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Post-print of Television Media Market Strategies in the Converged Media Era

Authors: Jiang Min

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Abstract

The emergence of new media has provided richer approaches for the market-oriented marketing of television news. This paper focuses on examining windowing marketing strategy, relationship marketing, and word-of-mouth marketing within the marketing strategies of television news programs. The transformation of marketing strategies represents a critical step in the transformation and upgrading of television news.

Full Text

Preamble

Market Strategies for Television Media in the Converged Media Era

Abstract: The emergence of new media has provided richer approaches for the market-oriented marketing of television news. This paper focuses on windowing strategies, relationship marketing, and word-of-mouth marketing within television news program marketing strategies. The transformation of marketing strategies represents a crucial step in the upgrading and restructuring of television news.

Keywords: television news; converged media; marketing

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Author: Jiang Min

In the era of traditional television news, the primary function of news was to serve as a mouthpiece, while its industrial and commodity attributes were completely overlooked. With the development of the market economy, the commod-

ity attributes of television news have been revived, and an increasing number of scholars have begun to apply marketing concepts to explore television news marketing. After the emergence of new media, its rapid growth has competed for audience resources in the television market, damaging its revenue. Under tremendous survival pressure, television news marketing has become particularly important. Generally, television marketing encompasses two levels: one refers to enterprises using television media to market commodities; the other refers to the promotion and marketing of television's own programs. Here, the author discusses television news marketing at the second level—marketing with television news as the ontology, that is, the self-marketing of television news, rather than advertising marketing for commercial products or industries using media as a carrier.

1. Changes in the Television News Market

In the new media era, television is no longer the sole channel for people to access video news. Social networking sites, Weibo, portal websites, and even mobile phones can all provide video news to audiences. Compared with television, news provided by new media platforms is superior in terms of timeliness and entertainment. Huang Yong, Deputy Editor-in-Chief and Director of the Development Research Center of the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, predicts: “In the next decade, video new media will occupy half of the audiovisual media market.” The once calm television news market must now face the tremendous changes brought by the wave of new media. However, “crisis” and “opportunity” often coexist. The market transformation under new media brings not only challenges but also opportunities within those challenges.

1.1 Market Differentiation

In the information age, obtaining information is not only a way for people to understand and perceive the world; in many cases, information means money, opportunity, and even wealth. Rapid social development keeps people in a constantly changing environment, and information is the best way for people to understand and adapt to these changes.

1.1.1 Fragmentation After the emergence of new media, network technology can provide users with any information at any time and any place for selection. People can watch needed news programs at any time through the internet, turning fragmented time such as commuting, waiting in line, and before bedtime into important periods for obtaining news information. Locations like subways, buses, and squares have also become venues for information acquisition. This model satisfies people's needs for news information, forming a fragmented news market.

As a fleeting living room medium, television news programs emphasize programming and seamless overall effects. Their inherent “time walls” and “space walls”

clearly cannot adapt to fragmented market demands.

1.1.2 Audience Segmentation The scene of several family members sitting together watching television news at the same time has become rare. Adults no longer need to accommodate elderly family members by watching news programs they dislike, and children no longer need to watch news they don't enjoy due to parental preferences. People now have new choices. Through new media platforms like the internet and Weibo, they can freely select news information they want to watch without following the linear format pre-programmed by television news.

Due to differences in age, education level, interests, and professional habits, people have different information needs. These needs are differentially satisfied in the new media era, as people can watch news information according to their preferences. After new media emerged, information supply methods that traditional television news programs could not achieve have become possible through new media, which have differentiated the television news market and led to audience segmentation.

1.1.3 Converged Market Wu Zheng, CEO of Sun Culture Group, believes: "Compared with old media, the first characteristic of new media is its dissolving power—dissolving boundaries between traditional media (television, radio, newspapers, communications), between communities and industries, and between information senders and receivers, among others." In traditional television news program markets, the strong regional propagation characteristics of television media created geographical limitations for television news, especially for television news carried by ground channels, where regional characteristics were particularly pronounced. After new media emerged, their open, network-based communication methods broke through the morphological barriers and administrative boundaries of traditional media, forming a cross-regional communication pattern.

New media technology provides possibilities for television news programs to break through geographical limitations, and networking can also push local livelihood news from various regions to audiences. New media has overcome the limitations of ground channels. In response to new media development, Jiangsu City Channel proposed the "Livelihood News 3.0 Era," defined as "new forms of television programs in the era of new media network-based communication." They upgraded "Nanjing Zero Distance" to "Zero Distance." Director Zhang Jianguang stated: "News topics should expand beyond Nanjing to cover the entire province, and SNG satellite live broadcasting and other means will be more frequently used for major cross-provincial reports." With new media support, the regional nature of television news has further dissolved, converging the television news market.

2. Extended Market

Traditional television news broadcasting platforms were limited to television media. After new media emerged, various portal websites, Weibo, and mobile phones have all provided broadcasting platforms for television news, 无形中 extending television news market demand and providing broader space for television news. Meanwhile, after new media emerged, the diversification of video information release platforms has caused the market boundaries of television news programs previously defined by traditional television media such as wireless, cable, and satellite television to rapidly extend into the communication territory of new media. Although television news audiences have significantly declined, audience contact time with media has increased, with more and more people choosing video news to understand the world.

3. New Marketing Methods with New Media Participation

Since the late 1990s, the pace of commercial operation in China's media industry has accelerated, and the high ratings of television news programs have proven the success of their market-oriented operation. After new media emerged, changes occurred in the television news market, and television news was considerably affected. However, the audience-centered program concept has made television news more flexible and rapid in utilizing new media marketing.

3.1 “Windowing” Strategy Marketing

Nowadays, people can obtain news information through both commercial websites and new media such as mobile phones. New media has developed into a large family with numerous forms including internet television, commercial websites, Weibo, and mobile phones, providing diverse platforms for people's news selection. Video news, with its authentic and infectious visual experience, has become a favored news communication form in new media. The “windowing” marketing strategy for television news is precisely based on the numerous forms of new media and their capability to play video news.

3.1.1 Long Tail Theory Before discussing the “windowing” marketing strategy, let us first examine a theory—the Long Tail Theory.

In 2004, Chris Anderson, Editor-in-Chief of *Wired* magazine, proposed the famous “Long Tail Theory,” which can be condensed into a simple sentence: “Our culture and economy are increasingly shifting away from a focus on a relatively small number of hits (mainstream products and markets) at the head of the demand curve and toward a huge number of niches in the tail.” He used this to analyze changes in the media industry. In the past, due to limited broadcast channels, any business only followed the “80/20 rule,” concentrating efforts on promoting the 20% best-selling products. However, the internet can provide unlimited “shelf space,” where almost all products can have display space online. Therefore, the tail of this supply-demand curve extends infinitely, continuously

dividing people' s expenditures, including attention expenditure and media usage expenditure. Simply put, its basic principle is to win through quantity and diversity. This is of great significance for television programs surrounded by new media.

Chris Anderson explicitly stated: “Of all the traditional media, the television industry is the one most likely to be radically transformed by the Long Tail forces, because it produces more content than any other media and entertainment industry, yet audiences can only see a small portion of it. Therefore, the ratio of content creation volume to availability in the television industry exceeds that of any other industry.” Programs broadcast on television are fleeting, especially television news programs that are often only broadcast once. Many viewers may only watch a portion or happen to miss it completely. These program resources cannot be rebroadcast on television, resulting in significant waste. After new media emerged, with the help of search engines, any video uploaded to the internet can be found by audiences, forming a huge market. Television news can choose multi-channel broadcasting, enabling news products that consumed substantial human and material resources to be disseminated multiple times, improving utilization rates. This has positive significance for enhancing the communication effects of television news programs and 挖掘 potential space.

Meanwhile, he proposed three forces that promote the Long Tail in the media industry. The first is the popularization of production tools—such as personal computers. The second is the popularization of communication tools reducing consumption costs. The third is the convenience of connecting supply and demand reducing search costs. Anderson emphasized that the popularization of communication tools is an important force in the development of Long Tail Theory. In the internet era, communication tools based on network technology have developed into multiple forms, including media websites and commercial websites. Regarding how to reasonably and effectively use these platforms to achieve Long Tail effects, the “windowing” marketing strategy provides an excellent solution.

3.1.2 Windowing Strategy—Media Websites, Commercial Websites, and Other New Media Platforms The “windowing” strategy is a marketing model for Hollywood film distribution that creates economies of scope through multi-level window broadcasting. Program suppliers maximize program development by treating primary, secondary, and tertiary television audiences as different “windows.” To maximize program value, these programs must be sold in as many windows and channels as possible, and arranged in sales models and sequences that generate optimal returns.

According to windowing theory, displaying and broadcasting products in more levels and types of windows will more prominently and substantially create social and economic benefits. “Windows” are the main content of windowing marketing, which in the media industry means broadcasting platforms. New media provides many broadcasting platforms for television news programs. Currently, television

news programs mainly use the following platforms:

1. **Media Websites:** Official websites of major satellite TV stations. Media official websites only republish their own television programs, setting up content according to their channel divisions. Television news programs are segmented into individual news items and uploaded within their respective channel sections, without complete programs, which also conforms to the fragmented communication method of online media. Through Baidu search, relevant news videos can be found. In addition, some media websites republish videos from other media, such as People' s Daily Online, which has set up People' s Television specifically for broadcasting video news and republishes livelihood news programs from some TV stations.
2. **Commercial Websites:** Such as Tencent Video and Sina Video. Websites have specialized personnel responsible for updating video news, selecting and republishing local news programs.
3. **UGC Websites:** Such as Youku and Ku6. Video sources are generally uploaded to websites by television station staff after registering in the name of the television station.
4. **Weibo:** Such as News Weibo and Sohu Weibo. News videos on Weibo directly link to media websites.
5. **Mobile Clients:** Such as Phoenix Broadband and mobile clients developed by television stations like Jiangsu Satellite TV' s LeXiang Television client. Mobile clients are new platforms developed by television stations for mobile media. Currently, they are relatively few due to network speed and cost limitations.

From the above, television news programs have already adopted multi-window program promotion and marketing. Through this method, the probability of news programs being seen by audiences can be increased, competing for more attention resources. However, in the “windowing” marketing strategy, having as many broadcasting platforms as possible is only one aspect. The windowing marketing strategy also emphasizes dividing audiences into different levels according to different windows and conducting targeted communication to achieve optimal communication effects. Currently, television news is still in the stage of expanding platforms and has not yet created different content for different platforms.

3.2 Relationship Marketing Under “Relationship is King”

In the 1980s, Professor Leonard L. Berry from Texas A&M University proposed the theory of relationship marketing, which defines relationship marketing as “attracting, maintaining, and enhancing customer relationships.” Industrial marketing expert Barbara B. Jackson (1985) described relationship marketing from the perspective of industrial marketing as: “Relationship marketing views the

market as relationships, interactions, and networks.” Establishing and developing good relationships is the core of relationship marketing.

When relationships among audiences are stable, audience dependence and loyalty to programs will naturally be established. Two-way interaction is the basic principle of relationship marketing. Relationship marketing provides good theoretical guidance for television news marketing using Weibo.

The official Weibo accounts of television news programs mainly have three functions: information release, relationship building, and image shaping.

3.2.1 Information Release Information release includes pre-broadcast announcements and post-broadcast program video releases. Program previews are brief introductions to program content before broadcasting. Post-broadcast program video releases involve fragmenting television news programs and releasing them item by item on Weibo, consisting of text news, video screenshots, and video links. This increases television news broadcasting channels, facilitates multiple dissemination, and enhances Long Tail effects. For example, Jiangsu Satellite TV’s “News Eye” program has set up the topic “Focus on News Eye,” selecting some news content to preview the day’s program. Afterwards, most news information is released daily on Weibo with text introductions, images, and news links.

3.2.2 Interactive Activities Television news programs use Weibo for interaction in various forms. The first is organizing offline public welfare activities for news events, calling for public action in response to help-seeking information in news programs. Public welfare activities such as book donations and student aid are beneficial for program promotion, enhancing visibility and influence, and also help shape a good program image.

3.2.3 Voting and Feedback Television news programs can use Weibo to initiate voting, which is simple and convenient. For example, “Zero Distance” initiated the “Zero Distance Most Influential” voting on the @MicroColumn, once a week—a frequency perhaps only achievable on Weibo. Through voting, television news programs achieve effective interaction with audiences, more accurately grasp audience preferences, and make program feedback mechanisms more scientific.

The main function of Weibo is to form good interaction with users, thereby building long-term stable relationships. These relationship advantages have expanded into the content domain. Starting from relationship considerations for new product creativity, development, and marketing is an important 思路 in market competition. In television news, when building relationships with audiences through Weibo, the following points should also be noted.

First, in terms of presentation, Weibo information release should be diversified. One aspect is combining text, images, and videos, adhering to originality, lever-

aging Weibo' s self-media embedding characteristics, using information source images and videos to publish or forward original Weibo posts, avoiding screenshots to leave space for users to verify and discuss, thereby attracting attention. Another aspect is combining event information, opinion information, and interactive activities for release. "Opinion dissemination must be based on the full elaboration of factual information, through multi-angle interpretation and in-depth exploration of various topics, supplemented by high-frequency information sending." This is conducive to Weibo dissemination.

Second, regarding update timing, follow Weibo communication patterns to form a dynamic and continuous information update process. Weibo' s fission-style communication structure makes its communication effects and scope spread in an exponential diffusion manner. This communication method' s influence involves releasing preview news to build momentum before programs, strengthening interaction with audiences during programs to attract multi-screen participation, and valuing user evaluation and feedback after programs, thus forming a dynamic continuous process.

Weibo updates should fully leverage Weibo' s immediacy, interactivity, and openness characteristics to expand the communication time and space of television news.

Finally, in terms of operation methods, embed famous journalists' Weibo posts into column Weibo through forwarding, leveraging the role of famous journalists and hosts as core nodes in network relationship dissemination, thereby providing possibilities for information fission dissemination. Meanwhile, this achieves effective interaction between network users and columns and column members, aggregating popularity for official Weibo accounts.

3.3 Word-of-Mouth Marketing—Sharing and Forwarding

Word-of-mouth marketing originates from communication studies and is mainly applied in marketing. Word-of-mouth refers to a two-way interactive communication behavior where individuals other than producers explicitly or implicitly convey information about a specific or certain type of product, brand, manufacturer, seller, and any organizational or personal information that can evoke associations with the aforementioned objects, without third-party processing, causing audiences to obtain information, change attitudes, and even influence purchasing behavior. This marketing method using word-of-mouth communication is called word-of-mouth marketing. In word-of-mouth marketing theory, relationship strength is an important factor affecting word-of-mouth communication. It can be said that the closer the relationship between the sender and receiver in real-life interactions, the more significant the effect. In social media represented by Renren and Weibo, a large portion of the friends added or accounts followed are people known in real life, representing the transfer of real relationships to the network. These interpersonal relationships have been further consolidated and extended in the network, making them authentic and

credible. This authentic and credible relationship forms the foundation for word-of-mouth marketing.

Currently, television news programs mainly conduct word-of-mouth marketing through social media via forwarding, reposting, and sharing. Audiences release or comment-post news on their own social media such as Sina Weibo, Sohu Weibo, and Renren through official websites, official Weibo accounts, and mobile clients. In audiences' own social media, television news programs not only achieve multiple dissemination but also leverage the influence of publishers within their social circles to achieve word-of-mouth marketing effects.

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(Author' s Affiliation: Anhui Broadcasting Corporation)

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

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