

An Analysis of Technological Innovation in Wellness Television Programs in the Context of Media Convergence: Postprint

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Date: 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

With the development of information technology, various new media platforms have rapidly emerged, rendering the convergence of traditional and new media an inevitable trend. Concurrently, “Healthy China” was elevated to a national strategic priority at the National Health Conference, thereby creating possibilities for age-inclusive development of wellness programs within the context of new media integration. Presently, wellness programs are experiencing vigorous growth, attributable on one hand to the expansion of dissemination channels afforded by the rise of new media, which has consequently broadened the audience base; and on the other hand, to the increasing sub-health population and accelerating demographic aging in China, which have collectively stimulated public demand for wellness content. Consequently, innovating wellness programs under the backdrop of new media convergence constitutes the central focus of this study.

Full Text

An Analysis of Technological Innovation in Health and Wellness Television Programs Under Media Convergence

Abstract: With the development of information technology and the rapid rise of various new media platforms, the convergence of traditional and new media has become an inevitable trend. Meanwhile, “Healthy China” was elevated to a national strategic priority at the National Health and Wellness Conference, creating possibilities for health and wellness programs to develop across all age groups within this converged media landscape. Today, these programs are flourishing for two primary reasons: first, the rise of new media has expanded their distribution channels and broadened their audience reach; second, factors such as China’s growing sub-health population and accelerating aging process have

stimulated public demand for wellness content. This paper therefore focuses on how to innovate health and wellness programs within the context of media convergence.

Keywords: media convergence; television programs; media technology; new media; broadcasting

Classification Code: G222

Document Code: A

Article ID: 1671-0134(2019)06-060-03

DOI: 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2019.06.014

The increasingly severe challenge of social aging in China is an objective reality that cannot be ignored. Compounded by factors such as fast-paced lifestyles, high stress, and environmental pollution, many people now live in sub-health conditions. These factors have intensified public attention toward health and wellness issues. Simultaneously, the rise of new media has created possibilities for wellness programs to reach audiences of all ages, making innovation within this new media context a topic worthy of exploration. Drawing on practical experience, this paper analyzes the dilemmas facing wellness programs under media convergence and proposes recommendations for their innovation.

1. Current Dilemmas of Health and Wellness Programs Under Media Convergence

1.1 Imbalanced Resource Distribution and Severe Homogenization

Research reveals that health and wellness programs are concentrated in China's economically developed regions, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Shandong, Jiangsu, and Guangzhou. These areas not only possess better medical resources but also host populations with more progressive mindsets whose basic needs have long been met, driving them to pursue higher-quality lifestyles. Consequently, wellness programs in these regions have developed rapidly. In contrast, local television stations in central and western China rarely produce such programs, primarily because health awareness remains relatively weak among their audiences. Overall, China's current wellness program distribution exhibits a characteristic of "abundance in the east, scarcity in the west," fundamentally rooted in uneven economic development.

Moreover, in terms of program format, surveys indicate that China's health programs mainly adopt studio talk shows, reality shows, and special features, with studio talk shows being the most common. From a structural perspective, the basic 流程 follows a predictable pattern: host introduction—guest presentation—host questions—guest responses. This "presentation-question-answer" format has led to severe homogenization. Whether in content or form, China's wellness programs share numerous similarities, demonstrating a clear lack of in-

novative spirit. This homogenization has resulted in low audience expectations and difficulty in building viewer loyalty.

1.2 Blind Pursuit of Ratings Prompting Spread of Pseudo-Health Information

The original intention of wellness programs was to disseminate accurate health knowledge and provide consultation services for the public. However, some programs have incorporated commercialized “health knowledge” to pursue higher ratings and economic benefits, transforming these programs into commercial enterprises that mislead audiences. For instance, certain once-popular wellness programs gained such influence that some viewpoints became “mythologized,” prompting viewers to purchase related products en masse, even causing price surges and stock shortages. Subsequent verification by multiple parties revealed these viewpoints to be false, constituting pseudo-health information. When the authority of such statements is compromised, audience attention and trust inevitably decline, revealing the need for improved regulatory oversight.

According to CSM Media Research, middle-aged and elderly populations represent a primary audience segment for wellness programs. However, these groups have relatively limited interaction with the latest social information and lack the ability to discern the authenticity of health information. Without careful verification and validation of claims, audiences can be easily misled. The *China Health Communication Research: 2009-2010 From Media Public Opinion to Doctor-Patient Communication* indicates that approximately 60% of wellness programs suffer from chaotic health information that compromises quality, making it difficult to scientifically distinguish even accurate health information. Additionally, some well-intentioned programs inadvertently spread pseudo-health information due to limited professional talent at local television stations. This paper argues that the root cause lies in the insufficient development history of China’s wellness programs and inadequate emphasis on professional talent cultivation.

1.3 Vague Program Positioning: Difficulty Balancing Universality and Personalization

Under media convergence, wellness programs face the possibility of reaching all age groups, necessitating consideration of personalization in their positioning. However, content theme selection must also address universality, creating a major dilemma for local television stations. Research data shows that viewers aged 65 and above currently constitute the largest audience segment, followed by those aged 55-64. In the context of media convergence, the phenomenon of “younger aging diseases” has emerged. According to *An Analysis of the Status and Causes of “Younger Aging Diseases” in China*, some geriatric diseases are occurring 15 years earlier than before—a concept demanding serious attention. Diabetes also shows a trend toward younger populations, with increasing numbers of patients aged 20-35. Against this backdrop, wellness programs are

trending toward “full-age” appeal, yet local television stations maintain “universal” positioning focused on elderly audiences, typically selecting common conditions such as the “three highs” (hypertension, hyperlipidemia, hyperglycemia) and cardiovascular diseases as subjects. For example, many stations have produced programs on “treating winter diseases in summer,” while diabetes-themed programs have been produced by Beijing, Shandong, Zhejiang, and Chongqing television stations. Insomnia-related programs have been particularly numerous on Beijing Television. Despite similar themes across different programs, content is largely repetitive, failing to leverage the interactive advantages of new media and resulting in a lack of distinctiveness.

1.4 Sensational Titles Undermining Program Credibility

On internet platforms within the media convergence landscape, various forms of “clickbait” use exaggerated titles to attract attention, such as “The Cabbage Detox You Never Imagined” or “Three Health Dishes That Can Keep You From Getting Sick.” These phenomena are particularly prevalent in WeChat Moments. This practice has spread to wellness programs, with some television stations employing exaggerated titles to attract viewers, while others use associations between common diseases and audience behaviors as promotional hooks. Over time, such practices increase public anxiety and erode trust in these programs.

2. Innovation Strategies for Health and Wellness Programs Under Media Convergence

2.1 Optimizing Topics and Strictly Controlling Content Quality

Program topics directly affect quality, dissemination effectiveness, and influence. This paper recommends that wellness programs develop fundamentally different core values to gain competitive advantage. Therefore, programs should strengthen new media application to enhance interactivity and diversify topic selection. Simultaneously, leveraging new media functions to build feedback mechanisms enables timely integration of audience opinions, facilitating subsequent program adjustments and innovation. Under media convergence, wellness program topics should be based on traditional Chinese medicine and culture while organically integrating modern wellness approaches such as qigong and Pilates. This broadens audience perspectives, allowing them to understand historical contexts while learning about combined traditional and modern health methods.

In the context of media convergence, topic selection must fully consider local characteristics by analyzing different regions and incorporating local customs, climate, and other factors. However, programs should also maintain a broader perspective by emphasizing “universality,” as audiences include not only locals but also out-of-region viewers across all age groups and with diverse wellness needs accessing content through television and various new media platforms. Overemphasis on regional characteristics may cause programs to lose audiences

from other areas. Therefore, programs must pursue both “individuality” and “commonality.”

As the first gateway to attracting audience attention, topics directly determine program success. From the perspective of scarcity economics, when information is abundant, attention becomes a crucial scarce resource. Therefore, wellness programs must adopt audience perspectives and flexibly adjust narrative styles. When facing information overload, effective approaches to improving ratings and new media click-through rates involve capturing attention. For example, some programs have transformed titles from *Prevention and Treatment of Coronary Heart Disease* to *How Is Your Heart Doing?*, making content more relatable and attractive. Additionally, new media can enable online commentary, allowing real-time interaction between audiences and program experts, or even letting audiences vote on topics to select subjects of greatest interest for future episodes. This fosters emotional identification and enhances audience loyalty.

From a production standpoint, wellness programs must maintain a strong sense of responsibility, actively ensuring quality control by upholding their unique authority and scientific rigor. Only such programs can withstand the test of time and provide truly valuable wellness services for audiences.

2.2 Segmenting Audiences to Meet Heterogeneous Needs

Under media convergence, audience segmentation and content fragmentation have become urgent issues for local television stations. The key to segmenting wellness program audiences lies in fully utilizing the live-streaming characteristics of new media to push different content to different audience groups—a necessary dissemination approach in the converged media era. Today, wellness program viewership continues to grow, extending beyond elderly populations to middle-aged, young, and even child audiences, each with naturally different content needs. However, traditional wellness programs, considering universality in topic selection, struggle to meet diverse group requirements. New media can fragment content and push appropriate wellness information to different demographics. Therefore, content must attract different groups by leveraging new media features and advantages to innovate wellness programs, incorporating both “entertainment-oriented introductions” and “service-oriented exports.” Especially as audiences experience “rational regression” and “complex subjectivity,” wellness programs must attend to higher-level needs by segmenting audiences according to age, income, gender, and other factors to achieve targeted wellness media supply.

To 挖掘 more potential audiences, programs should analyze factors such as hosts, content, and format from the audience perspective. Taking program hosts as an example, they can refine their language fundamentals by skillfully using “longer tones,” which create a sense of spaciousness and relaxation for audiences, as shorter tones tend to induce tension. Therefore, hosts can vary tone length according to context—for instance, shortening tones to create tension when nec-

essary. However, considering the overall tone of wellness programs, a relaxed and harmonious atmosphere should dominate. In human memory formation, “self-perception” –including emotions, attitudes, motivations, and desires–plays a crucial role. As wellness program hosts, they should stimulate audience “self-awareness” through narrative storytelling, thereby strengthening emotional connections.

2.3 Strengthening Interaction and Innovating Program Formats

Under media convergence, the traditional one-way communication pattern from media to audience has been transformed, providing audiences with diverse interaction methods such as WeChat/Weibo interaction, bullet comments, topic discussion participation, voting, and QR code scanning for quizzes. Interaction can occur both during program broadcasting through live audience-host engagement and online via various media platforms. Furthermore, audiences can participate in program discussions and recording processes, making interaction possible for every viewer and enhancing program affinity while stimulating viewing enthusiasm. Additionally, in the converged media environment where audiences can selectively consume content, high-quality material is promptly shared, transforming audiences from “receivers” to “transmitters” and expanding program reach.

In terms of format, traditional production models should be replaced with more flexible, life-oriented, and interactive approaches to achieve program innovation and inject new elements such as plotlines, dramatic performances, and reality show segments. Where feasible, inviting celebrities as guests—conducting physical examinations based on their health conditions and developing wellness plans—can be effective. Given celebrities’ fast-paced lifestyles, high work pressure, and public visibility, their participation can generate significant “star effects,” satisfying audience curiosity while helping viewers find relatable cases to apply program knowledge. Additionally, talk show formats can be incorporated. For example, *The Dr. Oz Show* satisfies audience demand for health knowledge through this format. Under media convergence, wellness programs should enhance both “viewability” and “freshness” while preventing excessive entertainmentization to fundamentally attract broader attention.

2.3 Strengthening Cultural Identity and Achieving Media Convergence

Beyond material needs, humans require cultural identity and social recognition—what we commonly call a “sense of belonging.” This represents a higher-level need that this paper considers a “selective” demand. From a selective perspective, choosing certain information is not necessarily about its practical value but rather about audience value identification, representing personalized choice and lifestyle expression. Given the nature of wellness programs, they must satisfy audience material needs while also addressing higher-level cultural and selective demands.

Therefore, under media convergence, we must actively facilitate media convergence based on cultural identity. This convergence is not simply about merging traditional and new media but about becoming an integrated whole. In this environment, smart TVs such as Fengxing and JmGO have entered public view, allowing audiences to watch not only television programs but also internet video apps like iQiyi, Youku, and Tencent Video—typical examples of blurred boundaries between traditional and new media. This flattening of distribution channels gradually eliminates barriers between audiences, enabling real-time or near-real-time dissemination, sharing, communication, and interaction. In fact, future media boundaries will become even more blurred, requiring us to explore how to integrate new products so that both traditional and new media can become content providers and disseminators, thereby achieving self-optimization and upgrading.

In conclusion, the elevation of “Healthy China” to a national strategic priority at the National Health and Wellness Conference, combined with the rapid rise of new media, has created possibilities for wellness programs to develop across all age groups. This is particularly significant given China’s increasingly severe aging society, growing sub-health populations, and the trend of geriatric diseases affecting younger people. Innovating wellness programs thus holds substantial practical importance. By leveraging new media advantages, we can promote the development of wellness programs and disseminate more valuable health information and knowledge for the public.

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

Source: ChinaXiv –Machine translation. Verify with original.