Exploring Innovative Operational Models for Specialized Broadcast Frequencies (Postprint)

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Abstract

Specialized broadcast frequencies refer to radio and television stations possessing distinctive characteristics, with precisely targeted audience groups, and surviving through their unique features. This necessitates that radio and television stations continuously innovate the operational models of specialized broadcast frequencies, constantly seeking their own personality and characteristics to attract larger listening audiences. The foundation of innovation lies in market segmentation and positioning to satisfy users' actual needs. Based on this premise, this paper first proposes the positioning of operational programs for specialized broadcast frequencies, and subsequently suggests innovative operational approaches for specialized broadcast frequencies.

Full Text

Preamble

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Abstract: Specialized radio frequencies refer to broadcast stations that must develop distinct characteristics and precisely target audience groups to survive through their unique features. This requires continuous innovation in operational models and persistent efforts to establish distinct personalities and attributes that attract larger listenerships. The foundation of innovation lies in market segmentation and positioning that addresses actual user needs. Based on this premise, this paper first proposes positioning strategies for specialized frequency programming, then advances innovative operational approaches for specialized radio frequencies.

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From a macro market perspective, frequency specialization both adapts to objective demands of audiences and markets, and facilitates optimized broadcast mechanisms that allocate resources efficiently, highlight media characteristics, and reduce waste. This represents an inevitable trend in China' s broadcast media development. For most radio stations, innovating specialized frequencies carries more symbolic than practical significance. Many so-called professional broadcast stations are not truly specialized in content, instead offering comprehensive formats that cover everything. Problems such as program overlap and redundancy between frequencies are widespread, making it difficult to distinguish clear differences between one frequency and another. If a news frequency, for instance, broadcasts news and news specials for less than half of its total airtime, and its content still heavily overlaps with economic and entertainment programs, then the lack of specialization and distinctive features prevents audience appreciation and recognition, limiting influence. To overcome operational challenges, broadcast media must pursue innovation.

1.3 Economic Broadcast Positioning

Economic broadcast positioning primarily targets consumers and merchants with programs such as *Consumer in Progress* and *Our City' s Big Players*. These programs are distinctly economic in orientation, delivering both economic and social benefits while opening new avenues for advertising revenue. Particularly against the backdrop of rapidly developing internet technology, online shopping has gained widespread acceptance. Consequently, economic programs must position themselves to address both physical and digital economies.

1.1 News Broadcast Positioning

News broadcast positioning focuses mainly on middle-aged and elderly audiences, who constitute the primary listenership for radio and rely on broadcast channels for news information with minimal entertainment needs. Therefore, news frequency positioning should center on "news as the foundation, authoritative public opinion." On weekdays, the broadcast framework should prioritize news content supplemented with distinctive news programming, while weekends can feature opera, folk art, and cultural content. News channels should leverage political resources, strengthen current affairs reporting from a people' s livelihood perspective, cover hot news topics, and enhance audience participation. For example, *Sunshine Hotline* focuses on listening to public voices and advocating fairness during morning slots, while afternoon slots emphasize communication and collaborative oversight, demonstrating the power of news broadcasting. This integration of specialized frequency and program positioning

with authoritative, influential journalism satisfies public demand for news.

1.2 Traffic Broadcast Positioning

Traffic broadcast positioning should facilitate public travel through programs like *Singing All the Way* and *Fifty-Mile Rhythm*. These programs provide real-time traffic updates by monitoring surveillance footage from the traffic police command center twelve times daily from 6 AM to 8 PM, with resident hosts at the center who listen to driver feedback. Through broadcast connectivity, hosts can promptly share information with other drivers, making traffic broadcasts the most powerful and caring programs for drivers.

1.4 People' s Livelihood Broadcast Positioning

People' s livelihood broadcast positioning must fully leverage specialized frequency characteristics. Programs like *Happiness Formula* and *Family Matters* have withstood the test of time and gained public recognition. To enhance effectiveness, these should be supplemented with consultation programs like *People' s Livelihood Frontline*, service programs addressing daily needs such as *Beyond Life, More Happiness*, and discussion programs on livelihood topics like *Let Me Tell You*, all of which maximize satisfaction of public policy needs and genuinely reflect people' s lives and concerns.

2. Operational Strategies for Specialized Radio Frequencies in the New Era

The best method for specialized frequency innovation is self-produced programming. Although some stations face constraints in human resources and hardware facilities, this does not signal the end of self-produced content. On the contrary, many broadcast stations have achieved further development by transforming operational thinking, grounding programs in local culture, bringing content closer to life, and expanding specialized themes.

2.1 From "Broad" to Specialized

Professional operation is measured by whether program frequency positioning is clear and whether it serves a specific audience, transforming broad programming into specialized content. For example, Beijing Radio' s Music Frequency is a relatively pure specialized frequency because its positioning is clear and singular —playing only popular songs. The programming is highly professional, minimizing host commentary to less than seven minutes per hour and emphasizing professional music selection and arrangement. This frequency targets specific demographics: students aged 12-23 and white-collar workers aged 23-40. Its specialization has earned widespread praise and popularity.

2.2 From Specialized to Diverse

Specialized frequency operation must uphold the principle of "specialization,"but this does not mean one frequency equals one program type. Rather, specialization should generate diverse content to meet audience needs through variations in program format, style, and presentation. The same program with a different host creates different effects, and different participation methods provide fresh, stimulating experiences. Using Beijing Radio' s Music Frequency as an example again, while maintaining its specialized foundation, it selects different music types for different time slots and audiences. From 6-8 AM, *Music Solar Energy* targets commuters and students aged 15-35 with upbeat rhythms and current popular songs. From 7-9 PM, *Music New World* targets white-collar workers aged 23-45 with lyrical songs and classic rock. Even a pure music frequency can expand its functions through different musical content and presentation forms, avoiding the pitfall of "specialization equals monotony" and enriching the specialized frequency.

2.3 People-Oriented and Localized

A successful broadcast station must establish an audience-centered management mechanism. In specialized frequency operation, only down-to-earth content can satisfy public tastes and needs. Pursuing "high-end"specialized frequencies without considering audience accessibility inevitably results in limited listenership and unsustainable development. Therefore, integrating specialized frequencies with audience needs represents the correct operational approach.

2.4 Distinctive Specialized Frequency Image

Since radio lacks visual elements, constructing a unified external image system is crucial for accurately conveying frequency identification, call signs, main content, and cultural concepts. This clarifies the frequency' s direction and creates easily recognizable visual identities. For instance, Beijing People' s Radio News Station' s outdoor advertisements feature a blue sky with the station' s logo—an acute news eye—clearly printed alongside "AM828, FM100.6" and the station' s English letters, merging with the sky imagery. This design establishes a new brand concept for outdoor media, leveraging the broadcast space characteristic of "waves above the city" to deliver fast, high-quality news information, with the vast sky representing the popular positioning of news content and enhancing the station' s market competitiveness.

3. Innovative Operational Methods for Specialized Radio Frequencies

The positioning strategies and operational concepts discussed above lay the foundation for innovating specialized frequency operations. Building on this solid base, innovation and competitiveness can be enhanced to ensure healthy broadcast development. This paper argues that innovating specialized frequency

operations requires multimedia development to create greater space for innovation.

3.1 Comprehensive Integration with Network Platforms to Expand Full-Media Output and Transformation of Broadcast Resources

Broadcast stations must integrate with new media. For music and entertainment frequencies, three approaches are essential: (1) Early entry into new media platforms such as Sina Weibo Radio and Qingting FM to capture the "dividends" of internet platform development; (2) Effective promotion leveraging specialized frequency platforms and audience resources to strengthen official Weibo, WeChat, and audio client promotion, achieving "two-way flow" between traditional broadcast and new media users while enhancing influence across both platforms; and (3) Deep integration making new media a standard component of daily operations and an integral part of routine work.

3.1.2 Building Column Micro-Sites via "Jiting FM" "Jiting FM" is a client developed by Hebei Television, an audio software product combining "broadcast + mobile internet" that enables synchronous interaction between broadcast content and new media. For example, during the evening rush hour food program *Smooth Listening All the Way*, the platform automatically pushes information about which restaurants the host visits. Audiences can reply "food" in the official WeChat account to access the specialized frequency, click micro-site hyperlinks to watch short videos filmed by the host, read about signature dishes, or connect directly to the live broadcast for interaction. This achieves an operational model of "broadcast guidance–WeChat diversion–multimedia synchronous interaction," realizing comprehensive integration of traditional and new media that compensates for traditional broadcast limitations and provides audiences with unprecedented audio-visual experiences.

3.1.3 WeChat "Voice Red Packet" Interaction Model Leveraging WeChat' s popular red packet feature, official WeChat accounts can set "keywords" allowing listeners to grab red packets through voice interaction. This method, first introduced by a television station, attracted over 100,000 participants within a week, with voice interactions exceeding 2 million. The WeChat "voice red packet" model integrates broadcast specialized frequencies with WeChat functions and serves as an important tool for broadcast-media convergence.

3.1.4 "Broadcast + Video" Model The nationally popular 2017 program *Mysterious Dinner Party* used dinner tables as settings and dishes as threads to invite professionals from various fields to discuss hot topics. During evening rush hour broadcasts, hosts announced live program starts while official WeChat platforms simultaneously launched live broadcast rooms, pushing URLs to audiences. Those who missed the livestream could receive screenshot images. Hosts

guided audiences to reply with keywords "dinner party" via WeChat and Weibo or directly enter the "Mysterious Dinner Party" live room, where listeners could interact with hosts and guests through bullet comments, achieving daily online viewership in the millions.

3.1.5 Experimenting with Emerging Technologies like VR and Drones With mature VR technology, specialized frequency operations can integrate with conventional media and live broadcasting to launch 720° seamless VR live video. Audiences can be guided from broadcast programs to rotate their phones for immersive experiences while listening. For major events, drone aerial footage can provide broader perspectives, switching between long and close shots to make broadcast content more comprehensive, satisfying audiences with both overview and detail.

3.2 Leveraging Frequency Programs to Engage in Multimedia Interaction via New Media

3.2.1 Targeted WeChat Menu Service Functions Official WeChat platforms can define pull-up menus with "quick service" functions divided into multiple broadcast specialized frequencies, such as real-time traffic conditions, air quality, and online listening. Using fuzzy processing technology and big data, clicking on keyword searches in WeChat dialog boxes automatically provides application services connected to traffic police departments, meteorological bureaus, and Qingting FM. These functions are determined by daily audience needs—for instance, "traffic violation queries" and "real-time traffic conditions" are essential for drivers, the primary audience for urban broadcasts, while "air quality" modules including PM values and weather forecasts address growing public environmental concerns.

3.3 Reengineering Frequency Workflow and Organizational Structure

Innovating specialized frequency operations requires top-level design strengthening and organizational process reengineering through capital integration, breaking traditional interactive barriers, and enhancing new media communication effectiveness. This involves building internal centralization with external multipoint dissemination.

On one hand, efficient internal scheduling mechanisms should be constructed to reflect contemporary specialized frequency characteristics of small scale, distinctive features, and fast-paced operations. Station managers should uniformly schedule all programs, activities, and new media platform resources to achieve integrated planning across programs, content, Weibo/WeChat matrices, and activities. Staff must be proficient in WeChat, Weibo, short video tools like "Miaopai," "Douyin," and "Kuaishou," while technical personnel should master VR, H5, PS, and web design technologies to lay the foundation for operational innovation.

On the other hand, building new media alliance platforms enables multi-point dissemination from a single source. For example, a Women' s Day campaign themed *My Girlhood* can be launched across Weibo and WeChat, uploading event photos and work pictures to the internet. Hebei Radio and Television' s *Back to Age Twenty* campaign documenting sanitation workers' work photos spread across networks and exploded on social media, generating widespread attention. Once the event gained momentum, the radio station revealed the backstory—a child photographing their mother at work to advocate for young people to pay more attention to their parents. Radio stations should preheat topics, release content, and facilitate autonomous discussion among audiences across broadcast and new media platforms to ensure effective information dissemination.

Conclusion

Specialized radio frequency operations have substantial room for innovation. To promote healthy broadcast industry development, continuous strengthening of technical foundations and integration with new media innovation are essential. Radio must move beyond being confined to a single specialty or audio format, experimenting with integration with images, video, and live streaming to further advance broadcast industry development.

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