

On the Convergence Path of County-Level Television Stations in the All-Media Era (Postprint)

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Abstract

In the context of the evolving internet information age, “integration” constitutes the key to media reform in the current era and has become a crucial objective for county-level television station development. In recent years, to meet audience consumption demands, county-level radio and television stations have actively pursued reform and innovation, exploring pathways for integration with new media. This paper conducts a multi-perspective analysis to assist county-level television stations in exploring development paths suited to their own circumstances, fully leveraging their advantages, and adhering to innovative integration concepts and methodologies, with the aim of achieving integrated development in the all-media era and establishing distinctive programming for county-level television stations.

Full Text

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A Brief Discussion on the Integration Path of County-Level Television Stations in the All-Media Era

Abstract: Against the backdrop of the networked information age, “convergence” has become the key to media reform in the current era and a critical objective for the development of county-level television stations. In recent years, to meet audience consumption demands, county-level radio and television stations have actively pursued reform and innovation while exploring pathways for integration with new media. This paper analyzes the issue from multiple perspectives to help county-level television stations identify development paths suited to their own circumstances, fully leverage their advantages, and adhere to innovative integration concepts and methods. The goal is to achieve inte-

grated development in the all-media era and establish distinctive county-level television programs.

Keywords: All-media era; county-level television stations; integration path

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County television stations serve as local service platforms that must disseminate government policies, public will, and mainstream ideology to audiences while performing services such as governance inquiry, educational assistance, help-seeking, and public supervision. Promoting the transformation and upgrading of county-level television media to fully realize their functions as mainstream ideological opinion platforms, information service providers, and regional information hubs will enable them to better guide and serve the public. Therefore, county-level radio and television units should integrate media resources, innovate internal management mechanisms, and strengthen the organic convergence of platform technology, services, and promotional content to form a community information hub centered on television media platforms, thereby further enhancing their communication capacity, guiding influence, impact, and credibility.

1. Current Status of County-Level Television Stations in the All-Media Era

The “four-level broadcasting and television operation” policy, established at the 11th National Broadcasting Work Conference in 1983, led to the gradual establishment of county-level radio and television stations across China, propelling the development of the broadcasting industry and charting a course for reform and innovation. However, in today’s continuously evolving networked information environment, traditional radio and television can no longer adapt to new media development. The drawbacks of the four-level broadcasting system have left county-level television stations facing significant challenges.

1.1 Institutional Rigidity and Talent Instability

Broadcasting development is constrained by numerous institutional regulations, preventing genuine innovation and reform. County-level radio and television institutions operate under a hybrid model combining public service establishment with enterprise-style management, resulting in two classes of employees with different compensation structures—those within the establishment and contract workers. While this system partially stabilizes the operational environment, it fails to retain professional talent outside the establishment. As local broadcasting platforms, county-level television stations offer limited benefits and career development opportunities for established employees, causing most platforms

to become training grounds rather than destinations for talent. Compounded by the dilemma of being unable to afford high salaries while also failing to retain self-trained personnel, talent loss has become a serious problem. Only by addressing this challenge can county-level television stations progress further along the new media integration path.

1.2 Low Program Quality and Unmet Audience Demands

Due to regional constraints, county-level television media face limited news sourcing scope, often resulting in monotonous and rigid programming. Under the traditional institutional environment, news content, reporting, and programming are all restricted by the public service system, leading to a lack of innovation and homogenized content that compromises program quality. Additionally, insufficient funding fails to support effective program development. Producing high-quality programs requires substantial investment, yet county-level television stations, constrained by regional and policy factors, cannot secure adequate funding chains. This not only hinders diverse program development and dampens audience interest but also impedes quality improvement. For instance, Hongta District Television Station once launched the region's first talk show, *Weekly Face-to-Face*, featuring direct dialogue with guests, heartfelt exchanges, and personal interpretations of current events. The program, which documented history through conversations and told stories of local people, received acclaim from peers and audiences upon its debut. However, due to various constraints—including the lack of a dedicated studio—only formulaic, conceptual, and structurally similar programs remained.

1.3 Lack of Content Innovation and Declining Ratings

As times continuously evolve, county-level television stations must keep pace by innovating program content to meet audience demands and improve ratings. However, influenced by traditional systems, these stations still primarily produce conventional programs without adequate research into audience needs or development trends. Traditional news information and conference reports dominate programming. According to surveys, most county-level television news programs consist solely of news reporting, lacking interactive, commentary, and discussion segments. This forces audiences into passive reception without participation, diminishing viewing enthusiasm. Meanwhile, in the rapidly developing new media environment, audiences increasingly access news through diverse channels such as Weibo, websites, and WeChat. Consequently, single-form news reporting not only fails to attract viewers but also creates boredom, leading to gradually declining ratings.

1.4 Unclear Development Goals and Integration Difficulties

Under the impact of the new media network environment, some county-level television stations have responded hastily and blindly imitated others, creating a “rush to join the trend” development model. Seeking short-term ratings, they

have rushed to establish websites and interactive platforms without thoroughly assessing market demand or the development environment, subsequently collecting consumer data. In this context, these stations lack scientific long-term planning and ignore new media's development pattern of "consumption first, dissemination second, industry third," which affects platform effectiveness and causes economic losses. Simultaneously, the absence of effective integration mechanisms between new and traditional media results in parallel development and departmental silos, preventing mutual promotion. For example, Hongta District Television Station timely established a new media department and created the "Impression Hongta District" public WeChat account, but its content production merely involved simple "addition" by republishing traditional media content without original, high-quality material. This made it difficult to form synergy throughout the information dissemination process, substantially reducing platform influence and communication effectiveness.

1.5 Neglect of Market Mechanisms

Influenced by the traditional economic system, most county-level television stations cannot effectively respond to flexible market mechanisms, hindering new media integration progress. In a market economy environment, these stations have more autonomous space and access to diverse resources. However, some remain entrenched in their ways, confining development within regional limitations and ignoring the promotional role of market mechanisms, thereby obstructing program rating growth. This environment not only affects economic returns but also prevents comprehensive advancement along the new media integration path, impeding the reform and innovation process of county-level television stations.

2. Integration Strategies for County-Level Television Stations in the All-Media Environment

To pursue integrated development in the all-media environment, county-level television stations must actively transform their concepts, break through traditional institutional constraints, diversify information resource channels, and fully utilize material resources to enrich program content, thereby carving out a distinctive path of integration and innovation.

2.1 Institutional Integration and Structural Optimization

From a macro-development perspective, numerous factors constrain media integration, but institutional integration is particularly critical. The institutional framework provides the fundamental basis for development, offering planning, constraints, and a favorable environment. As a product of the internet era and a hallmark of networked information, new media differs fundamentally from traditional media. New media represents a youthful industry characterized by high-quality technology, operational methods, and innovation cycles that align

with contemporary development needs. In this context, county-level television stations require sound management and operational mechanisms, deepening internal institutional reforms to create favorable conditions for all-media integration. To address talent loss caused by rigid institutional systems, county-level television stations should improve talent reserve strategies and strengthen professional team building to lay a human resource foundation for program production. This can be achieved by developing integrated talent training strategies in collaboration with universities and enterprises to cultivate comprehensive professionals with technical, practical, and production skills. Simultaneously, establishing an integrated talent resource database can retain outstanding broadcasting professionals. County-level radio and television units can set up talent funds, improve compensation packages, innovate employment mechanisms, and implement effective approaches to attract, retain, and properly utilize talent, thereby advancing integrated development. Additionally, by incorporating flexible market mechanisms, comprehensively integrating multiple media platforms, optimizing resource allocation, and building innovation capacity and core competitiveness, county-level television stations can further enhance their program influence. Such approaches inject vitality into development and drive the innovation and reform process toward emerging media industry integration.

2.2 Conceptual Integration and Adherence to New Media Development Patterns

Integrating new media concepts into the reform and development of county-level television stations and following new media development patterns can create a favorable ideological environment. In the networked information context, new media primarily enables natural, self-directed, and free information dissemination through diversified network platforms, bridging the gap between media news and audiences to stimulate interest. Therefore, county-level television stations must adopt new media thinking in their operations and use new media concepts to improve traditional models, laying a spiritual foundation for all-media integration. For instance, by integrating the functions of county-level television stations, WeChat public accounts, and news websites to build a media convergence center, they can adhere to the principle of “integration as one entity” and implement a model of “unified office, unified management, unified operation, and unified release” to achieve effective integration of various media resources. During integration, comprehensive platform terminals can expand program content promotion scope, creating a new media application platform featuring one-time collection, multiple generation, diversified release, multi-channel convergence, and multi-platform interaction. Furthermore, county-level television stations should thoroughly investigate new media patterns and characteristics, excel in new media promotion, break through traditional media concept limitations, and drive program transformation and development. As diversified platforms form the foundation of new media development, these stations can also draw from new media experiences and combine regional actual needs to build media platforms that meet consumption demands. For example, by strengthening market

demand research and constructing mass interactive platforms that connect traditional media platforms with new media resources, they can perform foundational market research. Such approaches optimize information dissemination channels, enhance program influence, and allow consumers to more genuinely appreciate program appeal. Embracing innovation and reform concepts during integration can advance media convergence and ensure a smoother, more sustainable integration path.

2.3 Process Integration and Unified Interface Formation

The integration path for county-level television stations also entails convergence in news gathering, editing, and broadcasting workflows. In the all-media era, these stations must break down excessive professional specialization and integrate professional requirements comprehensively, enabling every media professional to utilize various media methods for news gathering and editing while consolidating media channels, optimizing communication processes, and planning production workflows for both new and traditional media to achieve a unified operational interface. County-level television practitioners must possess comprehensive capabilities in television, radio, and online media production and thoroughly understand various production processes to meet development demands. Therefore, during new media integration, county-level television stations can unify the production, editing, distribution, and interactive interfaces of television and mobile programs to achieve genuine resource integration and advance integrated program development. Additionally, expanding content dissemination channels is essential to meet new media development needs. To forge an integration path suited to their circumstances, county-level television stations must both innovate traditional channels and vigorously develop new platforms to expand television information content and build a diversified dissemination system. For example, foundational programs can be reformed and innovated by 挖掘 more interesting and authentic material resources, allowing audiences to learn about regional culture and stories through programs and thereby improving ratings. Simultaneously, county-level television stations can leverage network resources to build communication and interaction platforms, utilizing commercial websites' Weibo, WeChat, and micro-store functions to broaden audience interaction channels, expand user scale, and lay a solid audience foundation for integrated development. Such approaches attract more audience resources, enrich broadcasting content channels, increase ratings, generate economic benefits, and drive the integration process forward.

2.4 Resource Integration and Optimized Allocation

Material resources constitute a key component of new media and hold significant importance for the integrated development of county-level television stations. Emphasis should be placed on resource information integration to optimize the rational allocation of material, channel, and hardware resources, creating broader development space for the broadcasting industry. For instance, county-

level television stations can establish new media operation centers based on internet information service resources to enhance news material appeal and elevate broadcasting industry charm. Simultaneously, combining government measures with market mechanisms in a flexible market environment can facilitate integration. County-level television stations can collaborate with internet and technology enterprises to fully utilize network and platform resources, achieving cross-industry and cross-enterprise integration and restructuring to enhance program influence. Additionally, they can leverage social resources and forces to upgrade production technology, attract corporate financing, secure adequate funding for program production, and guarantee program quality.

Simultaneously, treating “competition” as a driving force for industry integration can enhance producers’ market awareness, improve incentive and error-correction mechanisms, stimulate creativity among county-level program producers, and give full play to their innovative consciousness to optimize new media program quality. This environment provides better resources for program production and encourages innovation and reform by granting staff sufficient motivation and space, injecting vitality into integrated development.

In the network environment, the arrival of the new media era necessitates reforming traditional media models and integrating new media development trends to capture market share and win development opportunities. Guided by the “Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Integrated Development of Traditional and Emerging Media,” county-level television stations should establish media convergence centers to fulfill the core communication tasks of Party ideology and culture, remain true to their original aspirations and missions, and uphold positive energy, political principles, and value-oriented communication concepts to further enhance public opinion influence. Throughout this integration process, they must actively confront their shortcomings and problems, constructing an integration system centered on institutional, conceptual, process, and resource integration to comprehensively merge government funding and social resources, thereby building a superior platform for development that enables them to better guide and serve the public. In summary, the integration process not only drives self-innovation and reform but also seizes development opportunities, enhances market competitiveness, and improves program quality.

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

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