

Current Status and Problems of County-Level Media Convergence Construction in China: Postprint

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Abstract

As the pace of era development continues to accelerate, technological optimization and transformation are continuously influencing people's daily lives. This paper primarily conducts a detailed analysis and investigation of the challenges confronting contemporary county-level integrated media construction initiatives and their current developmental status, while systematically exploring approaches to enhance and improve integrated media operations in economically underdeveloped regions. By fully leveraging advanced operational and management expertise, it endeavors to enrich and expand integrated media content under the precondition of satisfying the demands of the general public.

Full Text

Abstract

With the accelerating pace of technological development, new media technologies are exerting an ever-growing influence on people's daily lives. This study examines the current status and developmental challenges of county-level converged media construction in China, with particular focus on economically underdeveloped regions. It explores strategies for enriching and expanding media content to meet public information needs while analyzing systemic issues that hinder effective implementation.

Keywords: county-level media construction; county-level institutions; policy support; funding

As national media infrastructure development accelerates, the construction of integrated media systems has become increasingly critical for consolidating mainstream media's influence and reach. People's lives are now saturated with

diverse media formats, and building authoritative information channels at the county level has gained heightened importance for ensuring information accuracy and authenticity. However, research reveals that county-level converged media construction suffers from insufficient systematic understanding and planning. To ensure that these initiatives align with national policy directives and achieve sustainable development, this paper investigates the practical problems and current conditions through regional case studies, offering recommendations for improvement.

Empirical data from multiple counties demonstrate significant regional disparities in development status, resource endowments, and infrastructure. Whether in terms of external platforms or internal content configuration, these variations profoundly affect construction outcomes. Analyzing these differences is essential for formulating targeted policies and advancing the integration of traditional and emerging media technologies. This research draws upon ninety county-level case studies to identify key challenges and propose evidence-based solutions.

2.1 Platform Diversification with Underdeveloped Content

Currently, county-level media institutions nationwide exhibit a pattern of extensive platform development coupled with shallow content depth. Approximately half of all counties face resource shortages and suboptimal platform configuration, leading to construction approaches that vary significantly based on local economic conditions and development levels. Particularly in regions with advanced digital infrastructure, media systems have evolved into complex networks spanning WeChat, Weibo, TikTok, and news aggregator platforms like Toutiao. This diversification aims to capture audience attention and adapt to changing consumption habits.

However, this rapid platform expansion has outpaced content development. While the number of distribution channels has multiplied, systematic content creation and management mechanisms remain underdeveloped. Many counties have adopted a “build first, improve later” approach, resulting in platforms that lack distinctive local characteristics and comprehensive functionality. The integration of traditional broadcast and television with new media technologies requires more than technical upgrades—it demands substantive content enrichment that aligns with national media convergence policies and local development needs.

2.2 Singular Funding Structure and Unsustainable Business Models

The integration of media systems through technological convergence has created substantial funding demands for county-level construction and management. However, current financing models rely almost exclusively on government appropriations and enterprise sponsorships, lacking diversified revenue streams and sustainable business strategies. Research indicates that government financial

support accounts for the overwhelming majority of media construction budgets in most counties.

This over-reliance on public funding creates vulnerability and limits operational flexibility. While government guidance is essential, the absence of market-based revenue mechanisms constrains long-term development. The structural imbalance between funding sources and operational needs represents a critical weakness in current implementation strategies, particularly as media technologies require continuous investment for upgrades and content production.

3.2 “Disorderly” Platform Expansion

County-level institutions’ efforts to develop and upgrade content management systems have led to a proliferation of platforms, yet supervision mechanisms remain inadequate. While policy support from higher-level governments has stimulated market growth and platform development, this expansion often lacks strategic direction. Many counties pursue large-scale platform deployment without clear objectives, resulting in redundant systems that fail to integrate effectively.

This blind expansion, driven by short-term performance metrics rather than long-term planning, creates resource waste and management chaos. The absence of unified standards and coordination mechanisms leads to fragmented development, where platforms multiply without corresponding improvements in content quality or operational efficiency. Effective governance requires establishing clear regulatory frameworks to guide rational, needs-based platform development.

2.3 Deficient Management Models for Structural Integration

The effectiveness of system integration directly impacts overall media development, yet current management models suffer from functional overlap and insufficient coordination. Most county-level media structures remain locked in traditional hierarchical systems that impede the integration of new media technologies. This institutional rigidity creates inefficiencies and prevents the formation of unified, agile management frameworks.

The persistence of outdated organizational structures, combined with unclear delineation of responsibilities, results in duplicated efforts and resource waste. Without systematic restructuring, the promotion of integrated media technologies cannot achieve its full potential. Reforming these internal management systems is essential for creating cohesive operational mechanisms that support both traditional and emerging media functions.

3.3 Shortage of Professional Talent

The construction of converged media platforms demands specialized expertise, yet county-level institutions face severe talent deficits in both technical and managerial domains. Most personnel lack training in internet-based media operations, and management models remain rooted in traditional broadcast paradigms. This skills gap is particularly acute in economically disadvantaged regions, where recruitment and retention of qualified professionals pose major challenges.

The scarcity of personnel proficient in digital content production, platform management, and data analytics constrains innovation and operational effectiveness. Current staffing configurations, often inherited from legacy media organizations, cannot meet the demands of integrated media development. Addressing this talent shortage requires targeted training programs and competitive incentives to attract digital media professionals to county-level positions.

3.4 Inadequate Advertising Revenue Support

Traditional media relied heavily on advertising revenue, but the shift to integrated digital platforms has disrupted this model. As audiences migrate to online platforms and information dissemination becomes more fragmented, advertising revenues have declined significantly. This financial strain particularly affects county-level media, which lack the scale and market reach of larger outlets.

The proliferation of alternative advertising channels and the rise of social media marketing have diverted revenue streams away from official media platforms. Without robust support mechanisms to offset these losses, county-level converged media struggle to maintain financial sustainability, further exacerbating their dependence on government subsidies.

2.4 Suboptimal Management Configuration in County Institutions

Traditional media management models exert considerable institutional inertia, complicated by fragmented policy support and inadequate regulatory frameworks. County-level media construction lacks systematic policy guidance, with many institutions operating without clear mandates or performance standards. The absence of unified management protocols creates coordination failures between government oversight bodies and media operators.

Legacy staffing systems and administrative procedures hinder the adoption of modern management practices. Many counties lack dedicated policy frameworks that define operational standards, evaluation metrics, and development pathways for converged media. This policy vacuum results in inconsistent implementation and weakens institutional capacity for effective media governance.

3.1 Weak Financial Support Mechanisms

Sustainable development of county-level media requires robust financial support systems, yet current funding mechanisms lack stability and strategic orientation. Research demonstrates that funding shortfalls represent a primary obstacle to effective construction and operation. The absence of scientifically designed investment plans leads to resource misallocation and project delays.

Financial constraints manifest at multiple levels, from infrastructure development to content production and personnel training. Without predictable, multi-year funding commitments and transparent allocation criteria, media institutions cannot undertake long-term planning or invest in capacity-building initiatives. Establishing evidence-based funding models that align resource distribution with developmental priorities is critical for ensuring operational continuity and service quality.

4.1 Deepening Policy Reform and Strengthening Top-Level Design

Comprehensive policy reform and strengthened top-level design are essential for advancing county-level media convergence. Government authorities must create enabling environments through systematic policy frameworks that address institutional, financial, and human resource challenges. This includes developing tailored support mechanisms that account for local developmental characteristics and resource constraints.

Effective reform requires multi-pronged strategies: establishing clear regulatory guidelines, providing fiscal incentives, optimizing resource allocation, and implementing performance-based evaluation systems. Policies should promote the integration of traditional media assets with digital platforms while preserving local content distinctiveness. By embedding media construction within broader regional development plans and ensuring coordinated implementation across government levels, policymakers can foster sustainable, high-quality media ecosystems that serve community information needs.

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

Source: ChinaXiv – Machine translation. Verify with original.