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A Preliminary Exploration of “Live Streaming+” Media Convergence for Local Television: A Case Study of CCTV-7’s “Happy Anshan” Online Live Streaming Report for the First Chinese Farmers’ Harvest Festival (Postprint)

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

Abstract

In the wave of mobile internet technology, communication forms such as self-media, video media, distribution platforms, live streaming, and short videos are proliferating in full diversity. Traditional media has been catalyzed by live streaming to initiate transformation. By harnessing the advantageous characteristics of online live streaming, leveraging the technical conditions of communication equipment, embracing the challenges of new technologies, and exploring innovations in media convergence strategy, traditional media seeks superior development prospects through its experimentation with ‘live streaming+’ media convergence.

Full Text

Preamble

ChinaXiv Collaborative Journal: Integration and Development Research

A Preliminary Study on “Live Streaming +” Media Convergence in Local Television Stations: A Case Study of CCTV7’s “Happy Anshan” Live Broadcast for China’s First Farmers’ Harvest Festival

Abstract: In the tide of mobile internet technology, diverse communication forms such as self-media, video media, distribution platforms, live streaming, and short videos are flourishing. Traditional media has been catalyzed by live

streaming to initiate transformation. By leveraging the advantageous characteristics of online live broadcasting and utilizing the technical conditions of transmission equipment, traditional media accepts the challenges of new technology, explores and innovates media convergence strategies, and seeks better development prospects through experiments in “live streaming +” media convergence.

Keywords: “Live Streaming +” Cross-domain Applications; Media Convergence; Convergence of Traditional Media Professionals

CLC Number: G206

Document Code: A

Article ID: 1671-0134(2018)12-033-02

DOI: 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2018.12.010

By Han Haibo

Introduction

In the wave of mobile internet technology, communication forms such as self-media, video media, short videos, distribution platforms, and live streaming have blossomed profusely. The new media era ushered in by live streaming has eroded the inherent advantages of traditional media, leaving it in a precarious “besieged on all sides” situation. Local television stations, in particular, are experiencing unprecedented growing pains. If traditional news media fail to grasp the essence of “newness” and “speed,” they risk being left far behind by their audiences. This paper takes as a case study the “Happy Anshan” live broadcast for CCTV7’s first China Farmers’ Harvest Festival, in which this author’s station participated, to explore the development of “live streaming +” media convergence in local television stations and the corresponding requirements for media professionals.

1. “Live Streaming +” Cross-domain Applications Become an Inevitable Trend in Media Convergence

By the end of December 2017, China’s internet user base had reached 772 million, with mobile phone users accounting for 97.5% [1], making mobile devices the primary terminal for internet access. Following the rapid and explosive growth of China’s live streaming market in 2016, the industry has now entered a more rational and stable period. Gradual standardization of industry policies has raised the threshold for the online live streaming market, ushering in a content-driven era of live broadcasting and fostering healthy market development.

As live streaming applications and technologies continue to evolve and upgrade, major platforms have begun integrated development with various industries through the “live streaming +” model, including transportation, education, daily life, sports, and healthcare. “Live streaming +” has become a key driver for integrated development across many social sectors. In this cross-domain market, traditional media organizations at various levels have begun experimenting

with live streaming's advantageous features combined with transmission equipment capabilities. By embracing emerging technological challenges and exploring innovative media convergence strategies, these traditional media outlets seek better development through "live streaming +" experiments.

In essence, "media convergence" represents a new operational model under diversified information transmission channels, effectively combining traditional media such as newspapers, television stations, and radio with new media channels like the internet, mobile phones, and smart terminals to produce different information products for distribution across various platforms. In other words, it integrates media editorial operations with new media transmission, enabling resource sharing and centralized processing.

Driven by market demands and global trends, media organizations have no choice but to converge. The "Happy Anshan" live broadcast, a seven-hour online television simulcast, involved nearly 100 staff members from our station's frontline news department, special topics department, arts department, technical department, WeChat public account new media department, and broadcasting department. Additionally, over a thousand people participated as guests across six segments, performing arts groups, and audience members. This live streaming process represented not only the convergence of traditional editorial methods but also comprehensive integration among editorial, technical, stage, new media, and broadcasting personnel across the traditional media organization. Live streaming affects every aspect of the organization, unblocking its vital channels and bridging the gap with audiences in one step. Indeed, live streaming serves as a lever for media transformation. From the live streaming models of People's Daily Online, CCTV.com, and various portal websites, the industry continues to explore what constitutes the proper approach to live broadcasting.

2. The Live Streaming Process as High-Level Integration Breaking Departmental Barriers

Traditional live broadcasting primarily relied on OB vans, a common practice for provincial-level and above satellite television but rare for local stations. Our station's live broadcast represented a "three-level leap." Previously, from the frontline editorial departments upstream to the broadcasting departments downstream, each operated with an independent review system. Journalists' pre-interviews with guests, subsequent writing, and non-linear editing were only subject to review within their own news departments, with no connection to technical staff responsible for non-linear editing systems or broadcasting departments. Technical departments always remained behind the scenes. However, the "Happy Anshan" live streaming process broke down these vertical departmental silos, requiring not only horizontal coordination but also cross-functional interaction and mutual support.

First, electronic field production represents high-level integration of technical

personnel. Our station's technical staff utilized electronic transmission technology to move to frontline field studios for electronic field production (EFP), achieving deep integration with live broadcasting. EFP, a product of rapid television technology development, differs from traditional in-house production by primarily serving as an "outside-the-station" television program production method. Compared to the complex system equipment required for in-house editorial and broadcasting, EFP represents a condensed editorial-broadcast system. For our station's live broadcast, EFP essentially involved relocating the entire indoor studio, including multiple cameras, video switchers, audio consoles, and other auxiliary equipment, providing solid technical support crucial for successful live streaming.

Second, "live streaming +" media convergence entails high-level integration of news editorial personnel. For live streaming, topic selection forms the foundation while advance preparation proves key. The Farmers' Harvest Festival represented a major topic, but its implementation in Anshan required numerous sub-topics for comprehensive coverage. Our station's live broadcast comprised seven content segments. As a frontline editorial staff member, this author was responsible for the "Travel in Anshan" segment—a one-hour live broadcast featuring seven guests. This example illustrates the high-level integration required of editorial personnel.

Live streaming demands on-site Q&A segments, promotional video inserts, and, most importantly, precise timing for guest appearances and interviews. This requires journalists to shift from traditional linear work thinking to horizontal interactive modes. Based on editorial experience and rhythm control, different guests require different time allocations and question sets, requiring journalists to communicate with guests about content reduction according to time constraints. This process tests not only fundamental editorial skills but also the ability to adapt content provided by government officials—which tends to be report-oriented and unsuitable for news dissemination—into audience-friendly material while maintaining the guests' expressive fluency. After familiarizing themselves with the seven guests' content, journalists must write host connecting scripts, a process that demands greater consideration of audience needs to make the program "watchable." This process also builds a bridge between hosts and guests. Once live content is determined, the pre-broadcast rehearsal becomes a process of interactive coordination and timely correction, involving communication with technical staff about promotional video timing and time reminders for hosts. Journalists must manage relationships with hosts, guests, and technical broadcasting personnel to achieve seamless, high-level integration and ensure successful live broadcast completion and content quality.

3. Quality Requirements for Traditional Media Professionals in Media Convergence

Regardless of the development model, implementation ultimately depends on people. Therefore, whether local station media convergence develops sustainably

depends fundamentally on shifts in human thinking and the redefinition of media professionals' roles in the new media environment.

First, media professionals must transform their mindset and consciousness. They should recognize that media convergence represents a “gene revolution” concerning their destiny and future, requiring clear understanding of the industry' s challenges and opportunities while maintaining confidence in the transformation from traditional to converged media. Practical work demands team coordination awareness—departments cannot operate in isolation, and individuals cannot be self-centered. The key lies in team cooperation and collaborative capability to achieve smooth, comprehensive integration. Previously, this author primarily handled special topic reports in planned, modifiable environments. However, the live broadcast process shattered many established thinking patterns, shifting from one-way subjective dominance to interactive audience feedback while maintaining a sense of being “on-site together with the audience.” Furthermore, user thinking must be rooted in creative work, using “angle” and “depth” to create highlights. Throughout the live broadcast process, seamless cooperation proves crucial.

Second, media convergence requires traditional media professionals to change their roles. First, they must become information gatekeepers and audience guides. Regardless of media format, “content is king” remains the primary competitive principle. Currently, Weibo and WeChat self-media have exploded, creating fragmented, voluminous, and complex information across platforms. Media convergence dramatically raises the bar for professionals, who must not only accurately capture audience needs from massive fragmented information but also possess “eagle-eye” insight to carefully edit and filter information from all directions with a strong sense of responsibility. During the “Happy Anshan” live broadcast, abundant tourism information about Anshan required editorial consideration of macro and micro perspectives, market factors, and audience needs. By controlling both the “upstream” and “downstream” of information consumption, professionals can guide users toward in-depth reading, thereby counteracting the inability to cultivate focused attention caused by fragmented reading [2].

Second, media professionals must redefine themselves as user service providers. The traditional television media terms “audience” and “viewers” have become “users” and “customers” in the converged media era. This represents not merely a lexical change but a monumental conceptual transformation. For local stations to develop and survive, deep media convergence requires shifting from the concept of one-way broadcasting to audiences toward product thinking. Under market thinking, strengthening user awareness by occupying, developing, and aggregating users as developmental elements can bring new breakthroughs in operations. Content production should adopt a “supply-side” concept, focusing on product innovation to create high-quality programs, segment markets, and conduct all-media marketing with online-offline integration. Distribution methods must also incorporate service awareness, improving precision, mobility,

interactivity, socialization, and video quality. User-centricity should enhance direct participation and experience, organizing quality content, elevating service levels, and permeating all aspects of content production [3].

The First Decade of the 21st Century: “The Decade of Media Convergence” [4]

From medium to human philosophy, from technology to institutional reconstruction, the evolution has progressed from simple superposition and superficial cooperation between traditional and new media to recent deep integration across content, channels, platforms, operations, and management. An era of comprehensive media convergence is arriving [5]. Traditional media is collectively testing the waters of media convergence through the “live streaming +” cross-domain application model, and third-tier local television stations within traditional broadcasting may thereby welcome a “second

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

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