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Convergence and Innovation: Practice and Reflection on Platform Integration at Jiangsu Xinhua Daily Media Group (Postprint)

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Abstract

In the era of interactive convergence between old and new media, newspaper groups urgently need to transform their singular communication models and accelerate the process of innovative integration. Taking Jiangsu Xinhua Newspaper Media Group as an example and employing case study and literature research methods, this paper first analyzes its strategic layout for convergence practices, identifies existing problems, and then summarizes the characteristics of its integration. The findings reveal t...

Full Text

Preamble

In the era of interactive convergence between old and new media, newspaper groups urgently need to transform their singular communication models and accelerate the process of innovative integration. Taking Jiangsu Xinhua Newspaper Media Group as an example and employing case study and literature research methods, this paper first analyzes its strategic layout for convergence practices, identifies existing problems, and then summarizes the characteristics of its integration. The findings reveal that in terms of content production, platform convergence, and business expansion, Jiangsu Xinhua Newspaper Media Group has formed an all-media platform integration network characterized by “six communication platforms as points, three media platforms as lines, and an innovation convergence experimental zone as the surface,” constructing a media industry ecosystem centered on news and information dissemination and supplemented by intelligent services, e-commerce operations, and art management. However, the group also faces issues such as inefficient internal management mechanisms, insufficient leverage in industrial convergence, and a shortage of

composite cultural management talent. The key characteristics of its development experience can be summarized as three points: the mutual reinforcement of content sharing and technological breakthrough, the complementary nature of internal integration and external alliances, and the parallel development of demonstration leading and mentoring. Other Chinese newspaper groups should deepen institutional reform, emphasize content as king, focus on integrating and optimizing internal and external resources, and actively promote cross-border integration of culture and media.

1. Introduction to Jiangsu Xinhua Newspaper Media Group

As one of the five major provincial-level cultural groups directly under Jiangsu Province, Jiangsu Xinhua Newspaper Media Group (hereinafter referred to as “Xinhua Newspaper Group”) owns 14 newspapers and 7 periodicals covering various local regions within the province, including two flagship publications—the provincial party committee’s official newspaper *Xinhua Daily* and the province’s highest-circulation metropolitan newspaper *Yangtze Evening Post*. In addition, the group directly holds shares in or participates in 10 business entities, including Jiangsu Xinhua Media Investment Industry Company and Jiangsu Xinhua Media Times Jiangnan Co., Ltd. Since 2011, with the internet transforming people’s reading habits, the market share of print media has gradually shrunk. Like most media groups, Xinhua Newspaper Group, which primarily operates in the media industry, urgently needs to transform and upgrade. Particularly in the context of innovative convergence, a pressing issue is how to promote complementary advantages and deep integration between traditional and emerging media in content, channels, platforms, and management. To this end, Xinhua Newspaper Group aims to build “a new media group with strong credibility and innovative convergence,” continuously reforms its systems and mechanisms, integrates and optimizes internal and external resources, and actively constructs various interactive convergence platforms between old and new media such as the “Media Convergence Innovation Experimental Zone” and the “Jiaohui” news APP. The group was selected for the “2013 World’s Top 500 Media Companies” and ranked sixth in the 2015 national “Two Microblogs and One App” convergence communication ranking among media groups, with its *Yangtze Evening Post* being China’s largest-circulation evening newspaper.

2. Platform Convergence Practices of Jiangsu Xinhua Newspaper Media Group

Since the “Twelfth Five-Year Plan” period, facing the rapid development of the internet economy, Xinhua Newspaper Group has adopted “convergence and intersection” as its philosophy, “culture +” as its development focus, and diversified, three-dimensional platform convergence projects as its support. While integrating resources and forming horizontal alliances both internally and externally, the group has continuously pushed various business operations toward

deeper development. On the one hand, it fully demonstrates the regulatory and operational capabilities of traditional mainstream media, jointly creating an all-media platform integration network with new media that features interconnected “points, lines, and surfaces.” On the other hand, based on connecting various media platforms, it continuously expands its business scope, enlarges its operational scale, adjusts its business structure, and gradually builds a media industry ecosystem centered on news and information dissemination and supplemented by intelligent services, e-commerce operations, and art management.

2.1 Innovation in All-Media Convergence

Xinhua Newspaper Group uses convergence innovation as its foundation, integrates existing media platform resources, adds new media communication channels, and comprehensively utilizes the content resources and channel advantages of various media platforms to form a three-dimensional, all-media platform integration network characterized by interconnected “points, lines, and surfaces” (see Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]).

2.1.1 The “Point” of Platform Convergence The “point” of platform convergence manifests in integrating scattered media platforms to construct a rational distribution sequence. Xinhua Newspaper Group has integrated its existing 21 newspaper and periodical resources and utilized Internet Plus to form six communication platforms encompassing print media, online media, mobile newspapers, mobile apps, Weibo and WeChat, and outdoor screens. Among these, print media such as *Xinhua Daily* and *Yangzhou Evening Post* serve as the foundation, online media like China Jiangsu Net and Jiangsu Mobile Newspaper form the trunk, and new media platforms including various official Weibo accounts, WeChat public accounts, and outdoor screens constitute the branches. Based on this structure and with content at the core, the group has formulated different platform resource integration and operation strategies according to the brand influence of each platform. For instance, for *Yangtze Evening Post*, the local newspaper with the largest circulation, the group continues focusing on print distribution while also opening an official Sina Weibo account, WeChat public account, and Yangtze Evening Post website, establishing long-term strategic partnerships with major national websites such as People’s Daily Online, NetEase, and Sina to achieve multi-platform sharing of news resources. Other city- and district-level newspapers and periodicals concentrate on building new media platforms like Weibo and WeChat, including *Training Magazine*, *Preschool Education 365*, Suqian Daily, Yangzhou Plaza, Jin Xuzhou, Xinhua Central Jiangsu Discovery, Weibo Taizhou, and Weibo Yancheng.

2.1.2 The “Line” of Platform Convergence The “line” of platform convergence manifests in integrating the group’s numerous small and scattered media platforms, stringing them together like beads so that each performs its own function and assumes its own responsibilities. This has currently formed a tripartite development pattern with the “Jiaohui” news APP as the main mobile

platform, China Jiangsu Net and Visual Jiangsu Net as the main PC platforms, and *Xinhua Daily* as the main print platform. Among these, the “Jiaohui” news APP adheres to a “user-first” operation philosophy, integrating news resources and talent from *Xinhua Daily* and various local newspapers, positioning itself as a news release platform, news social platform, and people’s livelihood and government service platform. China Jiangsu Net operates through channels and columns, synthesizing Jiangsu’s local political, economic, social, and cultural development while aggregating information on news, cultural entertainment, business operations, and public services. Visual Jiangsu Net collaborates with Xinhua Newspaper Group’s newspapers, websites, and other platforms, focusing on releasing rich news photography, building a professional photojournalism team, and creating a modern visual product database and open image collection and dissemination system.

2.1.3 The “Surface” of Platform Convergence The “surface” of platform convergence manifests in integrating the functions of various platforms to form a complete all-media convergence platform matrix. Xinhua Newspaper Group’s “Media Convergence Innovation Experimental Zone” serves as the headquarters and command center for the all-media platform convergence strategy. Based on the central information kitchen operation mechanism, it achieves one-time news resource collection, comprehensive sharing, centralized editing, and multi-terminal release. The experimental zone implements a departmental center management system and utilizes project management methods to comprehensively operate the six communication platforms. The experimental zone has established seven departmental centers (as shown in Table 1), fully leveraging the group’s excellent journalist resources, encouraging reporters to participate in project operations part-time according to their interests and abilities, thereby achieving flat management and effective talent allocation.

2.2 The Extension Chain of Big Data Convergence

Leveraging the content resources and big data foundation formed through platform convergence and relying on internet and new media technologies, Xinhua Newspaper Group continuously extends and broadens its industrial chain while strengthening resource sharing and interactive integration among platforms. It has gradually built a media industry ecosystem centered on news communication services and supported by diversified intelligent services, e-commerce operations, art management, and other “culture +” and “internet +” platforms.

2.2.1 Three-Dimensional Themed Reporting During the 2014 National “Two Sessions,” Xinhua Newspaper Group achieved all-media convergence and round-the-clock communication in its reporting based on the characteristics of each media platform and content reporting requirements. On the one hand, relying on the central information kitchen mechanism and utilizing the six communication platforms, the group realized content sharing of news manuscripts.

For the same event or topic, it provided real-time brief reports on digital media platforms such as online media, official Weibo accounts, WeChat public accounts, and outdoor screens, while delivering timely detailed reports in *Xinhua Daily*, *Yangtze Evening Post*, *Nanjing Morning News*, and other platforms. On the other hand, based on specific news themes, the group innovated and enriched news reporting forms, deriving multiple related columns to achieve three-dimensional, diversified synchronized reporting. For example, it created five all-media innovative columns—"I Host Today," "Two Sessions in Pictures," "Two Sessions Micro-Videos," "Two Sessions Micro-Radio," and "Two Sessions in Images"—which were simultaneously published and broadcast across the group's various media.

2.2.2 Diverse Intelligent News Services In response to the demands of the media convergence era, Xinhua Newspaper Group launched the strategic product "Jiaohui" news APP in November 2015. The APP platform integrates functions including news media, government services, people's livelihood services, public services, and smart cities. The APP's operation adopts internet thinking, advocating user-first, content-is-king, and channel-victory principles. In user operation, it adheres to a user-first service principle, aiming to increase user stickiness and activity, continuously exploring how to push and customize news based on user behavior preferences to achieve personalized and characteristic news services. In content operation, it focuses on news information services, news social interaction, and smart life services, integrating three major functions—user life, standardized citizen management, and core value dissemination—covering central and local news services, people's livelihood and government services, life intelligent services, and public smart services. In channel convergence, it aggregates news link entrances including *Xinhua Daily* and various local newspapers to achieve multi-terminal content integration and unification.

2.2.3 Art Exhibition and Management Against the backdrop of industrial convergence, Xinhua Newspaper Group has identified its market positioning, seized market opportunities, and leveraged its comparative advantages in media marketing and promotion to collaborate with artists in building the Xinhua All-Media Art Museum and All-Media Gallery. In January 2015, the group held the "6th Xinhua Newspaper Group Art Exhibition and Fine Calligraphy and Painting Exhibition Commemorating the 77th Anniversary of *Xinhua Daily*." In addition to traditional exhibition hall displays of original works, the group utilized multi-level online news reporting, multi-terminal information services, and touch-screen digital interactive devices to enable real-time video dissemination of exhibited works and mobile browsing of art historical materials, achieving all-media communication and comprehensive interpretation of art exhibitions. Meanwhile, using *Xinhua Daily* Art Forum as the platform and the Xinhua All-Media Art Museum and All-Media Gallery as the foundation, the group created the "Jiangsu Xinhua Art" WeChat public account, providing academic information, art exhibition consultation, art appreciation and collection exchange, and

auction services for famous artists' works. Furthermore, the public account is linked to the "Xinyi Cultural Creation" Taobao shop, selling reproductions of famous masterpieces and authentic works by local masters.

2.2.4 E-commerce Shopping Operation Services Leveraging the content and user data accumulated through its news communication business and based on market demand in the Yangtze River Delta region, Xinhua Newspaper Group has gradually explored e-commerce shopping operation models. For example, the media shopping platform "Yangtze Yi Shopping" under *Yangtze Evening Post* is positioned as a B2C comprehensive department store online shopping mall, radiating to consumer groups in Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Shanghai, and surrounding areas. *Yangtze Evening Post* also holds shares in the third-party decoration service platform "Yangjia Network," providing professional one-stop home decoration convenience services including decoration bidding, price review and approval, fund custody, full-process supervision, building material selection, and media complaints. Currently, Jiangsu Xinhua Media Investment Industry Co., Ltd. is building the overseas shopping platform "Xinhua GO," *Jiangsu Economic Daily* has opened the WeChat public account "Xinhua Newspaper Group E-commerce Service Center," and Jiangsu Xinhua Smart Travel Cultural Media Co., Ltd. has created the "Jiangsu Courtesy" public account.

3. Existing Problems in Jiangsu Xinhua Newspaper Media Group's Platform Convergence

While Xinhua Newspaper Group has adopted a two-pronged approach in media platform convergence, laying out an all-media platform integration network and media industry ecosystem, its strategic planning, though timely, remains incomplete due to constraints of time and resources. Some projects are still at the conceptual stage and have not formed a systematic media ecosystem. Meanwhile, coordination and communication issues inherited from old systems and mechanisms affect the long-term path of deep platform convergence development. Currently, Xinhua Newspaper Group faces three major problems: inefficient internal management mechanisms, insufficient leverage in industrial convergence, and a lack of composite cultural management talent.

3.1 Inefficient Internal Management Mechanisms

During the transformation of management mechanisms, Xinhua Newspaper Group still retains traces of old systems and institutions. For example, due to the absence of systems governing content cooperation and performance evaluation between *Xinhua Daily* and China Jiangsu Net, the deep development of the "Insect Chronicles" column in the "Jiaohui" APP has been delayed. Such institutional barriers dampen the enthusiasm of those devoted to new media platforms and reduce work efficiency. Additionally, the problem of group media units operating independently despite nominal integration, caused by departmental system solidification and territorial management, has not been elimi-

nated, thereby affecting the coordination of project team cooperation. Long-standing inter-organizational barriers and informal employee relationships cannot be quickly improved under the banner of system reform. Therefore, ensuring smooth internal management mechanisms requires attention to both formal organizational management and informal organizational management, further improving the group's organizational management mechanisms, flattening the management structure, innovating distribution and incentive systems, combining personnel utilization with cultivation, and stimulating employees' market competition awareness and cooperative innovation capabilities.

3.2 Insufficient Leverage in Industrial Convergence

Although Xinhua Newspaper Group has made beneficial explorations and achieved some success in expanding traditional media businesses, its current industrial convergence still shows insufficient leverage, with some projects progressing slowly or producing poor results. For example, the overseas shopping e-commerce platform "Xinhua GO" remains in the website construction stage, with almost zero consumer awareness. The "Yangtze Yi Shopping" platform has limited market coverage, and combined with strong regional competitors like Suning.com and its offline experience stores, its shopping platform has relatively low fan aggregation and transaction volume. The "Jiaohui" news APP has a singular profit model relying primarily on advertising, and compared with local news sections on "Toutiao," its product competitiveness and user activity are both very low. Evidently, Xinhua Newspaper Group's operations still rely on its advantages in the news media industry, with shallow integration with other industries, an incomplete industrial system, and various industry types unable to achieve complementary synergy. This ultimately results in weak self-sustaining capabilities for each platform, which is not conducive to the virtuous cycle of the media industry ecosystem. Therefore, Xinhua Newspaper Group should give full play to its comparative advantages, seize strategic opportunities in "culture +" and "internet +," adopt an open and inclusive attitude toward social capital, technology, and talent resources, and achieve industrial expansion and integration through leveraging, utilizing, and exerting force.

3.3 Lack of Composite Cultural Management Talent

Regarding composite cultural management talent, Xinhua Newspaper Media Group's current talent reserve is insufficient, lacking a long-term mechanism for cultivating and incentivizing talent. At present, the group's internal employees are mostly traditional media unit writers, with few composite industrial talents who understand both technology and culture and are also skilled in management. Meanwhile, new media talent cultivation relies heavily on internal transfers. Although this maximizes talent development, it not only causes a lack of fresh blood within the group but also tends to make internal relationships more complicated, which is instead not conducive to internal organizational man-

agement reform. Therefore, how to form a talent utilization mechanism that can “attract, use well, retain, and help talent shine” through internal personnel “selection, training, utilization, and management” combined with external recruitment and selection, and recruiting excellent global cultural management talent to join Xinhua Newspaper Group, is an urgent problem to be solved in the group’s development process.

4. Characteristics of Jiangsu Xinhua Newspaper Media Group’s Platform Convergence

Xinhua Newspaper Group’s platform convergence model primarily takes content production as its foundation, platform convergence as its driving force, and business expansion as its main strength. These three elements interact and complement each other, ultimately creating an all-media platform integration network and media industry ecosystem. The specific characteristics of its convergence model are manifested in the following aspects.

4.1 Mutual Reinforcement of Content Sharing and Technological Breakthrough

Xinhua Newspaper Group’s platform convergence practice insists on the mutual reinforcement of content sharing and technological breakthrough. On the one hand, it establishes a news resource sharing platform to achieve all-media dissemination of content. On the other hand, it upgrades collection, editing, and reporting technologies, utilizing technologies such as drone aerial photography and H5+VR scene reporting to broaden the depth and breadth of content dissemination. For example, Visual Jiangsu Net has opened an aerial photography channel that integrates content collection, release, and sharing, while also providing technical consultation, image licensing, and aerial photography business training services. Additionally, by upgrading collection and reporting technologies, the group has successfully achieved innovative reporting for multiple major events, such as the “National Memorial·Nanjing 1213” all-media campaign during the 2014 National Memorial Day, which mobilized social donations through a virtual memorial wall, and the 2015 special report on the 70th anniversary of the Chinese People’s War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War, which released seven sets of mobile scenario (H5) files across the six communication platforms.

4.2 Complementary Internal Integration and External Alliance

Xinhua Newspaper Group’s platform convergence achieves complementary internal integration and external alliances. Internal integration breaks through traditional organizational barriers by encouraging employee entrepreneurship and part-time work for new media operations. External alliances leverage national and international media forces to jointly complete major event reporting while also attempting cross-border integration to accelerate external cooperation

in response to social demands and enhance the group's overall competitiveness.

4.2.1 Internal Integration In terms of internal integration, the group has not only achieved all-media platform convergence for successful reporting of major news such as the National Two Sessions but also realized internal personnel management integration by subcontracting columns to encourage employee entrepreneurship and part-time work, motivating traditional media department employees to shift to new media departments. Xinhua Newspaper Group has issued the “Group Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support Measures” and the “Client Subcontracting Column Support Measures” related to the “Jiaohui” news APP, encouraging employees to participate in the content production and commercial operation of “Jiaohui” and adopting an employee stock ownership model to deeply incubate the “Money Eye” WeChat public account. Taking the column “Insect Chronicles” as an example, the main operation team remains internal journalists from Xinhua Newspaper Group, but team formation is based on personal interests and abilities. Through voluntary registration and autonomous positioning for operations, the column achieves internal freedom and has ultimately become a self-media platform focusing on opera culture and disseminating traditional classics. Meanwhile, the group's series of assessment systems stimulate the column team's awareness of strengthening itself, and through continuous exploration, it has been built into a self-media platform gathering numerous cultural and drama activities from Jiangsu and even nationwide.

4.2.2 External Alliance In terms of external alliances, the group has not only formed media alliances—for example, during the 2014 Nanjing Youth Olympic Games, Xinhua Newspaper Group aggregated seven major media alliances and 217 media outlets both domestic and international to share news information resources and jointly report the Youth Olympic 盛会—but has also attempted cross-border integration of culture and media by cooperating with universities, self-media, and enterprises to connect with social talent and capital. For instance, it cooperates with Nanjing University of Finance and Economics in an industry-university-research model to build the Jiangsu Media Industry Research Institute, gathering high-level talent to explore media convergence models. It collaborates with self-media teams to explore the integration of UGC models with traditional mainstream media and partners with Prosperous Group to produce the documentary *Seasons* related to the world's intangible cultural heritage of the 24 solar terms, with plans to carry out subsequent dissemination and education activities about intangible cultural heritage. The second-phase project of the “Jiaohui” news APP also adopts public bidding.

4.3 Parallel Development of Demonstration Leading and Mentoring

In the process of platform convergence, Xinhua Newspaper Group has achieved parallel development of demonstration leading and mentoring, with leading platforms demonstrating and driving the gradual convergence of other platforms.

This is mainly manifested in two aspects: the mainstream media transformation of the official newspaper *Xinhua Daily* and the new media integration of the metropolitan newspaper *Yangtze Evening Post*. *Xinhua Daily*, while adhering to the responsibilities of mainstream media and disseminating core values, has added new media platforms, opened an official Weibo account, and achieved deep integration with China Jiangsu Net. Simultaneously, it uses performance assessment methods to stimulate employees' awareness of new media integration, implements a Weibo duty system, sets mandatory indicators and assessment standards for contributing to new media platforms, and also uses additional remuneration to incentivize employees to actively contribute. Additionally, in the integration of *Yangtze Evening Post* with new media platforms, it plays a demonstrative role in news services and business expansion, forming its own brand effect, while its pending transformation publications *Premium Reading* and *Premium Health* have also been incorporated into the *Yangtze Evening Post* media platform system for renewed operation.

5. Implications of Xinhua Newspaper Group's Platform Convergence

Xinhua Newspaper Group's integration of old and new media platforms has achieved certain accomplishments, and its strategic layout and experience model offer some implications for other Chinese newspaper groups in terms of content production and dissemination, platform resource integration, media system transformation, and cross-border integration of the media industry.

5.1 Deepening System and Mechanism Reform

Most newspaper groups in China are primarily old enterprises transformed from public institutions, facing problems such as aging personnel and weak management. This requires newspaper groups to actively implement and respond to the central government's "Deepening Cultural System Reform Implementation Plan" and carry out media system transformation and innovation. On the one hand, they should promote the transformation of media units into enterprises, emphasizing social benefits while operating according to market mechanisms to truly serve society and the people. They should also actively promote enterprise listing in accordance with modern corporate systems to enhance market competitiveness. On the other hand, they should gradually shift to a system with public ownership as the main body and mixed ownership operations, attempting to encourage and attract composite media management and operation talent through employee stock ownership while moderately absorbing private social capital. Through "grasping talent, promoting innovation, and strengthening mechanisms," they should create a virtuous development ecosystem where "the most suitable people do what they are best at under the most suitable mechanisms." In terms of organizational management, they should break the original administrative management-caused separation of media units in various regions and establish a unified yet flexible organizational structure system.

In personnel management, they should adopt a matrix-like personnel organizational structure, using departments as the main line and project work as the mobilization direction, establishing project teams according to project content and employee capability characteristics to achieve a situation where various units remain separate but not dispersed, information exchange is smooth, and responsibilities are clearly divided. In distribution and incentive systems, they should adopt a combination of fixed wages and additional remuneration, attempting a stock incentive model. In assessment systems, they should combine media self-evaluation with user evaluation, using user evaluation as the main assessment criterion.

5.2 Emphasizing Content is King

The core of news communication lies in content. Therefore, this requires emphasizing content as king in content production and dissemination models, adhering to the idea that content is the source water, technology is the booster, and users are the assessors. On the one hand, on the basis of perfecting and optimizing content, they should 立足 new media communication characteristics, create their own brand with down-to-earth communication styles, all-media integrated communication methods, and user-first service consciousness. On the other hand, they should emphasize personalized and diversified content presentation methods, focus on cultivating user groups, improve user participation and interaction rates, encourage user-generated news content, and usher in a new era of news socialization.

5.3 Focusing on Internal and External Resource Integration and Optimization

In terms of internal resource integration, they should reorganize scattered and homogeneous media platform resources, use leading platforms as demonstrations, aggregate the group's core media resources, and emphasize that other branch platforms should focus on segmented markets to achieve a situation where large, comprehensive integrated media platforms and small, refined local media platforms integrate and complement each other. In terms of external resource optimization, they should strengthen external cooperation, cultivate talent, and broaden business formats. On the one hand, they should cooperate with universities, research institutes, and others to establish industry-university-research cooperation models, providing think tank guarantees for media platform convergence, supporting the shortage of new media talent, and mapping out blueprints and strategies for integrating the media industry with other industries. On the other hand, they should cooperate with private social enterprises through strategic cooperation and other forms to deeply develop project content, upgrade and rebuild platforms.

5.4 Actively Promoting Cross-Border Integration of Culture and Media

While building benchmarks for media platform convergence and shaping group brands, modern media groups should also focus on cross-border integration of the media industry. On the one hand, they should establish cultural market awareness, uphold an open and inclusive posture, utilize their own content data and platform channel advantages, establish a content big data platform, deeply develop content, and build a diversified media ecological service circle centered on news services and integrating media + culture + tourism + life + finance, broadening profit models and improving platforms' self-sustaining capabilities. On the other hand, while achieving content cross-border integration, they should also achieve regional cross-border integration, adopting a market strategy of rooting locally, laying out nationally, and going international to form the group's overall brand competitiveness and enhance the group's international visibility and reputation.

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