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## Media Convergence Development in Frontier Prefecture-Level Cities (Postprint)

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### Abstract

Media development has undergone a tortuous journey; today, convergence has become the general trend. On the path of media convergence, central and provincial-level media started early and acted swiftly, establishing powerful scale effects and demonstration effects while fully leveraging the prominent advantages of integrated media. As a frontier ethnic minority region, Tibet lags behind in economic and social development, with media convergence starting late and progressing slowly. In particular, the question of how prefecture- and city-level media should navigate the path of convergence development has become an urgent issue requiring resolution. This study examines the media convergence development of Shannan Daily, Shannan Website, Weibo, and WeChat official accounts as case studies, conducts an in-depth analysis of the problems and their root causes that emerged during the convergence process, and proposes viewpoints and suggestions grounded in practical realities.

### Full Text

#### Preamble

Media development has experienced numerous twists and turns, and today, convergence has become an irreversible trend. On the path of media convergence, central and provincial-level media started early and moved swiftly, already forming powerful scale and demonstration effects that fully leverage the outstanding advantages of integrated media. As a borderland ethnic region with relatively lagging economic and social development, Tibet began media convergence late and has progressed slowly. Particularly pressing is the question of how prefecture-level media should navigate convergence development. This paper examines the media convergence of Shannan Daily, Shannan Website, and associated Weibo and WeChat official accounts, deeply analyzing the problems and root causes that have emerged during the integration process, and proposes viewpoints and recommendations grounded in practical realities.

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Traditional media struggles for survival while new media advances triumphantly, radiating infinite promise. This stark contrast, coupled with emerging challenges in propaganda work, compels traditional media to reflect: how can they leverage their own strengths and harness new media to escape their predicament and achieve rebirth? The principle that “the wise adapt to changing times, and the knowledgeable adjust to circumstances” reveals that integration with emerging media offers traditional media a ray of hope and points the way forward. Consequently, media organizations are racing to embrace convergence.

Due to Tibet’s unique circumstances, media convergence started late and has progressed slowly. Nevertheless, there is clear recognition that convergence represents the general trend and industry direction. As the mainstream media organization in Shannan City, Tibet Autonomous Region, Shannan Daily and Shannan Website registered WeChat official accounts “Weishannan” and “Shannan Release” in 2016, while Shannan Website also launched Weibo accounts, mobile websites, and digital newspapers. A prefecture-level media propaganda matrix has begun to take shape. Yet beneath this seemingly complete array of propaganda tools that should demonstrate convergence advantages, various factors—including unclear thinking, insufficient understanding, staff shortages, and ineffective measures—have led to “deviations” that also characterize the current state of many prefecture-level media convergence efforts.

## **Problematic Phenomena in Media Convergence**

### **Phenomenon 1: Putting the Cart Before the Horse**

Media convergence is not simply about appropriating new tools; rather, it should establish a core, highlight a main body, and build a new-type communication system around this center to extend communication chains, broaden pathways, intensify efforts, enhance credibility, and firmly grasp the initiative in public opinion. Specifically, print media should take the newspaper as their core, with propaganda reporting as the main body and content production as the priority, while other tools and means revolve around this center. Reality, however, tells a different story. Some print media, on one hand, devote substantial human and material resources to operating new media platforms like Weibo and WeChat while neglecting their primary business—news content production—resulting in frequent errors in their newspapers. On the other hand, they simplistically equate possessing new media tools with achieving media convergence, no longer prioritizing innovation in newspaper content, leading to questionable quality. Over time, newspaper readership naturally declines, making obsolescence inevitable. When the foundation crumbles, how can anything attached to it survive? Can Weibo, WeChat, and other new media tools develop well without core support? I believe they cannot.

### **Phenomenon 2: Serious Homogenization**

Convergence remains superficial: though many media tools are at hand, the content is uniform. While insufficient personnel, funding shortages, and technological limitations contribute to this reality, the primary causes are unclear thinking and uncertain direction regarding media convergence. Simply copying and pasting newspaper content onto new media platforms like WeChat and Weibo results in identical faces across all propaganda tools. This problem plagues Shannan Daily, Shannan Website, and Weishannan. Reviewing all posts from the Weishannan official account since its launch reveals serious homogenization with Shannan Daily and Shannan Website news, lacking both formal innovation and the timeliness that new media should emphasize. Whether opening a newspaper, launching an app, visiting a website, or accessing Weibo and WeChat, the same news reports bombard audiences. At this point, aside from their different “origins,” traditional and new media look strikingly similar, completely losing their distinctive characteristics. Such severe homogenization of news products not only wastes resources and increases costs but also causes readers to lose interest and media to lose its appeal.

### **Phenomenon 3: Self-Righteousness**

Published content undergoes no market research, particularly in the new media sphere. Decisions rely solely on traditional media experience, personal interests, or assumptions about audience interests, resulting in dismal click-through rates and attention levels—essentially self-amusement. Some print media attempt crossovers, producing skits and livestreams, promoting video as mainstream content on new media platforms, believing that occupying video territory means capturing new media’s core and attracting massive followings. What is the reality? Not only do follower numbers fail to increase, but staff also become exhausted and unable to attend to their primary business. Abandoning one’s strengths to compete with others in their markets undoubtedly brings more losses than gains.

The ancient wisdom of Xunzi states: “When one observes things with doubt and an unsettled mind, external objects appear unclear; when one’s thoughts are unclear, one cannot determine what is right or wrong.” We should calm down, make unified long-term plans based on each media tool’s characteristics and actual conditions, solve the problem of piecemeal approaches, and fully enjoy the benefits of convergence.

## **Strategies for Effective Media Convergence**

### **1. Building Distinctive Internal Converged Media Platforms**

Convergence represents a transformation from “you are you, I am me” to “you have me, I have you.” It is a process of fully leveraging the characteristics and advantages of various converged media platforms to form synergy. While conducting comprehensive propaganda, this process should also play absorptive and radiating roles to enhance media attractiveness and cohesion, achieving maximum propaganda effect. In this process, each platform both integrates

with and exists independently from others, sharing a core while maintaining distinctive features. Specifically, traditional newspapers should hold high the banner, fully playing their role as the main propaganda front by focusing on major policies, reporting well on the Party committee and government's central work, and serving as the mouthpiece. As a palm-sized communication tool, WeChat should capitalize on its news timeliness advantages, using fast, convenient, and fragmented forms to promptly and accurately report on livelihood issues, attracting public attention. Weibo should utilize its advantages of rapid information release, wide dissemination range, timely fan interaction, and easy topic formation to shape official authority. Websites should focus on in-depth investigative reporting and thematic coverage, highlighting their comprehensive nature unrestricted by space, time, or word count to create a news propaganda complex.

## **2. Addressing Weaknesses Based on Reality**

Tibet, located on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau with vast territory and sparse population, is a borderland ethnic region with relatively lagging economic and social development. Particularly, prefecture-level traditional media started late and remain small in scale, still far behind inland regions even with small rapid steps. Given disadvantages such as small local populations, limited markets, and professional technical levels of practitioners requiring improvement, immediately developing new media platforms would inevitably create a short-leg situation, further straining already shrinking newspaper businesses. Therefore, under current conditions, we must still base ourselves on the traditional newspaper business, utilizing text and image advantages to establish authority and credibility, allowing newspaper influence to take root among citizens again. This can both lay foundations for expanding other converged media platforms and effectively conduct staff training and talent reserves. Weibo, WeChat, and news apps serve as supplements and extensions to newspapers, using their characteristics of combining text and images, accommodating both audio-visual and interactive elements, strong marketing capabilities, and convenient, effective dissemination to compensate for newspaper limitations.

## **3. Content Production Must Be Down-to-Earth**

Media convergence is absolutely not a simple matter of one plus one equaling two. Building Weibo, WeChat, and app platforms does not automatically create synergy or ensure invincibility. Integrating various media tools merely provides platforms; content remains what truly matters. Through the development process from traditional media to new media to converged media, our propaganda has traced a parabola from content-is-king to channel-is-king and back to content-is-king. Content has always been the foundation of media survival and the key to victory. Channels and marketing merely increase audiences; content plays the decisive role. Media without content is like a spring without water or a tree without roots—fundamentally unsustainable. Content quality relates directly to audience attention and loyalty, to media's communication power and image shaping.

Regrettably, many prefecture-level print media still fail to sufficiently prioritize content production. Every newspaper page overflows with conference news, while WeChat, Weibo, and websites are similarly occupied by various meetings, leadership speeches, receptions, and research activities, leaving hot issues that concern the people nowhere to be found. President Xi Jinping says we must enhance news and public opinion’s communication power, guidance power, influence, and credibility. How? I believe it requires being down-to-earth. Our content should not put on airs; our journalists should not skim the surface but go deep to the grassroots, writing about ordinary people’s matters, speaking their language, answering their questions, and resolving their doubts.

When media integrates with the masses, it thrives like fish in water; when estranged from the masses, it withers like a tree without roots. A media organization distant from the people will not attract attention. Media convergence that simply pieces together various tools has no future.

### Conclusion

“A great building is not made of a single timber; a vast ocean is not formed from one stream.” Media convergence is a long-term, systematic process requiring institutional mechanisms, reporting models, content expression, and technical means—none can be omitted. From the current actual situation, local media convergence still has a long way to go.

One should take a long view of the world. Media convergence is a lengthy process that cannot be accomplished overnight, requiring adjustments according to time and circumstances. In this process, we must neither belittle ourselves nor blindly copy others. Instead, we should base ourselves on local and organizational realities, identify goals, address weaknesses, and walk firmly forward step by step.

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

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