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Party-led Data Governance and Platformization of Media Convergence: Post-print

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Abstract

ChinaXiv Collaborative Journal: Ye Zhenzhen on Party Management of Data and Media Convergence Platformization

Full Text

Preamble

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Editor's Note: In recent years, as information technologies such as big data and cloud computing have deeply integrated with the media industry, they have accelerated media convergence and development. Simultaneously, critical questions have emerged regarding how big data technology can unleash data value in media convergence, how to establish norms for data application, and how to strengthen data security.

Ye Zhenzhen, Secretary of the Party Branch and General Manager of People's Daily Media Technology Co., Ltd., stated in "Party Management of Data and Media Convergence Platformization" that media convergence represents a Chinese solution. The transition from Party management of media to Party management of data involves overseeing development, rules, and security.

Four Dimensions of Media Value Convergence

When considering the future direction of media convergence at the top-level design stage, we cannot simply transplant Western media concepts, such as those of business models and profit models. While these concepts are not inherently wrong, they do not occupy a dominant position in our genetic attributes.

The core value of media requires fundamental reconsideration: Who will pay for our distinct values, and how should they be delivered? Media value convergence encompasses at least four dimensions. First, **political value**, serving as a communication bridge between the ruling party and the populace, industries, and various sectors. Second, **social value**, bridging social divides and fostering societal consensus. Third, **cultural value**, preserving heritage and documenting history. Fourth, **commercial value**, connecting users and transmitting information. If we focus solely on business and profit models, we risk becoming one-sided and potentially losing sight of our most important value dimensions.

During the 19th Party Congress, the People's Daily Youth Innovation Studio launched a new media product titled *Explosive! How the Most Awesome Team in History Started Its Venture*, which analogized the Communist Party of China as the most formidable startup team in history. This product contained a key insight: the Party masters two instruments—a gun barrel and a pen barrel. The gun barrel eliminates enemies physically, while the pen barrel conquers the hearts and minds of the masses. Today, General Secretary Xi Jinping continues to attach great importance to the ideological work we undertake.

Three Stages of Media Convergence

People's Daily Media Technology Company has built technical, operational, and capital platforms for media convergence. Through research and exploration, we propose that media convergence will progress through three distinct stages.

The **first stage** involves internal convergence within media groups, achieving integration of personnel, resources, and distribution channels. The **second stage** entails comprehensive convergence across the entire media industry. The fundamental precondition enabling this industry-wide convergence in China is that all media are Party media and essentially state-owned enterprises. This shared identity—"all Party media are one family"—provides the foundation for comprehensive industry integration. The **third stage** represents cross-industry convergence. On August 19, 2017, People's Daily officially launched the National Party Media Public Platform as a major vehicle for this industry convergence.

The platform operates on two primary models. First, "**Party Media +**" connects newspapers, broadcasters, and various Party media outlets, including new media, onto a single platform. This also encompasses content production and distribution channels, capabilities, and teams owned by Party and government organs, as well as the content production and dissemination capacities of large enterprises and institutions. Second, "**Content +**" aggregates various forms of content and connects them with all industry portals, service interfaces, and media outlets. In our conceptual framework, any platform capable of disseminating information qualifies as media. For instance, our controlling investment fund recently invested in the bike-sharing company Mobike, which I view as a traffic entry point with the potential to become an excellent media platform, generating vast amounts of data for user analysis and deeper user profiling.

Thus, Mobike is also media in this sense.

To date, over 90 media organizations nationwide have joined the Party Media Platform, with more than 200 client applications gradually connecting to the backend. The platform operates exclusively as a backend service, providing media with a continuous stream of content while helping them push their content to more websites and portals. It offers intelligent, personalized recommendation capabilities to each client, enabling every client to become a local “mini-Toutiao” in its respective industry and region. By focusing solely on backend operations rather than front-end interfaces, the platform assists each Party media outlet in capturing its market.

Three Genetic Attributes of Chinese Media

Chinese media differ fundamentally from their Western counterparts in their genetic attributes. Chinese media possess three key characteristics. The **first is political attribute**: every Chinese media organization is a natural extension of Party and government organs, forming an organic component of the ruling party apparatus. The **second is public attribute**: we are public institutions, non-profit entities providing quasi-public goods. The **third is market attribute**: we incorporate elements of enterprise-style operation and management.

Given these attributes, we differ enormously from Western media dominated by family-owned enterprises. We are not merely different species but vastly distinct species. Consequently, the media convergence solution is destined to be a Chinese solution.

From Party Management of Media to Party Management of Data

Data has become a fundamental factor of production, alongside labor and capital. Like oil and electricity, data now serves as an energy source driving societal operation. It has even become a basic structural component of our world, akin to matter and energy. Moreover, like the gun barrel and pen barrel, data constitutes a crucial pillar of political power. Given its paramount importance, data will inevitably be brought under the scope of Party management.

In the future, data can be leveraged to enhance public services, improve national governance capabilities, optimize economic structures, and build the digital economy, among other applications.

Three Aspects of Party Management of Data

The **first aspect** of Party management of data is managing development. This begins with encouraging the innovative development of the data industry and data technology as emerging phenomena. Consider this analogy: if you have an apple and I have an apple, giving yours to me means you no longer have it.

If you have a piece of knowledge and I have a piece of knowledge, exchanging them leaves us each with two pieces of knowledge. Data exhibits an even more remarkable characteristic: when you have one dataset and I have another, their combination does not yield a simple additive effect of $1+1=2$, but rather a quadratic effect, creating value equivalent to $1+1=4$. One can imagine that only when a hundred such units are combined does data's true value emerge. Therefore, while organizations may highly value their data, isolated datasets hold limited worth. Only when data achieves sharing, connectivity, and cross-referencing, thereby enriching its dimensions, can its value be fully realized. Consequently, Party management of data does not aim to strangle the industry through rigid control. On the contrary, it seeks to break down data barriers and information silos through encouragement and other means, fostering large-scale connectivity, openness, and sharing, enabling all parties to extract data value on this grand platform.

The **second aspect** is managing rules. This involves delineating which data is private and which is public. When each individual authorizes an APP to use their personal data, the platform appears to obtain individual consent and thus the right to use that data—ostensibly to provide services. However, when data from numerous individuals aggregates, a new form of public data emerges. The question of who owns this public data, and which rights and interests in data belong to the platform despite data being generated on it, must be clearly defined through legislation and regulatory frameworks.

The **third aspect** is managing security. Future data management will necessarily involve classification and categorization—identifying which data concerns state political security, which involves privacy, and which pertains to public safety. However, current gaps in laws and regulations have created difficulties for industry development and obstacles to data cooperation among organizations.

Therefore, Party management of data represents a fundamental principle for promoting large-scale industry development. This is particularly relevant for industry media, which, during their transformation, can leverage deep data mining, collection, accumulation, and application within vertical sectors—offering exceptionally promising prospects. We hope that more industry media will join in the future to open, share, and utilize data, creating greater comprehensive data value for all.

(The above content was compiled and edited from the keynote speech delivered at the Second China Industry-Economic Media Convergence Development Summit Forum.)

Feature: Media Convergence Watchtower

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

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