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Development Drivers and Communication Strategies for Cross-Screen Dissemination of Television Dramas: Postprint

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Abstract

The development of communication technology has accelerated the dissolution of media boundaries, driving the ecological reconstruction of the media industry. As a crucial content product of television media, TV dramas have emerged with a new production and broadcasting paradigm featuring cross-screen dissemination, cross-media marketing, and convergent development, which represents both the overarching trend of media industry evolution and the intrinsic impetus of media technology. This article analyzes the intrinsic driving forces behind the cross-media circulation and marketing of TV dramas within the contemporary media convergence landscape, and synthesizes strategies for the cross-media marketing communication of TV dramas.

Full Text

Abstract

The development of communication technologies has accelerated the dissolution of media boundaries and driven the ecological reconstruction of the media industry. As a crucial content product of television media, TV dramas have exhibited new production and broadcasting patterns characterized by cross-screen transmission, cross-media marketing, and integrated development. This trend represents both the general direction of media industry evolution and the intrinsic drive of media technology. This paper analyzes the intrinsic drivers behind the cross-media flow and marketing of TV dramas in the current media convergence environment, and summarizes strategies for cross-media marketing communication of TV dramas.

Introduction

As a major producer of TV dramas, China has consistently ranked first in the world in drama production volume in recent years. Since the concept of media convergence was first proposed in the United States in the 1980s, the media landscape has undergone dramatic transformation, and the blurring of boundaries between traditional and online media is no longer a novelty. From the operation of self-produced web dramas by American online video provider Netflix to the current boom in domestic self-produced dramas, TV dramas—as pillar products of video culture consumption—have entered an era of cross-media creation and transmission against the backdrop of media convergence. Under new communication patterns, TV dramas currently exhibit novel production and broadcasting forms. On one hand, the enormous domestic consumption potential for drama products drives market-oriented production; on the other hand, relevant authorities provide positive guidance for drama production and broadcasting units, creating a favorable development environment for the integrated development and all-media marketing of TV dramas.

1. The “De-televisionization” of TV Dramas

The cross-media flow of TV dramas and the rise of self-produced dramas have increasingly diminished the “television” characteristics of TV dramas, presenting a trend of “de-televisionization.” As an imported concept, “TV drama” originally referred to Drama or play that could be watched remotely, and television was the only medium capable of remote video playback at that time, dominating the media landscape for decades. The production and broadcasting of TV dramas followed television’s broadcasting standards and audience viewing habits, endowing them with distinct “television” features that differentiated them from films. China’s first TV drama is generally considered to be the live broadcast drama *A Bite of Vegetable Pancake* aired shortly after Beijing Television’s launch. Benefiting from a solid audience base, TV dramas gradually developed unique aesthetic styles and artistic forms distinct from theater and cinema through long-term production and broadcasting practices. As a primary form of fictional narrative, especially long-form continuous narrative, TV dramas are rooted in the rich soil of Chinese local folk popular narratives while employing modern electronic imaging technology to inherit and transcend China’s long-form continuous narrative tradition. Videos played on media carriers other than television are simply called “video content.” With the rise of video websites and the overproduction and broadcast restrictions of TV dramas, an increasing number of “quasi-TV dramas” have been released on online media, with narrative patterns, episode lengths, single-episode duration, and advertising insertion methods gradually catering to internet users. Moreover, some high-quality self-produced dramas from online media have been acquired by television media for reverse broadcasting on television platforms. The State Administration of Radio and Television has stated: “Scientific and effective management should be applied to traditional media and emerging media, online and offline, different

products, and different formats, ensuring that mass-oriented communication follows unified orientation requirements and content standards.” Under this trend, the “de-televisionization” of TV dramas has become increasingly evident, the boundary between TV dramas and web dramas gradually blurred, and the term “drama series” seems more appropriate for contemporary TV dramas.

2. Intrinsic Drivers of Cross-Screen Transmission of TV Dramas

The flood-like impact of new media on traditional media results from media technology development reaching a certain stage, simultaneously breaking down barriers that hindered the inter-media flow of TV dramas. Dramas can now choose television screens or online distribution. However, cross-screen transmission of TV dramas is not merely shaped by the era of media convergence; on one hand, the upgrading of China’s cultural industry has opened a huge gap for the production of television cultural products, and on the other hand, policy support and guidance have provided the basis for the legal flow and sharing of video resources.

2.1 Potential Cultural Entertainment Consumption Market Stimulating Cultural Industry Development

In 2016, China’s per capita GDP exceeded US\$8,000, with first-tier cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou reaching developed-country income levels. Meanwhile, national cultural and entertainment consumption grew sharply, the Engel coefficient decreased significantly, and personal consumption structures became more rational. Correspondingly, given the current economic aggregate and per capita consumption capacity, China’s cultural consumption market exceeds 4.7 trillion yuan, yet the actual consumption scale is only about 1 trillion yuan, indicating a massive consumption gap. Against the backdrop of supply-side reform, film and television cultural enterprises have vast market space. As the national economic development model upgrades, film and television enterprises face both anxiety and aspiration for survival and development. The transformation of state-owned film and television units into enterprises and the development of large-scale private film and television enterprises have created strong productivity for film and television products. In 2016, the United States produced 8,000 drama episodes annually, while China’s output reached 15,000 episodes, far surpassing the cultural industry powerhouse of America. However, problems such as overproduction and mostly bubble dramas persist. The enormous drama output corresponds to narrow broadcasting space—domestic TV stations at all levels broadcast a total of 6,000-8,000 drama episodes, with situations of multiple stations broadcasting the same drama or one drama broadcast multiple times, creating a huge disparity with production volume. Numerous dramas have no broadcast opportunities and suffer total losses. Consequently, online platforms have become broadcast platforms and revenue channels for massive numbers of TV dramas, complementing television platforms and achieving

resource sharing.

2.2 Technical Support for Cross-Media Flow of Drama Series

The meaning of media convergence extends far beyond simply grouping various technologies or product content together. When conducting cross-media marketing, products employ various methods and means to maximize consumer satisfaction, which should be the focus of any enterprise's product marketing strategy. Instead, cross-media platform content fusion, as well as the aggregation of media producers and consumers in content production and circulation—achieved through user-generated content, powerful consumer feedback mechanisms, fan-driven forces, or media campaign activities—characterize contemporary media convergence. Thus, current media convergence represents a transitional stage where text, sound, and images shift from independent transmission to re-aggregation. The integration of old and new media is not about replacement but about achieving optimal communication effects through current transmission technologies. Mobile internet technology is the key technology breaking down barriers between media. Video websites have evolved from a subordinate stage of promoting TV dramas, to a cloning stage of purchasing online broadcast copyrights, and finally to an integrated production-broadcast stage of self-producing exclusive dramas—leveraging the diversification and profit-maximization advantages of the internet. By analyzing user viewing preferences and satisfying personalized needs, they have gained loyal users. This internet product thinking is particularly applicable to the early marketing promotion stage of TV dramas, as drama viewership shares benefit greatly from internet precision marketing technology.

3. Cross-Media Marketing Communication Strategies for TV Dramas

Internet media has evidently transformed from an important marketing channel for TV dramas into a crucial marketing and broadcasting platform. Cross-media promotion and multi-platform distribution have become normal practices in current TV drama production and sales.

In terms of TV drama investment and sales, the model is no longer limited to television stations simply purchasing dramas to obtain advertising and copyright revenue. Instead, production companies bear production cost risks and participate in post-broadcast profit-sharing with broadcasters through various revenue-sharing models. Regarding copyright purchasing, after the “One Drama, Two Stars” policy was implemented, the previous model of multiple TV stations jointly purchasing one drama was blocked, causing the cost of exclusive or first-run broadcasts on satellite channels to soar. For ground channels not subject to the “One Drama, Two Stars” policy, limitations in their capabilities have led them to form ground channel drama purchase alliances, jointly buying dramas and offering segmented services such as trial broadcasting periods and view-

ership analysis. In cross-screen purchasing, the earlier practice of video websites purchasing online broadcast copyrights from TV stations at low prices has shifted to video websites purchasing “online exclusive rights” or “online first-run rights” at high prices.

In marketing, comprehensive, multi-platform, multi-channel, and all-stage integrated network marketing has become mainstream. TV dramas begin pre-marketing even before filming starts, and “IP” marketing commences even before scripts are finalized. Through the integrated application of various media marketing channels, better promotion, dissemination, and marketing effects are achieved, maximizing benefits from multi-media integration. Several years ago, marketing costs accounted for 1%-5% of production costs, but with video websites emerging as new broadcasting platforms, marketing projects have grown substantially and costs have risen sharply. Multi-media, multi-format, and multi-industry integrated three-dimensional marketing has become mainstream, with IP marketing becoming the keyword. Taking the marketing of the TV drama *Fighter of the Destiny* as an example: *Fighter of the Destiny* is an online literary work with a broad online audience. Before filming began, the operators launched an online manga of the same name, with character designs serving as prototypes for actor casting. Tencent Video, as the exclusive online broadcaster of *Fighter of the Destiny*, opened a dedicated column half a month before the drama’s premiere, broadcasting exclusive trailers and behind-the-scenes footage, building tremendous audience anticipation.

Effective cross-media marketing strategies must fully consider audience needs and follow media development trends. Excellent drama works are favored by audiences, selected by markets, and competed for by broadcasting platforms. While media forms change transmission formats, the eternal pursuit of content by audiences remains unchanged. By satisfying different audience needs while adopting marketing methods suited to different media channels, true cross-media marketing can achieve profit maximization.

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