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Exploratory Analysis of the Production-Broadcasting Separation Reform in the Radio and Television Industry Under Media Convergence: Postprint

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Abstract

This article takes the current media ecological environment of broadcast media as its starting point, analyzes the development status of traditional broadcast media against the backdrop of the production-broadcast separation reform, and then, through a combination of theoretical and practical approaches, proposes targeted coping strategies centered on the question of “how traditional broadcast media can break through the encirclement in response to the current situation,” for reference by relevant stakeholders.

Full Text

Exploration and Analysis of Broadcast Separation Reform in the Radio and Television Industry Under Media Convergence Environment

Abstract: This article, grounded in the current media ecological environment in which radio and television media operate, analyzes the development status of traditional broadcasting media against the backdrop of broadcast separation reform. By integrating theory with practice and focusing on the central question of “how traditional broadcasting media can break through the encirclement in response to the current situation,” it proposes targeted coping strategies for relevant practitioners.

Keywords: Media convergence environment; Broadcasting industry; Broadcast separation reform; Exploration

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For the broadcasting industry, broadcast separation refers to the practice where television stations entrust external institutions with program production. This approach first emerged in the United Kingdom in the 1980s, aiming to aggregate social forces to reduce production costs while enriching program content. Since the 1990s, television stations across various regions in China have gradually experimented with the broadcast separation model. Practice has demonstrated that applying this model to program production can not only compensate for insufficient human resources but also enhance program quality.

In Shanghai, the city that first implemented and actualized the broadcast separation model nationwide, programs produced by different television stations were typically broadcast only within their respective stations before the reform. After the reform, television programs entered the market as commodities. Analysis of several noteworthy programs such as *Dancing with the Stars* and *China's Got Talent* reveals the necessity of introducing competition mechanisms into the broadcasting market.

In 2006, Hunan Satellite TV put forward a targeted reform plan known as “two departures and one establishment,” with broadcast separation as its core content—namely, making program production institutions independent from the public service system. Programs produced by its team, such as *I Am a Singer* and *Where Are We Going, Dad?*, have all achieved remarkable ratings.

A representative program of Zhejiang Satellite TV is *The Voice of China*, which took the domestic market by storm in 2012. Produced by Shanghai Canxing Production and broadcast by Zhejiang Satellite TV, this program—unlike the common “self-production and self-broadcast” model in the broadcasting industry—is considered by the industry as the first truly meaningful case of broadcast separation and is regarded as a model for the practice.

1.1 Opportunities and Challenges Brought by Triple Network Convergence and Triple Screen Integration

Triple network convergence refers to the collaborative integration of the Internet, broadcasting network, and telecommunications network to form a new comprehensive network, enabling efficient sharing and integration of network resources. Triple screen integration refers to the convergence of computer screens, television screens, and mobile phone screens. The diversification of viewing terminals not only breaks through and transforms the traditional one-way broadcasting model but also demonstrates the inevitability of mutual penetration and integration among different media [1].

1.2 The Rapid Rise of New Media

New media refers to emerging media forms born from technological development, with mobile media and Internet media that people use with extremely high frequency in daily life being typical examples. Compared with traditional media, new media's advantages are primarily manifested in interactive communication,

instant sharing, and flexibility. Upon emergence, it rapidly captured audiences and market share from traditional media, attracting increasing numbers of users and substantial investment, generating enormous profits, profoundly influencing traditional media, altering the media order, and even changing human lifestyles and modes of thinking. According to data released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), as of December 2016, China's Internet user base reached 731 million, among which mobile Internet users numbered 695 million, accounting for 95.1% of the total, with the growth rate exceeding 10% for three consecutive years, indicating that mobile payment habits have been firmly established. Undoubtedly, China has entered the mobile Internet era, and new media, represented by mobile terminals, has become the most influential and promising mainstream media in the news communication field.

At present, the deepening of triple network convergence and the rapid rise of new media have brought tremendous impact to the broadcast reform of traditional media. Compared with traditional media, numerous audiences including young netizens, business professionals, and elite white-collar workers increasingly prefer to obtain information from the Internet and mobile terminals, watch their favorite programs through video websites, and engage in real-time online interaction via social platforms.

From the perspective of communication modes, a comparison between new media and traditional media reveals that traditional media's program broadcasting is significantly constrained by time and geography, whereas new media faces no such limitations—people can access desired programs anytime and anywhere through mobile phones and the Internet. Analyzing from the financing channel perspective, traditional media is subject to strict policy regulations, resulting in obvious deficiencies in financing flexibility compared to new media.

2.1 Achievements of Broadcast Reform at Shanghai, Hunan, and Zhejiang Stations

Today, new media is seizing audiences, channels, and various resources from traditional media with an unstoppable momentum, leaving traditional media facing a situation of “lost territory.” According to the *Media Blue Book: Report on the Development of China's Media Industry (2017)* published by Tsinghua University, China's media industry grew by 19.1% in 2016, with the overall market size reaching 1,607.81 billion RMB. This overall prosperity of the media industry is accompanied by major structural adjustments. Internet media, empowered by both technology and capital, has taken the leading position in the market, with its advertising revenue far exceeding that of traditional media such as television, radio, and newspapers.

2.2 Existing Problems: Widespread Lack of Innovation Capacity and Weak Competitiveness

The lack of innovation capacity is mainly manifested in two aspects: management mechanisms and program production. Regarding management mechanisms, as broadcast separation reform continues to advance, the responsibilities and tasks undertaken by broadcasting and production parties have become clearer than before. When broadcasting institutions arrange the scheduling and broadcasting methods for programs produced by production parties, they should have scientific and systematic management approaches for reference. Therefore, for satellite TV stations as broadcasting institutions, they must not only ensure correct guidance of public opinion but also possess the capacity to scientifically plan, review, and broadcast various programs. Regarding program production, for broadcasting institutions that have implemented reform, the primary problem is an excessive emphasis on building brand image while neglecting the crucial role of innovation. Programs that leave deep impressions on audiences typically possess distinctive characteristics, yet major TV stations tend to follow trends when purchasing programs, resulting in broadcast content that lacks necessary innovation [2].

3.1 Actively Introducing Private Capital and Expanding Program Marketing Channels

To date, China's broadcasting market remains immature in its reform process. Production institutions born from the broadcast separation context have yet to establish enterprise systems that align with actual conditions, and consequently, relevant personnel cannot develop strong confidence as market entities. To address this problem, the key lies in transforming mindsets, discarding traditional burdens, and expanding program marketing channels. In other words, production institutions can enhance their comprehensive strength and achieve market-oriented operations by actively introducing private social capital. Additionally, the industry can construct corresponding transaction evaluation systems and intermediary platforms to facilitate the growth of the broadcasting market. The above analysis demonstrates that in the context of broadcast reform, traditional broadcasting media must pay sufficient attention to program marketing channels and build a systematic and complete market platform for program circulation in the shortest possible time.

3.2 Strengthening Program Innovation and Breaking Production Limitations

It should be clear that the primary purpose of broadcast separation reform is to stimulate the potential of broadcasting media in program production and ensure quality improvement by combining program production with market competition. In other words, the core of the reform lies in enhancing program quality, making it essential to strengthen program innovation. Analysis of the current development of China's broadcasting industry reveals that a certain proportion

of television stations still lack sufficient awareness of the importance of innovation consciousness, instead focusing primarily on increasing audience ratings. This mindset constitutes the main reason for homogenization in broadcasting programs. To fundamentally solve this problem, the broadcasting market should be injected with new reform vitality and dynamism. Taking *A Bite of China* as an example, the program generated tremendous response upon broadcast, demonstrating that China's broadcasting market has always possessed the necessary innovative capacity, which simply requires excavation and stimulation [3]. Therefore, at the current stage, China should strengthen top-level design according to actual conditions, formulate guidance mechanisms suitable for the broadcasting market, focus on cultivating highly-skilled professional talent, guide and encourage the continuous emergence of high-quality original programs, and enhance the comprehensive competitiveness of China's broadcasting industry.

3.3 Actively Embracing New Media and Technologies to Accelerate Media Convergence Development

At the current stage, as triple network convergence trends strengthen, the deficiencies of traditional media are being exposed, the relationship between broadcasting and production parties is becoming more flexible than before, and increasingly fierce market competition is driving broadcast separation reform toward diversification.

From the audience's perspective, new media communication and interaction are characterized by equality and interactivity, with user-centricity at their core. Therefore, traditional media should also adapt to these features of new media, actively focus on user experience, and transform the traditional one-way communication and passive reception model into multi-way communication and active acquisition to meet users' diverse and personalized information needs. Moreover, with social development, people's demands for program content and quality have increased compared to before. To ensure that produced programs align with audience expectations and maintain an invincible position in fierce market competition, broadcasting media must also actively apply Internet thinking, utilize big data to analyze audience content preferences, understand their viewing habits and needs, adhere to the principle of "content is king," and craft quality programs with dedication. In any era, content remains the key to audience reputation.

In today's society of rapid Internet technology development, the boundaries between communication forms and development models of different media are becoming increasingly blurred, and the "Great Media Era" of media convergence has arrived. Broadcasting media must seize the opportunity of media convergence, accelerate the digitalization process, adopt an open mindset to quicken the pace of integration with new media, implement cross-media development strategies, construct a Great Media industry pattern, achieve leapfrog development, and avoid self-imposed isolation. Only in this way can broadcasting media break through the encirclement and reshape the media ecological environment.

4. Conclusion

In summary, it is evident that for China's broadcasting industry, the purpose of broadcast separation reform does not lie in "separation" itself, but rather in revitalizing the broadcasting industry with new vigor and vitality through the separation approach. Therefore, in the reform process, traditional broadcasting media need to expand program marketing channels, strengthen program innovation, break production limitations, and actively embrace new media and new technologies. Only in this way can the grand development of media convergence be achieved.

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