

On the Personalized Packaging of Television Channels (Postprint)

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Abstract

In recent years, the rapid emergence of new media has profoundly challenged the deeply entrenched and once-unassailable position of traditional media. At this critical juncture, comprehensive innovation in the television industry has become imperative, with personalized channel packaging serving as the decisive strategy for securing competitive advantage. Contemporary audiences have progressively elevated their aesthetic standards and quality expectations for television productions, thereby necessitating that television practitioners further refine their innovative capabilities and professional expertise while continuously enhancing production quality to satisfy public demands and meet broadcasting requirements. Consequently, for a television channel to distinguish itself and cultivate a unique identity, establishing a robust brand marketing mechanism is essential, wherein the standard and overall effectiveness of personalized channel packaging play a determinative role.

Full Text

On Personalized Packaging of Television Channels

Abstract: In recent years, the rapid rise of new media has challenged the deeply entrenched and unshakable position of traditional media, making comprehensive innovation in the television industry imperative. Personalized packaging of television channels has become the key to decisive victory. As public appreciation standards and quality demands for television works gradually increase, television professionals must further improve their innovative spirit and professional competence while continuously enhancing work quality to meet audience needs and broadcasting requirements. To make a television channel stand out and establish a unique identity, a brand marketing mechanism must be built, with the decisive factor being the quality of personalized packaging and overall [text incomplete]

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1. Development History of Chinese TV Packaging

The development of Chinese television packaging can be broadly divided into four periods.

1.1 Before the 1990s: Simple Packaging in the Program-Centric Era

During this period, television packaging was a component of post-production, primarily limited to basic packaging such as program opening and highlight reels. Techniques centered on pre-production filming with cameras, supplemented by editing-based post-production for simple external packaging to fulfill basic functions like “preview,” “guidance,” and “window.”

1.2 Late 1990s to End of 20th Century: Column Operation Period

In 1996, the production of the opening sequence for *Oriental Horizon* marked China's first attempt and innovation in television media packaging. In the same year, the launch of Hong Kong's Phoenix Television, with its comprehensive and meticulous overall packaging, greatly stimulated domestic television stations. In the late 1990s, the emergence of popular columns such as *Tell It Like It Is* and *Happy Camp* elevated the status of column packaging step by step. Packaging during this period emphasized visual impact, causing localized channel packaging to remain at a formalistic level.

1.3 Late 20th Century to Early 21st Century: Initial Formation of Overall Channel Packaging

As audience fragmentation became severe, channel brand management became the top priority in the television industry. Television stations began to invest significant human and material resources in channel packaging, establishing departments such as channel packaging departments and technical packaging departments. The average one-time investment in television packaging for provincial satellite channels reached over one million yuan. Television packaging shifted from initially emphasizing pure visual effects to focusing on functional appeals, moving toward overall channel packaging. During this period, CCTV stood out, first attempting in 1998 to introduce a complete channel identification system to audiences, initially forming a new model of overall television channel packaging.

1.4 Early 21st Century to Present: Perfection of Channel Packaging Represented by “Separation of Production and Broadcasting”

The depth and breadth of influence from outsourcing marketing packaging cases in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China have increasingly expanded, bringing new inspiration to domestic television stations. This period has seen numerous commendable cases of channel packaging, with CCTV, Dragon TV, and Hunan TV as successful representatives. In 2004, Shanghai TV's Life Channel won the “Silver Award” and “Channel Identification Grand Prize” for domestic promotional films at the 26th International Television Promotion and Marketing Federation and Television Designers Federation, becoming the first domestic media to receive this honor and marking a milestone in overall channel packaging.

2. Channel Packaging Strategies

Packaging strategy refers to the methods and approaches adopted to achieve packaging objectives. The ultimate goal of packaging is to establish brand identity and guide audience viewing habits. Channel packaging integrates with channel positioning, operational philosophy, and behavioral norms to ultimately achieve visual image packaging.

2.1 Packaging Elements

2.1.1 Positioning of Logo, Standard Fonts, Microphone Logo, and Standard Colors Internationally popular television logos fall into two categories. First, the text logo method: primarily popular in Europe and America, characterized by simplicity and ease of recognition. Examples include familiar foreign media like CNN and BBC that adopt this composition method. Second, the graphic logo method: many Chinese television stations use this approach, mainly derived from China's pictographic culture, characterized by aesthetic appeal and easy distinction. Examples include Hunan TV and Jiangsu TV.

2.1.2 Channel Image Clips Channel image clips are important means of channel packaging and the most primary identification practice for establishing and maintaining brand recognition for television channels. The visuals generally focus on interpreting the station logo, introducing a sound system composed of music and audio, sometimes accompanied by logo announcements, typically lasting 5-20 seconds.

2.1.3 Program Title Sequences When designing program title sequences, creative freedom can be exercised with elements such as backgrounds, visuals, and music, meeting standard requirements while reflecting individual characteristics.

2.1.4 Television Image Promotional Films Television image promotional films are another important means to highlight channel purpose and strengthen channel image. The duration is generally appropriate between 30 seconds and 3 minutes.

2.1.5 Program Guidance System Simple subtitle guidance is typically produced with backgrounds, subtitles, and background music. For program guidance types such as plot summaries and program content promotion, in addition to standard identification symbols, the most audience-attracting content must be selected for post-production editing. The broadcast frequency of program guidance is generally once every three to four hours at relatively fixed times.

2.2 Strategic Principles

2.2.1 Positioning Uniqueness The primary principle of television packaging is distinctive appeal based on accurate positioning. As a provincial-level station representing a municipality, Tianjin Radio and Television must highlight regional, cultural, economic, political, and culinary characteristics in its packaging. Elements such as the Haihe River, Five Great Avenues, Panshan Mountain, fortresses, shipping logistics, folk arts, and Goubuli steamed buns become preferred packaging elements for highlighting urban image.

2.2.3 Audio-Visual Aesthetics Audio-visual aesthetics must first emphasize audio-visual impact to capture audience attention immediately. Second, it requires rich visuals, careful composition, exquisite camera work, appropriate special effects, and concise editing. Third, aesthetic principles are also reflected in simple and clear imagery; multiple composite elements will inevitably create visual redundancy. In 2010, Dragon TV positioned itself with “Wind Comes from the East,” with clips featuring the song and subtitles of “Wind Comes from the East” accompanied by abstract paintings, creating a memorable impression. Although this phrase was not originally created by Dragon TV but came from the 1959 film *Wind Comes from the East* celebrating Sino-Soviet friendship, the channel’s promotional effect resonated with audiences.

2.2.4 Style Unity Unity should include the following aspects: first, unity in overall style design; second, unity in audio-visual language; third, overall unity across all channels of the station. Years ago, when CCTV’s variety channel first introduced overall packaging, the end credits after each program used unified templates, music, and colors, followed by the character “藝” (art) written in tree vines that changed colors according to seasons or time periods, making the channel’s overall style prominent and clearly unified.

3. Packaging Approaches

3.1 Humanistic Feeling Packaging

This approach highlights feelings as the main subject, emphasizing both audience feelings and host feelings. Hunan TV designs monthly themes such as “Gratitude Season” and “Growth Season” based on different program arrangement characteristics, featuring 5-second image clips starring hosts, actors, or ordinary people, highlighting humanistic feelings.

3.2 Simple Appeal Packaging

The simplicity of appeal is particularly important—appeals should be small and avoid being too broad or comprehensive. Blind ambition and overly “lofty, grand, and all-encompassing” approaches do not align with current television station promotional priorities nor reflect what the public cares about most. Starting from caring about people’s livelihoods and staying close to society and ordinary people maximizes the promotion of the station’s appeal.

3.3 Scheduling as Packaging

Gathering loose bundles, integrating scattered elements, and smoothing out obstacles makes packaging more essential in meaning.

4. Brand Marketing for Personalized TV Channel Packaging

4.1 Channel Brand Creation Stage Marketing Strategies

The purpose of television packaging is to satisfy audience viewing demands as much as possible or continuously stimulate new viewing groups.

4.1.1 Channel Positioning Strategy Mobile viewing has replaced directional viewing, with audiences spending less and less time on any single channel. Excellent packaging can quickly convey channel philosophy and viewing appeals in a short time, establish channel style, and gradually form a fixed image among audiences. Most successful television channels domestically and internationally have clear positioning, such as CNN’s global and professional news positioning, Hunan TV’s “Happy China,” Travel TV’s “Body Not Moving, Heart Already Far,” and Gansu TV’s “Wealth World.”

4.1.2 Establishing Market-Oriented Program Operation Mechanisms

Under the premise of separating production from broadcasting, program production and operations—from market research and planning to production and sales—are all regulated by market mechanisms.

4.1.3 Channel Brand Marketing Promotion To build a brand, marketing promotion is an indispensable component, with event marketing being the most common approach. Examples include the “9/11” terrorist attacks, “Touching China” figure selection, large-scale reports on the Wenchuan earthquake, and “Super Girl” singing competitions.

4.2 Channel Brand Maintenance Stage Management Strategies

4.2.1 Cultivating Brand Awareness, Loyalty, and Reputation Establishing a channel brand aims to win stronger market competitiveness and better conduct program marketing, with awareness as the foundation, reputation as the goal, and brand loyalty as the ultimate objective.

4.2.2 Building Core Competitiveness A channel’s core competitiveness lies in “the resources and capabilities formed around its main business that can win audiences, capture markets, achieve optimal economic and social benefits, and maintain competitive advantages among numerous media.”

The development of communication media drives the transformation of television channel packaging. Keeping pace with the times, technology forms the foundation of creation, innovative development systems are the source of transformation, and a stable social environment is the driving force for television industry development. Looking ahead, the integration of cultural progress and social development will continuously promote the active innovation and prosperity of China’s personalized television channel packaging industry.

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

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