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Live Streaming +: Creating New Development Scenarios for County-level Converged Media Centers (Postprint)

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Abstract

With the continuous advancement of new media and information technologies, the development of county-level media convergence centers is confronted with greater challenges and opportunities. [Objective] By harnessing the benefits of various advanced technologies to continuously upgrade the communication channels of county-level media convergence centers, thereby enhancing their dissemination capacity and influence. [Method] Systematically expound on the development opportunities that “Live Streaming +” presents for county-level media convergence centers, and analyze the existing deficiencies in the webcasting practices of county-level media convergence centers through a case study of the live streaming practice at Taihu County Media Convergence Center. [Result] Explore innovative development pathways for “Live Streaming +” in county-level media convergence centers. [Conclusion] County-level media convergence centers in the new era must advance with the times and leverage “Live Streaming +” to create new scenarios for their development.

Full Text

“Live Plus”Creates New Development Scenarios for County-Level Converged Media Centers

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Abstract

[Purpose] By leveraging the dividends of various advanced technologies to continuously upgrade the communication channels of county-level converged

media centers, thereby enhancing their communication capacity and influence. [Method] This paper systematically discusses the development opportunities that “Live Plus” brings to county-level converged media centers, and analyzes the current shortcomings in their online live streaming practices through a case study of Taihu County Converged Media Center. [Result] It explores innovative development pathways for “Live Plus” in county-level converged media centers. [Conclusion] In the new era, county-level converged media centers must keep pace with the times and utilize “Live Plus” to create new development scenarios.

Keywords: “Live Plus” ; county-level converged media center; new scenarios; multi-scenarios; integration

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The expansion of communication capacity and influence of county-level converged media centers is constrained to some extent by geographical limitations. How can these centers break through regional boundaries to reach broader audiences and gain greater initiative and discourse power in information dissemination and public opinion guidance? Utilizing mobile communication platforms for live streaming represents an excellent practical solution. Mobile internet, big data, cloud computing, virtual reality, and live streaming technologies have now permeated every aspect of information product production. With the widespread adoption of smartphones and the rise of the universal live streaming trend, mobile video live streaming is being increasingly applied in the integrated development of traditional media. For county-level converged media centers, “Live Plus” has emerged as a new enabling approach. By creating numerous “Live Plus” scenarios, these centers are being infused with continuous momentum for innovative development.

Unlike purely online live streaming, video live streaming at county-level converged media centers must not only adhere to the content production patterns of mainstream media, uphold socialist core values, promote mainstream ideology, and disseminate positive energy, but also respect audience needs and market principles. It must adapt to changing user habits on mobile terminals, innovate the content and form of information products, enhance attractiveness and interactivity, identify new operational breakthroughs, and achieve a win-win situation for both social and economic benefits. Current practice demonstrates that live streaming has injected greater vitality into the development of county-level converged media centers, becoming a breakthrough point for many traditional media outlets to stage a “comeback.” However, quality issues have emerged

behind the “live streaming fever,” requiring these centers to leverage their advantages and innovate their live streaming concepts and practices to create new scenarios and truly achieve “overtaking on the curve” in development.

1. Application Value of Mobile Live Streaming in County-Level Converged Media Centers

1.1 Mobile-First Approach: Expanding Communication Coverage

Information dissemination by county-level converged media centers is significantly constrained by geography, with traditional channels only reaching audiences within the county territory. This limitation restricts the expansion of their communication capacity and influence. When major news events occur within the county, the “close proximity” of these centers allows them to obtain leads first and respond rapidly. Through mobile live streaming, they can report on events in the shortest possible time, filling information gaps for audiences. In the internet era where “time is life,” this amplifies the “timeliness” of news products from county-level converged media centers. Meanwhile, mobile live streaming uses a single timeline to present the entire course of an event without editing, achieving not only content authenticity but also process authenticity. This brings audiences a more realistic sense of presence and participation, provides better information consumption experiences, and highlights the “freshness” characteristic of news products from these centers.

1.2 Interactive Experience: Constructing Open User Relationships

A distinctive feature and advantage of new media is the interactivity of the information dissemination process based on equal relationships between communicators and audiences. The productive mindset makes the interactive characteristics of mobile live streaming even more pronounced, forming an open communication relationship where on-site reporters (hosts), users, and users themselves interact and influence each other. When watching a live stream from a county-level converged media center, audiences often notice that hosts continuously communicate and interact with netizens while introducing the progress, background, causes, and details of news events or activities. They adjust the live streaming rhythm according to audience requests, conduct targeted interviews, display visuals, and provide focused analysis, delivering interactive, scenario-based, and immersive information consumption experiences. This open communication relationship can effectively enhance audience loyalty.

1.3 Weakened Boundaries: Promoting Media Convergence

How to achieve better and deeper integration has become a key point in the development of county-level converged media centers. Online live streaming can precisely enhance the degree of media convergence by weakening boundaries. On one hand, it effectively achieves the convergence of communication forms. Whether for news reporting live streams or offline event live streams, the “zero

time difference” and “sense of presence” break through the “lagging presence” presented by traditional media through text, images, and audio-video reports. This forms a comprehensive integration of various communication elements including graphics, audio-video, and interaction, realizing the optimal allocation of content resources in media convergence. On the other hand, it effectively promotes the convergence of communication platforms. Current practice shows that most hosts at county-level converged media centers “set sail by borrowing boats” —they establish deep cooperation by entering video platforms, achieving efficient platform integration and enabling cross-boundary dissemination of quality content.

1.4 Content Monetization: Exploring New Spaces for Converged Media Operations

As pioneers in the transformation and development of traditional media, county-level converged media centers have demonstrated their capabilities in deepening media integration. However, a comprehensive review reveals that most integration initiatives focus on platform construction and content production/dissemination integration, with obvious lag in the transformation of converged media operations. Mobile live streaming explores new spaces for media operations. For county-level converged media centers, live streaming to assist agriculture and enterprises is relatively easy to operate and generates direct economic benefits. On the foundation of creating quality content, it can also diversify profit models and enhance the economic added value of information products.

2. The Mixed Quality Behind the “Live Streaming Fever” in County-Level Converged Media Centers

The predecessors of county-level converged media centers were county-level television stations that, after years of development, possess well-trained professional teams capable of rapid and efficient content production and dissemination. However, influenced by fixed mindsets, their online live streaming is often equated with television live streaming, with signals directly placed online and big screens simply becoming small screens, completely unchanged in content and form. Shot composition, narrative methods, and language styles remain identical to previous television live streams, which actually does not align with mobile users’ viewing habits.

2.2 Live Streaming Disconnected from Viewers

The true charm of online live streaming lies in its interactivity—content must capture users’ attention and encourage their active participation. However, some county-level converged media centers engage in “follow-the-trend” live streaming regardless of content suitability or format appropriateness, simply streaming for the sake of streaming. These live streams, with weak relevance to viewers,

deviate from audience information needs and drown in the vast ocean of online broadcasts without creating a ripple, becoming a form of self-entertainment that generates zero clicks and readership.

2.3 Over-Complication of Live Streaming and Technology

The barrier to entry for online live streaming is low—existing technology allows anyone to become a “host” instantly with just a smartphone, demonstrating the effect and speed of “I’m on the scene.” However, some county-level converged media centers, in pursuit of better effects, put the cart before the horse. Instead of focusing on polishing content and form, they invest efforts in personnel and equipment, even deploying television live streaming technologies and equipment for online broadcasts. This over-complication often increases the burden on users, causing online live streaming to lose its advantages of being lightweight and convenient, and sometimes even affecting the speed and efficiency of on-site live streaming.

3. Innovative Pathways for Taihu County Converged Media Center to Create New Live Streaming Scenarios

With the popularization of the internet and continuous development of live streaming technology, large-scale event live streaming has become an important method for publicity and display. In recent years, Taihu County Converged Media Center has focused on this high-traffic arena, actively accepting new challenges, exploring new scenarios, continuously unlocking new technologies, and innovatively implementing a “Live Plus Government, Services, and Commerce” model. By delivering various information, products, services, and activities to broader audiences in real-time through live streaming, the center has enhanced information credibility, event influence, and product visibility while opening new tracks and injecting new vitality into converged media development.

In 2023 alone, Taihu County Converged Media Center undertook 16 large-scale event live streams covering government, services, and commerce. These included seven government events such as the “Taihu Functional Film Industry Technology Collaborative Development Summit” and the “Academic Seminar on the Liudeng Army’s Liujiadang Meeting,” three service events including the “Anqing City 2023 Flood Control and Emergency Rescue Comprehensive Drill” and “Party Member Distance Education Lecture Hall (Anqing Taihu Station),” and six commercial events such as the “Second Dabie Mountain Tianhua Gujian Tea Culture Tourism Festival,” “Taihu County ‘Farmers’ Harvest Festival’ Series Event - Xuqiao Town’s First Lobster Festival,” and “Celebrate Harvest, Promote Harmony - 2023 China Farmers’ Harvest Festival (Anhui Taihu).” This represented the year with the most large-scale events and the broadest field involvement since the center’s establishment.

These 16 large-scale events directly generated economic benefits for the converged media industry. The increasingly prominent brand drove broader sales

channels for Taihu' s agricultural specialty products, with sales of tea, crayfish, yellow beef, Chengling black pork, and Huating Lake bighead carp reaching new heights. Based on Taihu County Converged Media Center' s practice, the author believes that innovative pathways for creating new live streaming scenarios can be developed along the following dimensions.

3.1 “One-Chessboard” Concept

A successful event stems from good planning. To plan each event effectively, Taihu County Converged Media Center has established a core creative team comprising members from the Industry Development Department, Planning and Coordination Department, Collection Department, Editorial Department, New Media Department, and Technical Department. Based on event themes, the team thoroughly understands the organizers' expectations and ideas, combines them with Taihu County' s actual conditions, and promptly produces highly operable and watchable event proposals. These proposals break away from fixed patterns, emphasizing personalized element excavation, characteristic atmosphere creation, immersive scenario experiences, and interactive integration between main and secondary venues, making events creative, innovative, and attractive with both novel concepts and “down-to-earth” relevance. Each proposal has won praise from organizers and recognition from audiences after implementation.

Whether for breaking news event live streams or foreseeable news events and large-scale activities, planning is a critical link. The entire event must be placed on a “large chessboard” with a “one-chessboard” concept through unified planning and scheduling to achieve optimal allocation of material, human, and financial resources and ensure live streaming effectiveness. When undertaking related live streaming activities, Taihu County Converged Media Center unwaveringly adheres to the principles of being the main media, leading, creating, and hosting, upholds the “one-chessboard” concept, maintains political leadership and targeted guidance, and fully leverages its advantages as the main position and main communication channel to run the main melody and positive messages throughout the entire process of pre-event planning, mid-event execution, post-event dissemination, and continuous promotion. From ideological control and event theme establishment to scheme process refinement and brand creative promotion, the center conducts repeated on-site inspections and consults all parties' opinions before finally determining the event theme and live streaming plan.

For example, when undertaking the “ ‘Water Town Xuqiao · Xia Travel You Yue’ - Taihu ‘Farmers’ Harvest Festival’ Series Event ‘First Lobster Festival’ ,” the center learned that the local government had its own concepts for the lobster festival' s theme and activity plan based on experiences from other regions. After participation, the center considered issues from both the local government' s perspective and media communication effects, grasping the direction from ideological control, event theme establishment, scheme process refinement, to brand creative promotion. After several rounds of on-site inspections, repeated party-government consultations, and consulting various opinions, the center proposed

better ideas for the lobster festival' s theme and activity plan. Simultaneously, from the perspective of live streaming, it proposed more watchable execution methods, thereby establishing a “one-chessboard” concept for the event, unifying consensus, and forming the optimal plan. This ensured the “First Lobster Festival” was safe, refined, and efficient, achieving 700,000 online clicks on June 20 and securing coverage on CCTV, while also boosting the local crayfish market sales.

3.2 “One-Stop” Service

Many live streams conducted by county-level converged media centers are customized for the market and clients, making a “service” consciousness crucial. Only by being good at thinking from the client' s perspective and designing live streaming segments tailored to their needs can the final reputation and response be ensured. When undertaking events, Taihu Converged Media Center breaks previous inertia of only conducting live streaming and comprehensively undertakes every aspect of each event. From early-stage planning, proposals, processes, scripts, promotional video production, program preparation and review to later-stage stage construction, atmosphere creation, event hosting, process execution, live streaming, and post-event all-network push, the center provides “one-stop” service for each event, minimizing organizers' concerns and maximizing their confidence.

3.3 “Integrated” Operations

As the final link in the national four-level communication system, county-level converged media centers are important publicity positions and the backbone of mainstream media. How to open up the “Ren and Du meridians,” integrate internal resources, and mobilize external forces to achieve “integrated” operations is a key factor in creating new live streaming scenarios. In practice, Taihu County Converged Media Center emphasizes “integrated” operations, connecting internal and external resources to aggregate energy and amplify the overall effect of events, making them both vibrant and impactful.

Internally, various departments enhance their “convergence” capabilities and skills through live streaming practice. Major platforms exert precise efforts, operating according to plans, fighting as a group, and tackling challenges together. They carefully plan pre-event promotion and drainage, on-site live streaming, and brand promotion, achieving segmented and precise communication. This demonstrates the converged media' s “matrix” communication advantages and enhances event brand credibility and influence.

Externally, the center establishes cooperative relationships with Xinhua News Agency and Anhui Online directing and planning teams, leveraging linkage to expand collaboration fields and plan and promote events from a high starting point. This achieves multi-media communication and all-media presentation, enriching communication methods and forms, expanding the center' s commu-

nication brand influence, and effectively promoting cross-boundary integration between converged media and various fields. New breakthroughs have been achieved in converged media industry development technologies and applications, and the “Converged Media Plus” industry service brand has become increasingly prominent. Meanwhile, the center deepens cooperation with self-media within the county, strengthening collaboration in stage construction and atmosphere creation. This effectively solves the center’s shortcomings in personnel, equipment, and materials while fully demonstrating and expanding the mainstream media’s core circle advantages and its self-media collaborative circle, laying the foundation for expanding the converged media industry’s commercial market network.

3.4 “Multi-Scenario” Model

To further enrich event content and innovate activity carriers, Taihu County Converged Media Center seeks novelty and change in event formats, transforming from a single “one-scenario” model to models featuring “offline + online,” “main venue + sub-venues,” and “first scene + second scene.” Through live streaming, activities at various scenes are connected, presenting the most exciting parts to audiences at the main venue and online netizens. Although this multi-scenario approach poses significant challenges to live streaming, the center’s technical team continuously learns and applies new technologies to provide strong technical support for events. The application of this multi-scenario live streaming model, especially in breaking major news events or large-scale on-site activities, maximizes the display of mainstream media’s talent and technical advantages, demonstrating professionalism and authority different from ordinary online live streams and providing network users with extraordinary viewing experiences.

For example, the “Anqing City 2023 Flood Control and Emergency Rescue Comprehensive Drill” was held in the Poyang Lake waters of Tianxiangzui Village, Dashi Township. The drill adopted a “scenario preset + actual exercise” method, including five major categories of subjects: rapid emergency response, engineering rescue, emergency rescue, evacuation and transfer, and emergency drainage, involving 10 specific subjects and 11 teams totaling approximately 200 participants. The 10 subjects were conducted at 10 different drill locations, each requiring full display with tight connections to reflect actual combat status. Faced with the complexity of multiple drill subjects, teams, equipment, and long battle lines, the center established separate directing stations, arranged more than a dozen camera positions, and implemented three-dimensional, multi-camera, multi-scene, whole-process, all-round live streaming from ground to water, mountain areas, and air. This achieved a qualitative breakthrough in live streaming technology and format, realized multi-media communication and all-media presentation, and further demonstrated converged media’s “matrix” communication advantages. The entire drill presented optimal results and received high praise from municipal and county authorities.

In today’s rapidly evolving new media landscape, “Live Plus” has become a new

track for innovative development in county-level converged media centers. By creating new live streaming scenarios one by one, these centers can form greater communication capacity and influence. Therefore, county-level converged media centers must leverage their own advantages, establish a “one-chessboard” concept, provide “one-stop” services, implement “integrated” operations, and create a “multi-scenario” model. Through efforts in all dimensions and gradual achievement of high-quality live streaming, they can maximize the advantages of this new communication method of “Live Plus,” further enhance their credibility and influence while meeting user and market demands.

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

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