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Enhancing Influence Through Aggregated Communication in Media Convergence in Western Prefecture-Level Cities: A Case Study of Jinchang City, Gansu Province, a National Media Convergence Reform Pilot [Postprint]

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Abstract

Objective: Media communication power constitutes a pivotal indicator for evaluating the core competitiveness of media organizations. In the era of integrated media, competition among diversified media entities is intensifying. Throughout the developmental trajectory of China's media landscape, each medium possesses inherent strengths and weaknesses.

Method: As a national and provincial pilot site for municipal media convergence reform, Jinchang City in Gansu Province, situated in the Hexi Corridor, must navigate this critical examination of media convergence by leveraging an intelligent media convergence platform, deeply engaging in urban information interoperability and social governance, advancing institutional and industrial development through diversified operational models, and enhancing its self-sustaining capabilities.

Result: Propelled by the “dual-engine” drivers of content and technology, the initiative has conducted fruitful innovative experiments by linking social resources and talent teams.

Conclusion: Confronted with unprecedented opportunities and challenges, the city has forged a distinctive path of municipal integrated media development characterized by pronounced regional features, thereby submitting a response with distinctive characteristics of a western Chinese city.

Full Text

How Western Prefecture-Level Cities Can Enhance Influence Through Converged Media and Aggregated Dissemination: A Case Study of Jinchang City, Gansu Province, a National Media Convergence Reform Pilot

(Jinchang City Media Convergence Center, Gansu Province, Jinchang 737100)

Abstract: Media dissemination capability serves as a crucial metric for evaluating a media organization's core competitiveness. In the era of media convergence, intensifying competition among diverse media platforms has highlighted the respective strengths and weaknesses of each medium. As a national and provincial pilot site for municipal-level media convergence reform, Jinchang City in the Hexi Corridor of Gansu Province has embarked on a transformative journey. Leveraging an intelligent media convergence platform, the city has actively engaged in urban information exchange and social governance while advancing diversified business models to strengthen its self-sustaining capacity and industrial development. Driven by a “dual-engine” of content and technology, the center has effectively linked social resources and talent teams to carry out innovative experiments. In response to unprecedented opportunities and challenges, Jinchang has forged a development path for municipal-level media convergence with distinctive regional characteristics, delivering a unique solution that reflects the realities of western Chinese cities.

Keywords: Western prefecture-level cities; media convergence; aggregated dissemination; all-media; county-level media convergence centers; mainstream media

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In 2020, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the *Guidelines on Accelerating In-Depth Media Convergence Development*, which called for improving the four-tier integrated development layout comprising central media, provincial media, municipal media, and county-level media convergence centers. This policy sounded the “call to action” for traditional newspaper and television media in western prefecture-level cities. Media convergence and overall transformation represent not a simple merger of traditional newspaper and broadcasting entities, but rather a complete 重塑 of systems and mechanisms, integration of personnel structures, and opti-

mization of collection, editing, and broadcasting workflows. Confronted with unprecedented opportunities and challenges as a national and provincial pilot for municipal-level media convergence, how could a western city like Jinchang deliver a distinctive answer in this major test?

The Jinchang Media Convergence Center has boldly explored and taken proactive initiatives, pioneering media convergence in Gansu Province with a sense of urgency. Recognizing that the “all-media new pattern” represents a major trend and that “media convergence development” is a timely and necessary response, the center has strategically positioned itself to build an entirely new media architecture characterized by “all-media, full integration, full-process workflow, high efficiency, entertainment value, and interactivity.” Rather than “going through the motions or putting on a show,” the center has thoroughly grasped central government directives and meticulously executed its convergence strategy.

1. Clarifying Vision, Defining Positioning, and Building a New All-Media Dissemination Pattern

Jinchang City, located in western China along the “waist” of the Hexi Corridor, is a typical resource-based industrial city that emerged from mining enterprises. While relatively lacking in cultural depth, it serves as a national and provincial pilot for municipal-level media convergence. The center has adopted a 15-character principle—“how to converge, how to integrate deeply, attractiveness, stickiness, and user experience”—as its overarching framework. This has guided the construction of a “1+3+5+N” all-media dissemination matrix anchored by the newly developed “Jinchang Nickel Capital” client application.

The “1” represents the flagship “Jinchang Nickel Capital” client, designed to achieve a “maiden voyage effect” and fulfill its role as the flagship platform. The “3” comprises three major new media platforms—“Jinchang Release” WeChat, “Watching Jinchang” WeChat, and “Jinchang Release”—which supplement the flagship by expanding dissemination channels and enabling precise audience targeting based on user reading habits. The “5” denotes five traditional media outlets: Jinchang News Network, Jinchang Daily, comprehensive television channel, comprehensive radio frequency, and traffic music frequency, which maintain a solid foundation among broadcast, television, newspaper, and online audiences. The “N” represents connections to multiple platforms including Xinhua Net, New Gansu, Gansu Radio and Television, and Toutiao, actively engaging with these channels through humble learning and steadfast collaboration rather than pursuing “viral hits, eye-catching gimmicks, or traffic chasing.”

Based on a comprehensive assessment of its influence and capabilities, the center has adopted a user-centered approach that emphasizes novel experiences to effectively enhance user stickiness and aggregation capacity. By serving as a bridge linking mainstream media with the public, it has established a new workflow of “News + Government Services + Business,” advancing toward the goals of full-process media, holographic media, all-staff media, and all-effect media.

Leveraging the New Gansu Cloud editing platform, all news products are now first published on the “Jinchang Nickel Capital” client, maximizing the advantages of mobile-first publishing. The “publish upon arrival” approach eliminates time and space constraints on news reporting, providing greater creative freedom for journalists and editors while exponentially increasing the volume of 稿件 and new media products. When visiting media organizations from other prefectures frequently ask about our new media staffing levels, our answer is clear: “All reporters and editors simultaneously serve new media; we are all new media professionals.”

To fully mobilize citywide publicity resources and absorb civic strengths in new media promotion, the center has established fan communication groups for the “Jinchang Nickel Capital” client and actively cultivated a “citizen journalist” team within the media convergence context. Through regular interaction with netizens and citizen journalists, the center has broadened public participation channels in converged media creation, enhanced client user stickiness, enriched the substance of new media products, and earned widespread societal recognition.

2. Leveraging Convergence Advantages to Demonstrate Mainstream Media Influence

In the all-media dissemination matrix, the “Jinchang Nickel Capital” client features 24 channels including current affairs, economy, tourism, and education, with specialized columns created according to different promotional timelines to meet diverse citywide news requirements. The convergence interface provides “Watch TV,” “Read Newspaper,” and “Listen to Radio” channels, satisfying users’ needs for news content across different media forms. The “Jinchang Channel” interface offers entry platforms for all municipal departments and units, enabling comprehensive access to Jinchang information through a single portal.

Upholding mobile-first and content-as-king principles, the center has integrated traditional and emerging media to continuously enhance information productivity. It has reformed news production mechanisms according to the principle of “client first, then micro-media, then broadcast and newspaper,” reconstructing operational mechanisms for content planning, collection, editing, and dissemination. Publication prioritizes the client, performance evaluation is based on client metrics, and review focuses on client content. This approach has opened production channels between traditional and new media products, forming an integrated workflow of “unified planning, one-time collection, multiple generation, and diversified distribution.”

In the internet era, profound changes in dissemination methods and channels have created an overwhelming information environment. While all media compete for audience attention on online platforms, professionally produced stories with “dewdrops” of freshness and vitality—works with thought and soul—

remain essential. The internet has become the primary battlefield for public opinion struggle, and in an era where technological trends can be “dazzling,” content originality and innovation remain the fundamental foundation and starting point for all progress.

3. Crafting Quality Content and Establishing New Brand Column Images

To vigorously promote Jinchang and tell its stories through diverse new media forms and technologies, the center conducted extensive audience research before brainstorming and meticulously planning a weekly new media short-video column titled *Golden Baby Talks*. When Deng Xiaoping inspected the area in 1966, he affectionately called it the nation’s “treasure bowl” and “rare golden baby,” which inspired the column’s name. From the perspective of the protagonist Golden Baby, the column uses an approachable and endearing image to reflect on reality, envision the future, and discuss both historical and everyday matters, achieving innovation in both content and form.

Each episode runs 2-3 minutes, employing small entry points that gradually unfold to reveal larger themes through accessible internet language, making the Golden Baby character more vivid and lively. The short videos combine hand-drawn animation with real-life footage, allowing Golden Baby to transition between 2D and 3D spaces while creating interactive opportunities with audiences. Original short videos launched on the “Jinchang Nickel Capital” APP have quickly garnered widespread user comments and attention, giving the production team tremendous confidence and encouragement.

Based on audience feedback, the center established a “Golden Baby Innovation Studio” comprising core new media creators. Before each episode, the team launches content solicitation campaigns in interactive zones, fully discussing and collaborating with netizens to determine topics of interest, forming a “you request, we produce” mechanism that generates high audience enthusiasm. For special circumstances, the studio has developed dedicated workflows where 主创 personnel collaboratively complete copywriting, hand-drawn design, video editing, packaging, and voice-over production. Since its launch, *Golden Baby Talks* has released nearly 100 episodes with over 5 million reads across all platforms, earning industry recognition and audience acclaim.

The column has become a benchmark for innovative creation at the Jinchang Media Convergence Center. Under its leadership, the center has launched additional local video series including *Malachite Stories*, which excavates the history of Jinchang’s “city-built-by-enterprise” origins with strong period authenticity and local interactivity, and *Brother Jin Has Something to Say*, a talk-show format addressing topics of public concern with real-time netizen interaction. *Civilized Jinchang Let’s Discuss* builds on the national civilized demonstration city status, emphasizing “public discussion” and providing channels for citizens to “voice” their opinions, jointly participating in urban governance and city devel-

opment. These locally flavored columns continuously drive quality improvement and expanding influence in content production.

4. Embracing User-Centric Thinking and Expanding “News +” Domains

After comprehensive evaluation of its new media platform, the Jinchang Media Convergence Center has been tasked by the municipal government with developing the “Jinchang Citizen Connect” urban citizen service client as a sub-project of the smart city initiative. By embedding “Jinchang Citizen Connect” within the “Jinchang Nickel Capital” news client and operating them as an integrated platform, the center has created a comprehensive, intelligent platform featuring “news + services + experience + interaction.” This has forged new advantages in media convergence and achieved dual improvement in mainstream media dissemination capability and comprehensive service capacity.

As “Jinchang Citizen Connect” functions become increasingly sophisticated, the “Jinchang Nickel Capital” client has experienced geometric growth in installations, rising from an initial 80,000 to over 260,000—representing 38.8% of the city’s 432,000 residents—with an average daily usage frequency of 2.8 times per person. The platform has become residents’ primary source for news, government affairs, and livelihood services, enabling citizens to handle everything from tuition and heating fee payments to job searches and product information entirely through the app.

The center has actively developed “News + Government Affairs” by integrating with the Gansu Quick-Handle APP to connect with the province’s unified government service mobile platform, providing one-stop services for healthcare, education, judicial notarization, and certificate processing. It has also connected with the municipal government’s “12345” immediate-response platform and opened channels including the People’s Daily Online local leadership message board and mayor’s mailbox, creating a “government service center at your fingertips.”

Recognizing that traditional media revenue models based primarily on print, television, and broadcasting face increasingly prominent profitability challenges, the center has boldly innovated by developing a “News + Business + Market + Services” operation model. It established the Jinchang Media Culture Communication Co., Ltd. to engage in film and television production, event organization, platform operation and maintenance, arts training, commercial advertising, and printing and publishing, achieving “Media +” business services with synchronized online and offline operations. This has fundamentally transformed operational capacity from quantitative to qualitative, enabling rapid growth in various revenue streams and taking a solid step forward on the path of “strengthening extended services and aggregating industrial functions.”

5. Insights and Reflections Amidst “Convergence Transformation”

Media influence is premised on dissemination capability. Only by reaching users can quality content exert its guiding power. Under the new integrated operation mechanism, Jinchang Media Convergence Center has achieved 联动 among newspapers, television, and online platforms through “one-time collection, multiple generation, and diversified distribution,” with synchronized efforts in text and video. This new model has greatly stimulated the potential of editorial staff, enhancing their sense of achievement and fulfillment.

However, we clearly recognize that institutional constraints limit prefecture-level media from acting freely, with talent being the most significant bottleneck. Balancing speed, effectiveness, authenticity, public opinion guidance, and commercial monetization while maintaining focus on core journalism presents the greatest obstacle for most prefecture-level traditional and new media development. Pressures mount in areas including human resource allocation, performance accounting, advertising revenue sharing, and audience diversion. Given disadvantages in geographical location, compensation, and development space compared to first-tier cities, talented individuals are easily poached by higher-paying competitors. “To integrate old and new media, mechanisms must change”—strong institutional frameworks are essential for unified coordination and management.

Jinchang Media Convergence Center has explored internal restructuring and established new mechanisms based on the principle that “greater contributions yield greater rewards,” breaking down barriers between permanent and contract staff and creating multiple “chief” positions including Chief Reporter, Chief Editor, and Chief Announcer. With sound mechanisms and smooth systems, all personnel are highly motivated with strong consensus and participation.

The new media era requires “personality” to achieve steady progress. Through synchronized 联动 among newspapers, clients, and social media, mainstream media can explore internet dissemination. Media competition fundamentally boils down to talent competition and advantages. We must build platforms for young people, attract readers with quality original content, and optimize commentary and theoretical content to emphasize thought leadership, enabling mainstream media to guide public opinion on the internet battlefield. This transforms single-medium professionals into versatile all-media practitioners, highlighting mainstream influence on the internet’s primary battlefield. Overall transformation represents a tough battle; deep convergence is a protracted war. By concentrating editorial resources on original and in-depth content, we can deliver high-quality development results.

Whether in convergence or development, we must adhere to the fundamental laws of media development. The cross-media trend in news dissemination is unstoppable. Although western region media convergence has forged a path with regional characteristics, it still faces a long journey due to constraints from economic conditions, talent availability, and market factors. Talent uti-

lization remains a weakness, and talent reserves are severely inadequate. The phenomenon of “southeastward talent flight” occurs frequently, requiring deep reflection. Media competition is fundamentally talent competition. Transforming from single-medium professionals to versatile all-media practitioners highlights mainstream influence on the internet’s primary battlefield. Overall transformation has fought a tough battle.

We increasingly realize that “reform is always ongoing.” Many problems remain to be solved and numerous challenges await. “The vast journey has no boundaries; set sail with confidence.” In this new era and new journey, we will uphold originality and high quality, demanding dissemination power from in-depth excellence. We will implement correct guidance throughout, strengthen mainstream public opinion, and make the Party’s voice the strongest sound of the era, requiring redoubled efforts. Aggregated dissemination must ride the wave of media convergence development, forging ahead with determination!

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

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