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Navigating the Tides of Media Convergence: Shanxi Radio and Television Station's Transformation Amidst the Digital Tsunami

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Abstract

Great changes have occurred in China's media environment as a result of the growth of new media, particularly for Television and Radio stations. These media which were once considered powerful media in the conventional era are now under tremendous pressure to modernize. There are new potential and challenges for China's television program transformation, given the country's rapid economic and social development, as well as its continual improvement of its comprehensive national power. New media technologies play a crucial role in increasing productivity and transforming organizational structures. Growth and transformation in the Chinese TV industry are also due to the continuous development and evolution of media convergence. Through observation and literature analysis this paper examines the transformation of television programs of Shanxi Radio and Television Station in terms of content, technology, and policy. By referring to theory of media convergence, it also lays forth a framework for readers to consider how to apply communication tactics for the building of media industry in the context of China. It gives a thorough analysis of the mechanisms through which Shanxi Radio and Television Station utilize proper communication techniques to attract its audiences as well as stakeholders.

Keywords: Television Program, Media Convergence, Transformation

Introduction

Background

Television is an essential type of Chinese media and an integral part of China's public service. China's television media development began in metropolitans, where the demand for political propaganda was urgent, and the economic foundation and technical facilities were relatively good (Latham, 2007). In research by Keane, over the past 60 years since the birth of China's television, the number and scale of TV media organizations have seen a historical increase, and their coverage and communication qualities have been significantly improved (Keane, 2002).

Shanxi Radio and Television Station is a broadcasting corporation formed by the merger of Taiyuan Xinhua Radio Station, founded in 1949, and Taiyuan Experimental Television Station,

founded in 1960. After more than 70 years of development, Shanxi Radio and Television station have broadcasted 166,300 hours of radio and television programs, as well as 61,600 hours of self-produced programs, reaching 1.09 billion people in China by the end of 2020. All television systems have been digitized, and all television programs are now broadcast in high definition (Liu, 2021). According to McLuhan's "media is information," the media is the significant message, and humans use media to engage in related communication and other social activities (McLuhan, 1994). The advancement of new media technology has aided change and progress in all fields of life in recent years. New media technology has a significant role in increasing production efficiency and changing the way things are done. New media technology has been developing and evolving in the Chinese TV industry. Almost every process of news production has been affected by the change in information technology, which has brought many conveniences for journalists to free their hands and improve their work efficiency, from robot writing VR immersive news to 4K+5G+VR UHD TV live, from the production of manuscripts and videos to the transmission of pictures and video content (Fu, 2021).

Wang and Du pointed out that the social development and change of the social form are determined by the evolution and revolution of the media (Wang & Du, 2021). From the communication of letters and newspapers to the introduction of radio and television in the late nineteenth century, mobile broadband of 3G and 4G, and the panoramic and stereoscopic presentation of news scenes in 5G+4K, the change of communication mode is also influenced by technological advancements, the development and application of technology will provide a solid foundation for the revelation and development of China's TV in the era of media convergence. As a result, further statistical research into the use of new media technology in Shanxi radio and television programs is required.

For traditional TV, the development of new media has brought challenges and opportunities and promoted the "TV extinction theory" (Chang, 2019). The forms, broadcast terminals, and institutions of traditional TV media face unprecedented challenges and rare development opportunities. According to Lotz, the wave of digitalization has had a significant impact on the TV industry, changing the production, distribution, and use of TV programs, causing viewing behavior to deviate from the original linear program schedule, allowing the TV to transcend family boundaries and providing audiences with more options and interactivity (Lotz, 2014). Weber stressed that the development of China's media is based on two guiding principles: political control and economic progress (Weber, 2005). To strike a balance between media control and economic development, China's broadcasting industry will be affected by policy and institutional changes.

The rapid growth of new media has significantly impacted China's media environment, posing immense challenges and opportunities for traditional Television and Radio stations to modernize and adapt. With the country's swift economic and social development, as well as the constant improvement of its comprehensive national power, the transformation of China's television programs presents both potential and challenges. New media technologies are critical in enhancing productivity and revolutionizing organizational structures, while media convergence drives growth and transformation in the Chinese TV industry.

The motivation behind this study is to explore the transformation of television programs at Shanxi Radio and Television Station in terms of content, technology, and policy, by employing the media convergence theory as a reference framework. This investigation seeks to provide valuable insights into how communication strategies can be effectively applied for the development of the media industry in China. By thoroughly analyzing the mechanisms

through which Shanxi Radio and Television Station utilizes proper communication techniques to engage its audiences and stakeholders, this paper aims to make a meaningful contribution to our understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by traditional TV media in the era of media convergence.

Literature Review

The propaganda aim decides the program in China, and the types of propaganda goals are determined by the kinds of programs (Wang, 2011). China's television programs have been divided into three main categories: news, education, and entertainment for a long time. Due to the audience's gradual comprehension of television's social service purpose, service shows did not emerge until the "Reform and Opening Up" period. However, the show category is not synonymous with its social function, and the two often interfere. For example, entertainment programs can provide entertainment while also reporting on current events in the entertainment industry and cultural education programs can give news dissemination, social education, and cultural entertainment, among other social functions. Meanwhile, a social purpose is frequently fulfilled through a variety of programs. News, educational, entertainment, and service programs all have the process of propaganda and education.

Changes in broadcast mode and audience behavior for television programs have occurred as a result of media convergence. The original linear broadcast mode is first replaced by a nonlinear broadcast mode (Straubhaar et al., 2015). On-demand, replay, and other options are available for television programs. Second, from a single television set to a wide range of devices such as computers, mobile phones, tablets, and IPTV (Lee, 2018). Finally, the audience can engage in interactive activities (Blake, 2016). The communication forms and strategies of television programs have changed as a result of media convergence. The emergence of short videos, such as online dramas and micro films, meets the audience's demand for fragmented viewing (2018). Furthermore, TV programs can achieve twice the results with half the effort by utilizing new media propaganda (Gardner & Lehnert, 2016).

China has constantly adjusted broadcasting policies to assist the development of the broadcasting industry in adapting to globalization. Chan believes that the Chinese government is increasingly concerned about guiding public opinion through state-controlled media and that developing and managing the broadcasting industry is crucial (2007). It published *The Opinions on Promoting the Development of Radio, Film, and Television Industries* in 2004, advocating appropriate measures for developing the radio, film, and television industries. The CPC Central Committee and the State Council announced *Various Opinions on Deepening Cultural Reform* in January 2006. The State Council's Executive Committee approved the *Cultural Industry Revitalization Plan* on July 22, 2009, to provide policy assistance to important regions and significant projects in the radio and television industries. The 17th CPC Central Committee's sixth plenary session adopted the *CPC Central Committee's Decision on Deepening the Reform of the Cultural System and Promoting the Great Development and Prosperity of Socialist Culture* on October 18, 2011, proposing to promote the significant adjustment of the cultural industry, including radio and television (Chen, 2020).

Although television operators widely acknowledge its commercial function, the Chinese state is hesitant to grant it official recognition and emphasizes television's political and cultural functions. As a result of the Chinese state's two contradictory positions, the television system in China generally does not operate with a purely commercial or market-driven mechanism but must reconcile between market rules and political supervision, in other words, between

two contradictory value systems – the market and the planned systems. It is no surprise, then, that China's broadcasting policies have swung back and forth between pushing economic deregulation and maintaining political and cultural restrictions.

Discussion

The Transformation of Television Program Content

Since the beginning of television, program makers have been continually investigating the content and structure of programs suited for television stations. According to Liu (2010), over the last three decades, television stations have evolved from political propaganda to enterprises with a political function in addition to their commercial operations. The new commercial momentum fueled fierce competition for advertising revenue, which can be seen not only in ad sales but also in the creation of more diverse and exciting content. By the mid-1990s, there were plenty of television delivery platforms, but program genres and formats were mostly prosaic, dictated by decree rather than demand. The categories of television programs are constantly expanding and changing as television technology advances, and people's programming concepts become more apparent. Television programs have evolved from simple to complex, from random arrangement to deliberate effects in the Era of Media Convergence. Singh (2012) pointed out that customization and personalization are essential in the future business model. According to the needs and preferences of the audience to develop content products or services, or by changing some of the performance and characteristics of the existing content products to meet the taste of customers. So, in most cases, customization attracts a larger audience.

Shanxi Radio and Television station planned to broadcast the live media program "Traveling Shanxi Reading History" in 2020. Each program's content should always be preheated, pushed, and collected through the media convergence platform prior to broadcast. Shanxi Satellite Television and "Good Scenery in Shanxi Program" created the hashtag # Museum Without a Roof, and released the program's preview information, attracting widespread public interest. During the program's live broadcast, the audience interacted with the APP in real time, and the program's content was disseminated through short videos on the Tik Tok. The program's popularity grew, and its social impact grew significantly. The program innovation of "Traveling Shanxi Reading History" is based not only on technological innovation, but also on the integration of content that meets the needs of the audience and significantly increases the influence of brand.

The Transformation of Television Technology

The various technologies driving media development all point in the same direction: restoring and reproducing the original scene of human communication: word of mouth, face-to-face communication (Chen, 2018). Newspapers, magazines, radio, movies, and television have given way to the emerging Internet and mobile Internet in the 5G era. Carriers and forms of information transmission are constantly evolving, beginning with text transmission and progressing to picture transmission, audio transmission, and finally video transmission. Information communication has evolved to become more easily perceived, more conducive to audience acceptance, and have a lower threshold of use. Shanxi Radio and Television Station, aided by new TV technology, has made changes in the application and innovation of TV production and communication technology, resulting in an increase in audience and traditional TV program stickiness through the use of dynamic program forms.

Video Transformation of Communication Carrier

Almost all media are turning to video production at the same time these days: from television to radio, newspapers and magazines, and finally new media, all are producing video programs. Xinhua News Agency, China's largest state news agency, has already launched "Xinhua Network TV," People's Daily Online has launched a "People's Video" brand, and Beijing News has created its own video brand, "We video."

According to the China Internet Network Information Center's (CNNIC) 49th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China, there were 934 million short video users in December 2021, with a 90.5 % usage rate. Video is expected to have a significant impact on the future of human life: without video, nothing spreads, nothing sells, and nothing lives.

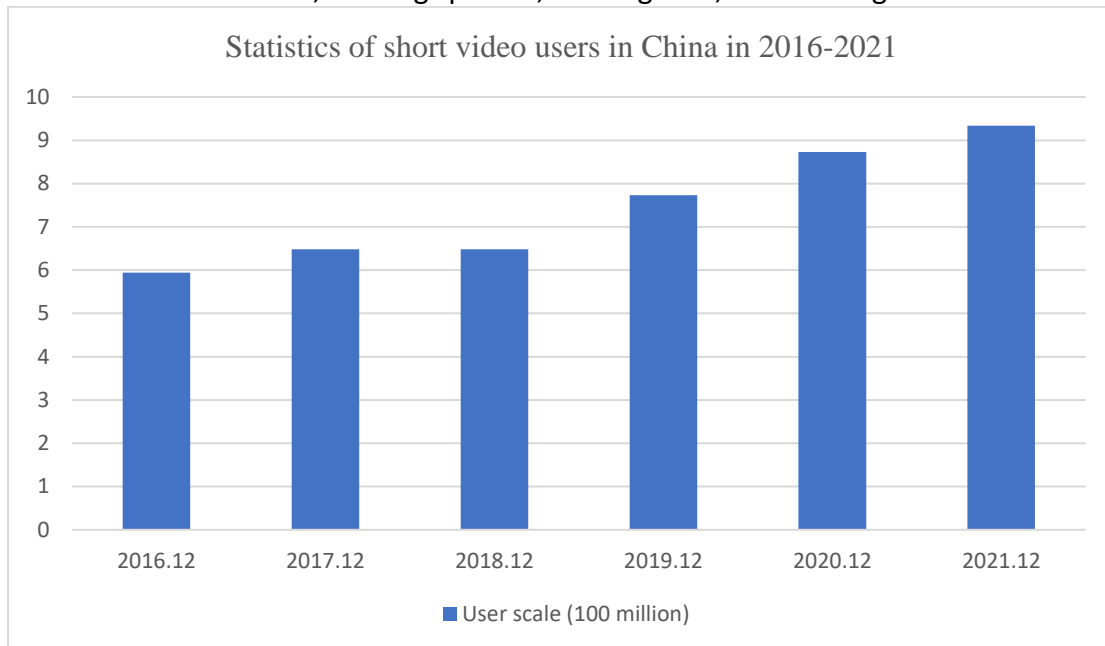


Figure1: Data source: CNNIC

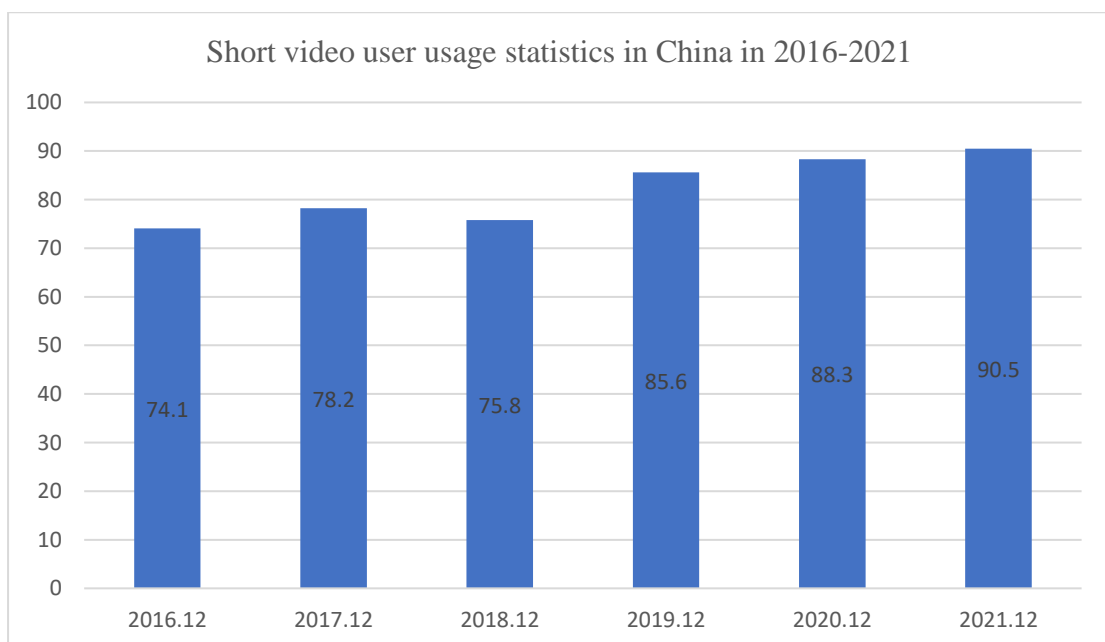


Figure2: Data source: CNNIC

Shanxi Radio and Television Station launched the "Yellow River Plus" App on November 23, 2019, completely breaking down the business barriers between traditional and new media, opening columns on news, society, and life, and producing high-quality programs widely distributed on the Internet. According to statistics from Shanxi Audiovisual Media Center, Yellow River Plus downloads increased from 235,000 in January to 271,000 in April, and the number of readers increased from 12.7 million in January to 13.09 million in April. These changes also show that the audience's demand for convenient communication carriers is gradually increasing.

Technical Transformation of Communication Content

In the evolution of media, technology plays a critical role. It is possible to argue that technology has shaped the entire history of media change. In daily program production, Shanxi radio and television station have widely used new communication technologies such as 5G, AI, VR, and cloud computing, gaining new advantages and creating new space for integrated communication.



The AI virtual anchor, also known as the "AI synthetic anchor," can provide round-the-clock, all-time, multilingual, and non-stop news broadcasting services, as well as convert text into audio and video at multiple sites in a second, lowering news program production costs and increasing program efficiency. With the help of technology, AI virtual anchor meets the media industry's business needs for data accuracy and timeliness, function perfection, and information mass production. The hourly news program "940 Zixun Kuaibao" of Shanxi Radio and Television Station is completed by AI anchors Jin Xiaole(Male) and Jin Xiaomei(Female), which not only saves production costs but also improves the news transmission rate.

The Transformation of Television Policy

In the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the socialist transformation of the broadcasting industry was completed in only a few years, and the national broadcasting industry was unified under state management. The ownership of broadcasting institutions belongs to the state, with all or most of the funds coming from the government. The party and the government lead and appoint the leaders of broadcasting institutions and stipulate the specific tasks of broadcasting work. The media, especially Chinese television, represents a relatively new relationship between the modern state and society. The Chinese government is more aware of the potential uses that media, particularly television, can be put to (Chan, 2002). Under this system, the popularization of broadcasting has made rapid progress, but there are also many problems in the construction.

Zhong (2012) observes that China creates a broadcasting administration system with Chinese characteristics based on national conditions. The fundamental tenet of this system is to stress that the broadcasting authority is in charge of the media's internal direction and quality of information. According to Xu (2013), even as the media market liberalizes, the Chinese government wants to maintain political control over television. In some ways, the direction

of television development in China is determined by the state and policymakers, specifically the governing authorities.

Shanxi Radio and Television Station, as Shanxi Province's mainstream media, is the CPC's primary position for controlling public opinion. The Shanxi Provincial Party Committee's Standing Committee issued the Shanxi Radio and Television Reform Plan on March 30, 2020, emphasizing the deep integration of radio and television reform, the construction of a "Big News" propaganda pattern, the establishment of a "Central System" of news programs, and the telling of Shanxi stories to the audience. Furthermore, Shanxi Radio and Television station fully utilizes the benefits of Shanxi media's "Smart Cloud" platform to construct the "Central Kitchen" of Shanxi radio and television media and establish a new system of content production and communication. This type of administrative order directly leads the transformation of the TV industry, shortens the long period of reform and integration, and has the potential to accelerate the pace of media integration.

Shanxi Provincial government issued financial support policies in order to strengthen the ability of TV programs to innovate. Shanxi Province's finance department allocated 7 million RMB to Shanxi Radio and Television station's key channels and TV programs. Another 30 million RMB was set aside for 4K technology transformation, with the purchase of 4K material collection equipment such as 5G news mobile trucks and fusion media relay trucks.

Chen asserts that policy convergence refers to that with the development of information communication technology, the supervision of information production requires resource integration and joint operation at the policy and institutional levels(2014). These convergence and collaboration occur in the interpretation and revision of existing policies, the formulation and implementation of relevant new media policies, and the allocation and cooperation of institutions and departments. Policy convergence, which may ensure the institutional environment and optimize current resources, is the most pressing convergence between new media and traditional media.

Conclusion

Focusing on the perspectives of TV program content, technology, and policy, this paper examines the transformation of Shanxi Radio and Television Station in the era of media convergence. It delves into TV program content tailored to audience demand, advancements in TV production technology, the impact of broadcasting policies, and financial support for TV programs. Drawing from relevant literature and observations of Shanxi Radio and Television programs, this paper discusses the opportunities and challenges faced by Chinese traditional TV media.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study. Shanxi Radio and Television Station, being one of the 189 TV stations in China, does not represent the entirety of Chinese television media. Consequently, the findings of this research may not be universally applicable to all TV stations across the country. Nevertheless, this study provides valuable insights into the transformation processes and challenges experienced by a regional broadcaster, offering a useful starting point for further investigations into the broader Chinese television media landscape.

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