Media Convergence: On Idea Transformation of Management

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Abstract. Media convergence has become an unavoidable subject in the development of China's television media. However, the media convergence in China's radio and television industry is far from mature. Still experimenting, it only sees superficial, unstable and unsustainable media cooperation. Against this background, the direction and path of media convergence are determined by the middle and senior management's awareness and understanding of it. The paper tries to highlight this point by discussing the significance, necessity and urgency of idea transformation among middle and senior management.

Introduction

Media convergence was advocated by president Xi Jinping in the Fourth Meeting of the Central Leading Group for Deepening Overall Reform in Aug.18, 2014. The convergence of traditional media and emerging ones has to be promoted, in line with the rules of journalism and internet development. Now it has become an unavoidable subject in the growth of China's television media.

First and foremost, effective integration of old and new media requires a clear definition of new media. Though various definitions have been put forward in business and academic circles, none of them have been widely accepted. However, they do have one point in common: as innovative media forms, new media derive from technology advancement, especially telecommunication and internet technologies. Therefore, many researchers believe mobile multimedia (text messages, games, news and TV programs on mobile phones), instant message tools, virtual communities, e-mails, public forums, blogs, micro-blogs, SNS, outdoor LED, should all be included in the category of new media.

Since the concept of "new media" evolves with technology advancement, the key to its understanding is the meaning of "new". According to Modern Chinese Dictionary, "new", as opposed to "old", is “recently experienced or recently emerging”. In essence, it is "turning better". So "new media" is a relative notion. It is the new media forms developed from traditional ones such as newspapers, radio and television. The concept of "new media" in this paper is used as opposed to TV media, encompassing the maturing internet media, mobile media with telecommunication technology as its core, as well as digital and internet televisions which integrate multiple media technologies.

Management refers to those who give direct supervision and directions at work. They are responsible for contributing to the organization with their position and knowledge, exerting tangible influence on its operation and accomplishment of its goals. Apart from the power to be in charge, modern theories stress responsibilities on the part of management. Management can
be generally classified into front-line management, middle management and senior management. Front-line management are those who are in direct charge of workers' daily routines, and who ensure the implement of instructions from superiors. Middle management are those in between. They are supposed to creatively combine superior guidelines with practice in their departments, and to give effective directions to front-line managers. Superior management are those at the top of an organization, who bear overall responsibility, communicate with the outside world and draw up the guidelines for the organization to follow. Favorite environment has to be created and correct decisions be made by them. Discussion in the paper involves middle and superior management, especially the significance of their idea transformation in media convergence in radio and television industry.

Management's Mode of Thinking and Ideas: Decisive Factors in Strategic Change

A significant majority of the studies on media convergence focuses on media integration on levels of operation, technology and tactic, such as the channels, platforms, markets etc, which are major components of China's media convergence strategy. Faced with such a new topic and challenge, China's, even the world's, media convergence are still at the start-off stage. In recent years, some radio and television stations have tried integration and interaction with internet media. Due to the limitation of systems, such integrations are just superficial, unstable and unsustainable, far from real convergence. Therefore, with regard to radio and television enterprises, strategy of new-old media convergence in this context requires the transformation of ideas, awareness of multiple-screen media era, consensus on development of new media and their integration, as well as a strong sense of urgency.

Gary Hamel argues that management in the 21st century is not very different from the 20th century management, except that the 21st century sees an unprecedented explosion of technology and information, and is full of potential opportunities. An innovative manager should be open to changes of time, be ready to adjust the resources at his or her disposal, and accordingly carry out active strategic change. Strategic change is the systematic transformation of strategic components in terms of their features, allocation or structures. The ideal transformation sees harmonious combination of strategic components inside the enterprise, as well as harmony with its outside environment. In addition, strategic changes of enterprise culture, organizational structure and management system are also involved. In other words, strategic change is essentially the restructuring of strategic components.

Convergence of old and new media is the strategic change by traditional radio and television media to adjust to drastic changes in its external environment and internal conditions in the multi-screen era. Its objective is to follow the market-oriented reform, to innovate its traditional business mode, organizational structure and resource distribution. Components in strategic change not only include static elements above mentioned, but also dynamic factors such as the cognitive process of the management, and decision-making procedures. So it's also about the comprehensive structure of dynamic components and the process of decision-makers' awareness, recognition and solution of various problems. As a 1996 Doz & Thanheiser report reveals, it usually takes a strong top-bottom drive to break with conventions for the sake of enterprise strategic change. The key to China's media convergence lies in whether the management on each level can be aware of the strategic environment, give it a full analysis, change their own thinking pattern, and adopt new ideas. As the "nerve center", the
management's outlook and views determine television media's path, scope and scale of development. The semi-political Chinese characteristics of China's media management further enforce the decisive role of management in face with this epic media transformation.

Management's Awareness of Necessity of Strategic Change

The starting point of management's idea transformation is to be aware of the necessity of new-old media convergence. The rapid growth and expansion of emerging media inevitably push traditional media to break with conventions and take the initiative for transformation. The sweeping force of new media deems its traditional counterparts old and outdated. It penetrates every corner of our lives, redefining our way of acquiring knowledge, communicating and getting informed. Ma Li, deputy editor-in-chief of People's Daily, chairwoman of the board of People.com in a 2014 lecture mentioned one of her personal experience. On a visit to Xiamen University, a college student there told Ms. Ma He seldom logged on news websites or used news apps, let alone read newspapers. His sole access to current affairs was the pop-up news windows while playing PC games. The remark was a wake-up call for the chairwoman to be aware of the vulnerability of traditional media faced with the challenge of emerging ones. Without timely strategic change, their traditional territories will be encroached on by the latter. The quote: "In the age of internet, if you dare not trespass, you end up seeing trespassers come and rob you of everything." reflects her full awareness of the urgency of media convergence. Apparently, with the leaps and bounds of communication technology, new media based on internet and smart phones is becoming a major channel of cultural transmission and is gaining substantial influence on people's living standards. Nowadays, the steady growth of internet sector has become the primary driving force of China's economy, as can be seen in the following statistics:

Statistics released by eMarketer show 2014 China's smartphone users exceed 500 million, far ahead of America and India.

According to the report issued by China Internet Network Information Center, until June in 2014, there were 632 million internet users in China, accounting for 46.9% of the total population. The internet users on smartphones (527 million) took up 83.4%, up from 81.0% in 2013, to surpass traditional PC net users (80.9%) for the first time.

Obviously new media has taken over our daily lives. Its rise boosts innovation of media forms, and changes people's habit of interaction and consumption. Today the internet video industry are going through an explosive development, with audience of videos on internet and smartphones totaling 775 million. It is growing extensively and intensively, cutting a fair share from the cake of traditional television market. Television stations' established advantage of being sheltered by political policies are being undermined by the ever-present new media. It's imperative that China's television media pursue convergence with new media for the sake of its long-term development.

Management's Awareness of Urgency of Strategic Change

Ever since its birth, China's television media has been leading traditional mainstream media as their indisputably influential and credible representative. However, with the advent of internet age, it's overwhelmingly dominant position has been shaken. Though television
remains a viewing priority in daily life, the CSM media research statistics show an annual 2% decline in the audience.

What is mainstream media? What criteria can we use to make the judgment? In 2004 Xinhua News Agency put forward 6 standards for the mainstream media: 1. Mouthpiece of government, the party and people; incomparable authority and special influence domestically and globally. 2. Advocate of mainstream ideology and values of the society, in China's case, the socialist ideology and corresponding values. 3. Strong credibility, with its reports and comments being widely read, reposted, quoted and analyzed at home and abroad. 4. Record of historical development such as major political, economic, social and cultural events. 5. Target audience: representative groups of every social class. 6. Considerably large audience. Except for the first "mouthpiece" function, television media has no advantage over new media such as internet and smartphones. Actually, the new media has displayed their edge in terms of all the other standards.

Statistics by China Internet Network Information Center shows in the first half of 2014 China's internet users spend an average 25.9 hours each week online, 0.9 hours more than the second half of 2013. In addition to traditional consumption and entertainment, areas like finance and medical services are also moving online to satisfy the needs of internet users. Online business and social media are making strides as well. Internet communities created by microblog and WeChat enable a radical break from conventional social interaction pattern. Fast, convenient, interactive and smart, the new media draws a large number of followers. Smartphone users increase even faster than PC internet users, fueling China's internet population. Smartphone media has accumulated much more influence than newspapers and radio. It is now catching up with, if not overtaking internet and television media.

China's television media are mostly state-owned enterprises. After decades of reform and evolution, though serving as "mouthpiece" of the mainstream ideology remains its inherent duty, its functions have extended from propaganda to the market. In the current society of pluralism and age of information explosion, in the hope of taking the initiative and consolidating its position, the television media has to integrate advantages of new media forms, by tapping into the resources, production factors, information, technology, platforms, terminals, talents, etc.

References

