

# Adaptation and Innovation: Exploring the Development Path of Municipal TV Programs

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**Abstract:** *Municipal TV programmes are facing the dilemma of being squeezed out of the market due to the rapid development of integrated media, shortage of talents, lagging technology and other factors. Now that access to information has increased and the audience of grassroots television stations has declined drastically, is there still a need for municipal television programmes. This study describes the current situation and importance of the survival of county and municipal television programmes, and concludes with a discussion of the development path for county and municipal television programmes to break through the predicament. Municipal TV programmes should focus on talent development, be close to people's livelihoods, and actively integrate with new media to find a path of innovative development.*

**Keywords:** *Municipal television programmes; Livelihoods; Rural development*

## 1. Introduction

With the country's emphasis on communications engineering, China's network information technology has reached a stage of high-speed development, all kinds of television stations, network television programmes, short videos and other multimedia platforms are emerging in an endless stream, the medium of dissemination of information has increased, even in the fields and villages, the people will be able to receive news from all over the country and see television programmes in all provinces and on all platforms. The market for municipal television programmes will inevitably be squeezed, not only that, municipal television programmes are also faced with a shortage of professionals, technology lags and other problems. Faced with many unfavourable factors, municipal television programmes must seek new development paths to adapt to the new environment and challenges.

## 2. Survival of municipal television programmes

### 2.1. The impact of the rapid development of integrated media

In the era when cable television and network television were not yet popular, rural residents mainly received television signals through antennas, which received only a few television channels, and viewers generally could only watch television programmes from the CCTV and the provincial television stations. Rural viewers have fewer choices, so municipal TV stations have consolidated a large township audience, attracting many local brands to advertise, and giving municipal TV stations room for positive market development.

However, with the rapid spread of cable TV in the 21st century, as well as the government's focus on the spiritual and cultural needs of the people, the government developed the HUHUTONG project. This project is aimed at the vast rural collectives throughout China, with the advantages of low cost and high speed, compared with antenna TV can receive about 56 sets of TV channels. The HU HU Tong project currently has 134 million subscribers nationwide as of June 2023, according to the National Radio and Television Administration. It effectively solves the problem of rural people watching TV, enriches the spiritual and cultural life of rural residents, and broadens the channels for villagers to obtain information.

Later, the rapid development of integrated media led to the rapid expansion of the market of online TV and short videos. Whether in the countryside or in the city, for a small amount of money you can buy a mobile phone and download all sorts of video apps for free and watch a wide range of TV

programmes and messages from all over the world. These programmes cover all kinds of different areas such as comedy, travel, beauty, education, science and so on. They cater to the different needs of the population and can even serve a social purpose. Various brands have also set their sights on online TV and short videos, where viewers click on links that can be on the programme to go directly to the webpage to buy the product, making it easier to drive traffic to the brand.

The development of integrated media has opened up the public's eyes and provided them with more choices. Compared with provincial TV programmes and network TV programmes, municipal TV programmes are not rich in content, not technologically developed enough and not diversified enough in terms of subject matter, so the TV station's audience ratio will be squeezed, the ratings will be drastically lowered and the market will face a crisis.

### ***2.2. Shortage of professional television personnel in townships***

Many well-known provincial TV stations have completed their market transformation, with Hunan Satellite TV, for example, building the online media platform Mango TV, which produces numerous self-produced programmes on the online media platform. And the hosting team has been optimised to create hosting stars with high recognition, national popularity and audience appeal. A series of initiatives have not only stabilised a huge subscriber base for Hunan TV and Mango TV, but also attracted many professional talents. Well-known TV stations and online media platforms have broad practice platforms, advanced technology and equipment. Moreover, the less restrictive and relatively free play space of network programmes meets the career aspirations, learning requirements and career development expectations of media people. A large number of excellent professionals have flocked to the head provincial TV station team under these favourable conditions.

The municipal media industry is generally faced with the problems of high-end talents not being able to come in, outstanding talents not being able to stay, incumbent talents not being able to move from one post to another, and inefficient personnel not being able to be dismissed.<sup>[1]</sup> Municipal TV stations often fail to provide favourable treatment, do not have the funds to introduce advanced equipment and technology, and the content of transmission will be limited, resulting in high-end TV talents are reluctant to sink to the grassroots units. Some municipal TV stations do not provide much learning channels and reasonable promotion space for serving staff, and the limited space for development leads to loss of motivation of the staff and makes them prone to ideological fluctuations. We must regard talent as our primary resource, and innovation as our primary driver of growth. Without the introduction of advanced talents and technology and without programme innovation, the television market will continue to be squeezed and be caught in a vicious circle.

## **3. The need for the existence of municipal television programmes**

Even though municipal TV programmes are facing such severe challenges, there are still thousands of municipal TV stations in China, which still positively influence the value orientation of the public, pay attention to the local livelihood, and transmit the local message to the outside world, so there is no denying their market and the necessity of their existence.

### ***3.1. Influencing the values of the masses***

The development of integrated media and the care of national policies have greatly reduced the cost of television viewers, but it cannot be ignored that there are still poor people who find it difficult to pay for network television. According to statistics, there are 9.02 million left-behind children in China as of 2022, and elderly people living alone also account for more than 50 percent of the total number of elderly people in China, among which there is a large number of groups who do not know how to use mobile phones and the Internet or have difficulty in paying for the Internet. CCTV and municipal TV stations, which are free to watch, may become their only source of information.

Television has more credibility than any other communication channel and is the mouthpiece of local government and an important tool for emergency management. In response to some controversial major events, it can take timely measures to deal with them, present the truth to the audience in the first instance through on-site interviews and reports, refute radical views on public platforms, and correctly guide social opinion. In response to the limitations of rural children's education, many municipal television stations offer educational programmes, broadcasting animated films with positive content that open the eyes of rural children, enrich their knowledge, provide spiritual guidance and emotional

values, and subconsciously influence viewers' values in the right direction.

### ***3.2. Delivering a local message to the outside world***

Municipal television is not only about getting the news from the outside world in, it's about getting the voices from the inside out. Each village has its own style of local culture, and it is difficult for the higher-level television stations to comprehensively radiate each region, while other media means will focus on the hot spots where traffic is focused, which will result in a situation of lack of rural information dissemination. Municipal TV stations shoulder an important responsibility at this time, and should try their best to explore local characteristics, give full play to regional advantages, create local IP, tell local stories to the outside world, and promote cultural exchanges and inheritance in townships.

The breadth of outward dissemination is by no means limited to the domestic sphere. The explosion of Cun BA has driven the tourism industry in Rongjiang and Taijiang counties in Guizhou Province to grow significantly, and the economic growth rate of Taijiang in 2022 ranked first in the province. At the same time, it has attracted the attention of the world, competing with the media in the United Kingdom and Singapore to report successively, spreading the Chinese vernacular culture and rural vitality overseas. The explosion of Cun BA cannot be separated from the joint dissemination of TV media and online media. In recent years, the major TV stations in Guizhou Province have been actively reporting on Cun BA, as well as Rongjiang County's vigorous propaganda: let the mobile phone become a new farming tool, let the data become a new agricultural capital, let the live broadcast become a new agricultural work, and accelerate the development of the countryside with the help of media dissemination, and promote cultural identity.

Through TV programmes, not only the good things in the countryside can be spread outwards, but also the problems in the countryside. Taking advantage of the speed and breadth of news dissemination, it is possible to make television special programmes on the difficulties faced by townships in their development, elaborating in detail on the problems that villages are facing, such as the uneven distribution of resources, the stagnation of agricultural products, and the failure to keep up with agricultural technology and management. Appeals are made to higher authorities in order to attract more policy and economic support.

### ***3.3. Focus on local livelihood***

Television is an important means of guiding and monitoring public opinion and can play a role in monitoring and criticising the style, corruption and performance of government officials. Municipal television stations should be more socially responsible and serve the people, tie the focus of news coverage to the people, gain insight into the needs of the people, the pain points and hot spots in society, and be on the same page with rural residents. People friendly is the biggest advantage of county and municipal TV stations, for influential media platforms, traffic is an important indicator of the value of the news, but in the countryside, many small things that are easy to be ignored, tangible impact on the lives of the masses. County and municipal TV stations can be peer-to-peer to solve local people's problems and focus on their lives. On the agricultural front, practical local agricultural knowledge can be popularised among residents. In the social aspect, it can publicise the good deeds and good deeds around us and promote positive energy. On the legal front, the necessary legal knowledge can be popularised in a more interesting way. In terms of cultural and sports activities, local cultural and arts enthusiasts can be invited to co-organise cultural evenings and cultural and sports activities. Grass-roots television programmes are always close to the people's livelihood, caring for the people and responding to their aspirations.

## **4. Exploring the development path of municipal television programmes**

### ***4.1. Professionals are in dire need of transformation and upgrading***

The rapid development of the era of integrated media also has new requirements for the quality of television talent. Municipal television programmes in the search for innovation on the road, there has been the problem of operating staff professional and technical level can not meet the needs of the work, the transformation and upgrading of talent is a problem that can not be ignored. It is necessary to strengthen the political education of the workforce, and even more importantly, to strengthen business training, and even to broaden the content of learning. Television work itself is orientated towards the

whole society and the whole field of work, and it is possible to learn about one's own profession and at the same time, to dabble in other fields as well.

For the training of the hosts of the programmes, it is important to focus on the subjectivity and diversity of the hosts, who should not only be able to speak, but also sometimes act as planners and editors, and should be able to think about the programmes from a planning perspective. Presenters in dialect areas also have to make the local dialect their learning target. For example, in Guangdong, many Cantonese news and variety programmes have been launched, and a total of 145 Cantonese anchors have been recruited by the Guangdong Radio and Television Station. As a carrier of Lingnan culture, Cantonese dialect has an outstanding advantage in spreading the outstanding culture of Lingnan,<sup>[2]</sup> and this is also true for other dialect areas. By mastering the dialect, the presenter can, firstly, effectively communicate with the local people and convey the voice of the people, and secondly, he can fulfil the function of language demonstration and cultural transmission.

It is also important to bring in technical personnel who understand media outreach, can innovate programme content and are familiar with new media networks. Under the new development situation, the communication form of the programme is rich and diversified, the technical level of the practitioners should have higher requirements, and the editorial staff should carry out content innovation, have Internet thinking, and reasonably enhance the depth and breadth of the programme. In terms of media outreach, it is necessary to recruit or cultivate talents who understand the skills of media outreach. Television stations should learn to probe into the concerns of the grassroots, know how to sift and integrate massive amounts of information, strictly control the content, select news with high value and strong influence, and carry out reasonable planning and editing.

All talent development cannot be separated from institutional and financial security. Many municipal television stations are faced with the plight of an ageing system and an easy loss of staff, so it is all the more important to improve the mechanism for attracting talent and to focus on the soundness and perfection of the talent management system, so as to ensure the reasonable and scientific management of staff. Work units should give staff reasonable and transparent promotion channels, communication opportunities and learning space, and create a good employment environment in order to mobilise the work of media staff. Municipal TV stations can also take local young talents as key training objects, activate their communication vitality in building villages, and inspire young TV talents to return to their hometowns to contribute to rural revitalisation.

#### ***4.2. Getting closer to people's livelihoods at the grassroots level***

Showing the countryside to the outside world is not simply about promoting the beauty of the countryside scenery, the tidiness of the environment and the civilisation of the countryside, but also about presenting the reality of rural life in a vivid and accurate manner.<sup>[3]</sup> Grass-roots television programmes must not be detached from the masses, and must establish the concept of "close to people's livelihoods and serving the people". Focusing the news on things related to the people's lives or of interest to the people is the only way to trigger the resonance of the people. Grass-roots television programmes should raise the awareness of responsibility, have a spirit of commitment, play a role in actively promoting the correct values to the townships and cities of the masses, focusing on local good people and typical deeds, so that the masses feel the depth and temperature of the news works.

Most of the viewers of municipal TV stations are rural residents, so the public issues that need to be addressed urgently in the countryside are also the focus of county and municipal TV programmes that should be focused on. Whether rural education, medical care and public facilities are perfect, whether rural environmental management and resource allocation are put into practice, how to provide educational support for rural children and narrow the education gap between urban and rural areas, how to effectively popularise and disseminate knowledge of agricultural production, laws and regulations, and medical knowledge in the countryside, and how to help governance to the best of its ability in solving the rural people's livelihoods and public and social problems, these are all issues that grass-roots TV stations should think about.

Local TV stations also need to combine the local humanities environment, give full play to the humanities advantage, and dig deep into the local cultural resources. The folk culture, characteristic villages and traditional festivals of some ethnic minority villages can become programme materials. Local intangible cultural heritage should be excavated, the inheritor should be interviewed, and the intrinsic charm of rural culture should be released through the medium of television.

#### ***4.3. Opening accounts on short videos and other online platforms***

Although standing in the traditional media track, municipal television stations should also seize the opportunity of integrated media development. Traditional media in the new media thriving development environment, exposed the slow speed of dissemination, less interaction with the audience, social media attributes of weak disadvantages. A number of mainstream accounts such as the Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's Office and CCTV have opened accounts on Tik Tok to publish short videos. They only intercept the core point of view of the release of a few dozen seconds of short video, with simple and concise expression and precise information points, so that the advice spread more widely and more quickly. These official accounts play an advanced role as a model for municipal TV stations, which are currently rarely seen on these short video platforms, and grassroots TV stations should also do a good job of integrating with new media. In 2023, Tik Tok released a report, which showed that in 2022, the number of new rural content on the platform totalled over 459 million, with a play volume of over 23,901 million, and that these recordings of the good life in the countryside triggered 41.5 billion likes from netizens. The whole platform released more than 20.7 million short videos of non-heritage in Jiangsu region, with more than 2.4 billion user likes and more than 1.24 million live broadcasts, which brought a positive impact on the development of Jiangsu Huaiju opera, Kunqu opera, and other performing arts. In July 23rd, Shanxi Province carried out a live broadcasting activity on the short video platform with the purpose of helping farmers, and promoted Shanxi special commodities such as mature vinegar to the audience, with a turnover of more than 30 million yuan. Municipal television stations can also follow the example of learning to open a short video platform account, fit the local reality and through the combination of live broadcasts, fit the local reality, publicise the local characteristics of agricultural products, do a good job of helping farmers to sell, promote the local brand, and alleviate the problem of stagnant sales of agricultural products.]Local TV stations can also do some cultural and tourism promotion, interpretation of local policies, broadcast local good deeds and hot news through short videos, and disseminate local culture accurately and quickly.

The low-cost production threshold of short videos will not bring too heavy a financial burden to municipal TV stations, but the large audience, which can bring high traffic and high yield, is very cost-effective relative to the production of programmes. Secondly, the fragmentation of the communication mode caters to the contemporary audience's preferred mode of information reception, which is in the rhythm of the current audience reading. Once again, short videos can attract customers in a quick and simple way by directly putting links to related programmes or products on the video webpage. The credibility possessed by official accounts residing on short video platforms can give the masses a sense of security, reasonably control the unwanted intrusion of capital and traffic, and guide the market to operate reasonably.

#### ***4.4. Strengthening communication with the public***

Although the online platform programmes have the viewer communication mode of open bullet screen and comments, due to the wide audience and many voices, the viewers' opinions can seldom be heard by the platform, and the viewers mostly use this as a way to express their moods, and the programmes seldom make adjustments and changes because of individual's ideas. However, municipal programmes are closer to the local audience, and their people-friendly nature brings more expectations from viewers, who are eager to have a channel to express their thoughts. Therefore, grass-roots television stations must continue to open up their audience hotlines, focus on the interactive part of their programmes, go down to the field more often to conduct interviews with the residents, and give the microphone to the public to listen to the voice of the people. It's also essential to broaden the channels to include audience opinions. In the new media environment, it is possible to open a WeChat official account and other means to expand information sources and facilitate communication with the public. The feedback received can not be left to chance, it is necessary to regularly collate the feedback in the calls and messages, to focus on focusing on the collective voice of the masses is very high or really hurt the interests of the masses, the unit should carry out regular meetings to discuss how to carry out the work of television to help the masses to solve the difficult problems of life. At the same time, if the TV station receives comments and suggestions on the programme, it should pay particular attention to them, so as to continuously optimise the content and form of the programme, innovate the shape of the programme and improve the quality of the programme.

## 5. Conclusions

At present, the development of municipal television programmes affects the spiritual construction and cultural dissemination of the inhabitants of our countryside, and to a certain extent can help urban and rural development. Even in the face of the impact of the rapid development of the integrated media and the predicament brought about by the shortage of professionals, grassroots TV stations should strive to turn difficulties into opportunities, endeavour to adapt to the development environment of the integrated media, optimize the training of talents and the management mode, and continue to give full play to their strengths in paying attention to people's livelihoods and listening to the voices of the people. To open up the market for municipal TV programmes and attract more viewers, but also to help revitalise the countryside in this way.

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