

Research on Convergence Media Construction of Chinese Universities

-- Take the Pilot Universities of Educational Convergence Media Construction as an Example

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Abstract: In the new media era, convergence media construction of universities is a new platform of news publicity and image building of universities. It plays an irreplaceable role in expanding influence, reshaping its image and conveying campus culture. The research object of this paper is 8 universities which are the pilot universities of China's educational convergence media construction. It is found that there are some problems in university convergence media construction, such as media positioning separation, low usage of convergence media distribution tools. Meanwhile, the role of convergence media center is not prominent. This study shows that it is important to find out the role orientation of convergence media, enrich the content theme of convergence media, and strengthen the centralized management of convergence media, in order to enhance the communication power and influence of university convergence media.

Keywords: Convergence media, Campus media integration, Media construction.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of information technology, the integration of media has become the main trend of campus media in Chinese universities. According to the communication characteristics and advantages of each platform, integrating resources and information communication channels to achieve the content compatibility and win-win benefits of each platform has become an important development direction of university publicity. Ithiel de Sola Pool of Massachusetts Institute of Technology was the first person who proposed the concept of "The Convergence of Modes" in his book *The Technologies of Freedom* in 1983[1]. He believed that the development of digital electronic technology would lead to the convergence of historically distinct communication forms, and various media showed a trend of multi-function integration. When Andrew Nachison, director of the Media Research Center of the American Press Association, mentioned "media convergence", he supposed it was an alliance between digital media organizations and integration of traditional media[2]. In 2005, Professor W.Cai of Renmin University of China took the lead in introducing the concept of media convergence, which attracted extensive attention in China[3].

In terms of the construction of university convergence media, Y.N.Ci proposed that the university convergence media center urgently needs to integrate three functions which are news publicity, online ideological and political education for college students and inside-school practical training of media talents[4]. J.Huang analyzed the problems existing in the platform of ideological and political education in universities from the perspective of convergence media and offered a proposal for the construction of media platform[5]. L.S.Wang explored a new idea of promoting campus culture construction in higher vocational colleges by using convergence media. Also, China attached great importance to the integrated development of university media[6]. In 2019 and 2020, a total of 30 first and second batch of pilot universities of educational convergence media

construction were established, including Peking University, Tsinghua University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, Xi'an Jiaotong University, Zhejiang University, Wuhan University, Sichuan University and other top universities.

Therefore, this paper takes the pilot universities of educational convergence media construction with the highest level of convergence media construction in China as the research objects, carries out research on the level of convergence media construction in these universities, and expands the boundary of convergence media research in universities. This paper helps to reveal the development status, communication characteristics and influencing factors of convergence media in universities, and provides suggestions for the development of convergence media in all universities in China.

2. Theories and Assumptions

The media convergence of universities is different from the media convergence advocated by news media institutions. This paper evaluates the construction level of convergence media in universities from three aspects: content convergence, distribution convergence and management convergence.

2.1. Content Convergence

Convergence media is a media form of intensive information production and dissemination. Convergence media unifies the original relatively independent content production departments and production platforms, and comprehensively collects and deeply processes media elements of text, pictures, audios and videos, so that the information can be disseminated by multiple terminals and covered by all kind of media types, and the information can be spread in the largest breadth and depth, forming a resultant force[7]. Social media is a media dedicated to news gathering, editing and distribution activities. It has more audiences and a more professional division of labor. Also, it has advantages in content convergence. However, news media in universities tends to fight alone on various platforms, lacking of the

mechanism for integrating different media resources. Therefore, this paper analyzes whether the themes of the content disseminated by various media in universities and colleges are the same, so as to evaluate the level of college media content convergence. Due to objective restrictions, campus broadcast, newspapers and other media contents can not be obtained. The types of university media studied in this paper are mainly focused on Microblog, WeChat DouYin official account.

2.2. Distribution Convergence

Compared with the social media, the publicity department and the news center of universities have fewer full-time staff engaged in news media, which is conducive to the distribution integration of traditional and new media in universities, such as the synchronization of distribution time. By improving the university's media integration level, universities can distribute major events at the same time. In case of important events, universities can distribute the events or announcements by using the new media platform matrix, so that they can convey the same information and expand the media impact [8]. Therefore, this paper analyzes the synchronization of the distribution time of the same content by various media types of universities to evaluate the level of distribution convergence.

2.3. Management Convergence

Compared with social media, the management integration of university convergence media has taken the lead. By promoting the construction of the convergence media center, universities will manage all types of media in a unified way, monitor the content and data distributed by different platform accounts of the school. At the same time, big data formed by various media can be used to provide clue gathering, theme planning, and statistical analysis of media communication for the entire media operation. Universities should focus topics

related to teachers, students and the society, concentrate on big data collection, tracking, mining and analysis of popular websites, and refine content constantly, making news publicity work under the rules of the Internet. Therefore, the convergence media center plays a decisive role in improving the quality, level and effectiveness of news publicity. Therefore, this paper analyzes the construction level of university convergence media center to evaluate the level of university convergence media management integration.

3. Analysis and Results

3.1. Overview of Pilot Units of Educational Convergence Media Construction

This paper selected the top 20[9] universities in the pilot units of educational convergence media construction as the research objects. As the top universities in China, they have obvious advantages in both the talent reserve of convergence media and capital investment, representing the highest level of convergence media construction in Chinese universities. Therefore, the analysis of these pilot universities of educational convergence media construction can provide reference for other universities.

As the top universities in China, Peking University and Tsinghua University have far more followers on Weibo and Douyin platform than other universities(The number of WeChat followers is private and not disclosed to the public, so only the estimated data can be inferred based on their public data).Wuhan University is second only to Tsinghua University and Peking University in the number of followers of the most popular three new media platforms. The WeChat official account of Shanghai Jiaotong University and Zhejiang University is their weakness. Xi'an Jiaotong University and Sichuan University have relatively few new media followers among the eight pilot universities.

Table 1. Number of followers of new media in some pilot educational convergence media construction universities
(Unit: thousand, Data as of October 2022)

University	Weibo	WeChat (estimated)	Douyin
Peking University	4821	1000+	3773
Tsinghua University	5289	1000+	6690
Wuhan University	3212	1000+	1211
Shanghai Jiaotong University	3087	659	1024
Zhejiang University	2270	926	1570
Huazhong University of Science and Technology	1448	1000+	969
Xi'an Jiaotong University	1977	690	716
Sichuan University	955	1000+	225

3.2. Analysis of Convergence Media Construction Level

This paper selects the content distributed by 8 universities on Weibo, WeChat and Douyin platform before October 2022 as the analysis object, and evaluates the convergence media construction level of the 8 universities by analyzing the content convergence rate, distribution convergence rate and the construction level of convergence media center.

This paper uses the content convergence rate to evaluate the level of content convergence. Content Convergence Rate=Number of content with the same theme distributed on Weibo, WeChat and Douyin platform/MIN(Number of

content distributed on Weibo/WeChat/Douyin platform).

This paper uses the distribution convergence rate to evaluate the level of distribution integration. Distribution Convergence Rate=Number of content distributed on the same topic and the same date on Weibo, WeChat and Douyin platform/Number of content with the same theme distributed on Weibo, WeChat and Douyin platform.

This paper uses the construction level of convergence media center to evaluate the level of management convergence. The construction level of convergence media center includes three status: not built/under construction/completed.

Table 2. Convergence media construction level of some pilot universities of educational convergence media construction

University	Content Convergence Rate	Distribution Convergence rate	Construction level of Convergence Media Center
Peking University	64.86%	50.00%	Completed
Tsinghua University	30.23%	38.46%	Under Construction
Wuhan University	76.92%	73.33%	Completed
Shanghai Jiaotong University	21.43%	66.67%	Completed
Zhejiang University	45.16%	71.43%	Completed
Huazhong University of Science and Technology	22.86%	75.00%	Completed
Xi'an Jiaotong University	30.77%	62.50%	Completed
Sichuan University	36.67%	63.64%	Under Construction

3.3. Research Conclusion

This paper selects the content distributed on Weibo, WeChat and Douyin platform by 8 distinct universities ranking top 20 among the pilot universities of educational convergence media construction as research object. Then, this paper uses content analysis method to analyze content convergence rate, distribution convergence rate and construction level of convergence media center to evaluate the convergence media construction level of the 8 universities. The conclusions are as follows.

3.3.1. Obvious Media Positioning Partition

Most universities regard WeChat official account as the official media type, and the distributed content is generally more formal and official, while Weibo and Douyin platform are positioned as more friendly media types. Regularly these universities distributed good morning and good night greetings, campus scenery photography and so on, which are homogeneous to other universities accounts and lack of attraction.

3.3.2. Low Usage of Convergence Distribution Tools

Only one of the eight universities uses the one-stop management tool of new media accounts, which can uniformly manage and monitor new media accounts and undoubtedly improve the efficiency of media operations. At the same time, some universities still use several different personal mobile phone terminals to distribute Weibo content, indicating that their convergence media accounts have not been uniformly managed and distributed.

3.3.3. The Central Role of Convergence Media is not Prominent

The content convergence rate and convergence distribution rate of the two universities which have not built convergence media centers are not high. Therefore, the convergence media center plays an important role in the unified management of convergence media in universities.

3.4. Suggestion

3.4.1. Identify the Role Positioning of Convergence Media

First of all, in terms of media positioning, all kinds of convergence media in universities should not only clarify the positioning of official media, but also strengthen the attributes of self media, especially social attributes, rather than just distributing content in a template way, so as to avoid causing "aesthetic fatigue" of followers. Secondly, in order to stand out among the other convergence media in Chinese universities, convergence media must combine the characteristics of universities to create a label attribute which is different from other universities, such as creating

"university persona" and creating a series of topics with unique university characteristics, etc.

Taking the DouYin account of Wuhan University as an example, some short videos are significantly contributed by ordinary students, which undoubtedly emphasizes its positioning as a window for students to show their ideas and creativity, and encourages students to create attractive short videos to be posted on the platform, so as to form high-quality content to improve video views and school image.

3.4.2. Enrich the Content Topic of Convergence Media

The topic selection determines the content. From the perspective of the theory of usage and satisfaction, the university convergence media not only transmits the authoritative voice of the university, but also needs to meet the information and entertainment needs of teachers and students. Therefore, the convergence media of universities need to deeply study the information and entertainment needs of teachers and students and produce popular and relevant content. In other words, the content must be innovative, imaginative and unexpected.

Take the micro blog of Zhejiang University as an example. Instead of opening a normal "Good Morning and Good Night" micro blog like other official micro blog accounts, Zhejiang University irregularly post a series of topics such as "Xiaoze Simple Stroke Classroom", "Whispers from Xiaozhe", and "Zhejiang University in Film", which are interesting and interactive at the same time in promoting the campus image. At the same time, the micro blog often posts Weibo super topics of Zhejiang University, which gathering people with common interests to discuss and share interesting stories. Weibo super topics of Zhejiang University not only enriches the content of micro blog, but also strengthens the interaction with followers.

3.4.3. Strengthen the Centralized Management of Convergence Media

It is necessary to give full play to the management role of the convergence media center in universities. All kinds of new media accounts should be included in the unified management of the convergence media center. Content scheduling, editing and other work should be carried out in advance. At the same time, professional operators should be introduced to improve the operation level of new media center. In terms of convergence media distribution, this paper proposes one-stop media management tools for all new media accounts and keep real-time monitoring of platform data, thus providing data support for convergence media operation decisions.

Take the convergence media operation center of Communication University of China as an example, established on January 6, 2018, it consists of three parts: the integrated media command center and the multi platform post

system, the all media interactive news studio system, and the integrated media virtualization production platform. Also, it includes 16 subsystems, including media news gathering, editing, production, data visualization, virtual image and text packaging, multi screen matrix display, cloud desktop resource management, and mobile phone interview production. It also provides Alibaba Cloud based big data services.

3.4.4. Give Full Play to the School's Professional Characteristics

Media integration is not just a publicity window of the university. Colleges and universities should integrate more content in a wider range and integrate their own characteristics, such as the development of colleges and universities, academic resources, and effectively use the media integration platform to improve the management level and education level of colleges and universities. Taking Shanghai Jiaotong University as an example, an important feature of its convergence media construction is that it has set up multiple convergence media sub centers based on the advantages and characteristics of different disciplines of the university, joined in the convergence media construction with the advantages of professional disciplines and talents.

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