

# Localization strategies for audience resource development in prefecture-level TV stations in western China

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## Abstract

Under the structure of “four-level TV stations” in China’s TV industry, the rapid development of CCTV and provincial TV stations has a huge impact on the development of China’s prefecture-level TV stations. Due to the economic development lag and the weak fund base, the prefecture-level TV stations in western China are struggling to survive; however, they will not disappear in the future because of their current development. Their special functional attributes determine the inevitability of their existence. From the perspective of audience expansion, this paper will continue to expand the special influence of western prefecture-level TV stations by stabilizing “popular” resources, developing “niche” resources, and expanding audience resources through multi-channel communication.

## Keywords

Western prefecture-level television stations, audience resources, localization.

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## 1. Status Quo of Localization of prefecture-level TV Stations in Western Regions

In order to figure out strategies to develop western China prefecture-level TV stations, the status quo of them is discussed first, which includes current problems and advantages.

### 1.1 Increased market competition

With the deepening of the pace of China’s media integration development, the audience’s access to information is more diversified, the convenient mobile Internet has accelerated the audience diversion, and the TV media’s viewing competition has further intensified. China’s TV media has a pyramid-like structure, with CCTV at the top and provincial TV in the middle; however, while prefecture-level TV stations and city-level TV stations at various levels constitute the bottom. Whether it is for development or survival, there is cruel competition between TV media of all levels. While the competition is becoming more and more fierce, the demand for TV audiences has not increased correspondingly. According to the research data of China Urban TV Station of Prospective Industry Research Institute, it shows: In 2018, Chinese viewers watched TV for 129 minutes per person per day, 10 minutes less than that in 2017, a decrease of 7.2%. The per-view time per visit has been reduced by 36 minutes compared with 2013. In just five years, the time has been shortened by half an hour, and the reduction in duration is close to one-third, which is enough to show that the status of TV in life is declining. At present, the prefecture-level TV stations in western China are caught in the lack of funds, TV channels setting, TV program production, TV drama introduction and other aspects of low level, poor quality, resulting in a decline in the share of advertising, affecting advertising business income, and less advertising revenue makes the funds less, resulting in such a vicious circle.

## 1.2 Local advantage

The western part of China, with its vast territory and large population, is the main living area of Chinese ethnic minorities, and it has a rich and distinctive regional culture. The urbanization paths of various regions also have their own local characteristics, and the development of economy, industry and culture is different. Different from CCTV and provincial satellite TV in the production of news information, variety entertainment, modernization, internationalization, cultural tourism, and the development of mature tourist attractions, the western prefecture-level TV stations have more resources as traditional media resources. With regard to the audio and video resources of the local people's lives, as well as the data research on the living habits, cultural needs and viewing habits of local TV audiences, how can we effectively apply this geographical advantage of grounding in the media era, stabilize and expand ourselves? The audience has become the core key to enhance the competitiveness of western TV stations.

## 2. Localization strategies for audience resource development

According to the status quo mentioned above, some methods will be adopted to help western prefecture-level TV stations to fully harness their advantages and to avoid the disadvantages so that they can survive the fierce competition nowadays.

### 2.1 Stabilizing “mass” resources

The so-called “mass” resources mainly refer to the audience resources with the largest proportion. For the western prefecture-level TV stations, as TV viewers, the group with the largest proportion is mainly retired middle and old aged people with low-level education, average income and fewer activities, just similar to the audience structure of almost all TV viewers. Therefore, striving for the audience resources of this group is the basis and guarantee for stabilizing the audience share of the western prefecture-level TV stations and enhancing their media credibility.

Moreover, unlike the audience structure of the prime time on Friday and Saturday nights, the viewing time of this kind of “mass” resources runs through the leisure time of each day; therefore, the western prefecture-level TV stations can make full use of the geographical advantages and create some programmes that suit their preferences, under the premise of clarifying the viewing characteristics of this audience, including the time nodes, duration, frequency, and preferred program types of watching TV. It can mobilize its passionate programs and cultivate the “mass” resources into the most loyal audience. This group of people tend to pay more attention to news, life information, and emotional programs.

### 2.2 Developing “niche” resources

The so-called “niche” resources are mainly those audiences with higher education level, on-the-job, and higher income levels, briefly speaking, simply office workers. They are the most valuable audience resources of TV stations. The characteristic is that they are busy working during the daytime, causing there is no time for them to watch TV. As a consequence, their viewing time is mostly the evening prime time and weekends.

Because these audience have the highest level of acceptance of emerging media, they can receive the latest information at any time through the Internet, mobile phones, etc. Therefore, they are not interested in news and information programs, while they are often fascinated by the professional programs related to work, various relaxing entertainment programmes, and programs related to youth education and training. If the western prefecture-level TV stations can accurately grasp the viewing characteristics of the audience and make some more targeted special programs according to their viewing needs, then it can also lock the audience share of this group and stabilize the overall viewing level.

### 2.3 Multi-channel communication to expand audience resources

The first is to create high-quality programs for export. Compared with CCTV and provincial satellite TV, even compared with the urban TV in the developed eastern region, the overall strength of the western prefecture-level TV stations has a big gap, and it takes a lot of manpower, capital, and large-scale results to create high-quality programs. It may still be impossible to compete with CCTV and provincial satellite TV. Such a competitive strategy is uneconomical. However, they can dig deep into local cultural characteristics and create differentiated and distinctive cultural tourism programs, which may open the export market more. If you can have high-quality programs for export, you can expand your audience's market through TV programs that are exported.

Secondly, because the current viewing network of prefecture-level TV stations in the western region still covers the local network and less covers the inter-regional TV network, which will result in no cross-over of the audiences in each region. If regional and municipal TV stations can carry out regional cooperation and cover cross-regional viewing network, they can dramatically increase the audience, which is currently being implemented in local areas.

Take the cross-regional coverage of the TV network in Liangshan and Panzhihua in the Panxi area of Sichuan Province as an example. Panzhihua carried out cross-regional cooperation with the neighboring Chuxiong of Yunnan Province in addition to cooperation with Liangshan of Sichuan Province. This mode of cooperation will certainly become an important channel in the future of regional cooperation.

For example, the integrated and co-urbanized cities of Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Zone, of the 1+7 cities of Chengdu Economic Zone and of the cities of Sichuan 8+3 Regional Cooperation, will have more and more cooperation foundations and cooperation opportunities. This is also a channel to effectively expand the audience.

Thirdly, under the general trend of the convergence of emerging media, western TV stations should update their traditional development concepts and cooperate with mobile TV, mobile TV and Internet service providers to expand TV programs through emerging media and media network platforms. The scope of communication can also effectively expand the audience.

## 3. Conclusion

In an era of rapid development of information media and increasingly fierce competition in television media, the relatively special industry of the media industry is facing new challenges. China's TV media is still in the initial stage of entering the full and complete market competition as a part of the government's implementation of its administrative functions in accordance with the administrative regional settings. Due to the oversupply of TV channel resources, all TV channels are seeking a reasonable development path to break the restrictions of the administrative structure back to the market principle of survival of the fittest. Western prefecture-level TV stations should make full use of their geographical advantages to clarify the target audience - local people and pay close attention to their lives. In the channel settings, column start-ups and program production, the target audience is fully taken as the starting point, thus highlighting the local cultural characteristics. Western prefecture-level TV stations should extract, disseminate and feedback the information audience most want to know from the perspective of local people to establish an authoritative media image of local TV stations in the region. They can create influential and distinctive local TV media through localization of audience resources, localization of program resource development, and localization of advertisement development.

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