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Research on the Urban Communication Mechanism of Low-altitude Media Integration from the Perspective of Media Convergence

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Abstract

In the context of the deep development of media convergence, low-altitude media has become a new business model for urban communication, providing a new path for urban cultural dissemination and brand building. This study, based on the "media convergence" theory, explores how "low-altitude media" that emerged under the dual drive of low-altitude economy and media convergence has restructured the urban communication paradigm. The research adopts a combination of case analysis and network ethnography methods, and is conducted from five integration dimensions: content, technology, channels, subjects, and industries. The study finds that low-altitude media has formed a multi-dimensional collaborative communication system through AIGC empowerment of cultural IPs, "AI + 5G + Beidou" technology support, three-dimensional channel construction, multi-party collaboration, and cross-industry integration. This research aims to enrich the practical dimension of media convergence theory, provide a theoretical perspective for understanding intelligent media reshaping urban public life and expanding media convergence forms, and offer practical paths and strategic suggestions for low-altitude media to participate in urban communication.

Keywords

Low-altitude multimedia; Media convergence; Urban communication; AI; drone

1. Introduction

In 2024, "low-altitude economy" was included in the "Government Work Report" for the first time, along with bio-manufacturing and commercial aerospace, and was established as an "additional growth engine". Its connotation is defined as: "Centered on low-altitude flight activities, through the integration of new productive factors such as unmanned flight technology and low-altitude intelligent internet, and the interaction with key factors such as airspace resources and market demands, it then drives the development of low-altitude infrastructure, low-altitude aircraft manufacturing, low-altitude operation services, and low-altitude flight support and other fields. " This poli-

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cy positioning means that the low-altitude industry is no longer just a single technical track, but has been endowed with the structural function of driving the transformation of the economic development model. In the same year, the News and Publicity Center of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology jointly launched the formulation of the "Low-altitude Media Innovation Application Implementation Plan", incorporating "low-altitude media" into the policy framework and defining it as a new technological, new business model and new mode of new technology and new business model integration form, supported by low-altitude technology, led by the new generation of information and communication technology, and constructed through innovative media communication channels to create low-altitude visual scenes, low-altitude public opinion platforms and low-altitude communication platforms.

At the same time, media convergence is undergoing a development stage from "channel addition" to "element integration", and the exploration of new media forms and communication models has become the core issue of the industry. Against this background, "low-altitude media" as a new media form that integrates low-altitude intelligent carriers and digital content has emerged. From the magnificent performance of integrating drones and digital fireworks over Liuyang River to the national majesty and grand narrative brought by aerial shots in military parade ceremonies, it marks that it is becoming a vivid practice of media convergence theory in three-dimensional space, opening up a new dimension of multi-dimensional and immersive image communication for cities and the country.

However, existing research on "low-altitude media" mostly focuses on the technical level. Most studies concentrate on the performance of drones, algorithm optimization and the implementation path of the plan, while there is still insufficient exploration of its media logic as a communication form, especially how the communication elements are recombined in the media convergence perspective, how the space is incorporated into the communication structure, and how aerial images generate meaning. This study takes media convergence theory as the core framework, comprehensively uses case analysis method and literature research method, through the analysis of typical practices such as the multimedia fireworks show over Liuyang River and low-altitude aerial images of national ceremonies, aims to systematically explain the urban communication mechanism of low-altitude media.

2. Literature Review

2.1.Media Integration Theory and Urban Communication

The concept of "Media Convergence" was first proposed by Professor Ithiel De Sola Pool of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1983 to describe the trend of various media presenting a unified multi-functional integration [1]. In 1999, Cui Baoguo officially introduced this concept to China [2]. Since then, domestic scholars have continuously absorbed its theories and restructured them in a local context. With the development of information technology, especially the maturity of Web2.0 technology and the rise of new media forms such as "blogs", media convergence has gradually shown many new characteristics and has become an important driving force for the formation of a mediaized society [3]. Based on the existing viewpoints and the current context, media convergence is a systematic process relying on digital technology, integrating new and old media platforms and business processes, conducting diversified and differentiated content narratives to meet the needs of public interaction experiences. Through literature research, it has been found that the combination of media convergence and urban communication research is particularly close. The city itself can be regarded as a complex network composed of multiple me-

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dia [4], and media convergence profoundly influences the production, flow, and perception of urban information, and its application scenarios are extending from the field of mass communication to specific urban space practices. "Low-altitude space mediaization" is the forefront manifestation of this trend - with the help of integrated media such as drones, the pure physical space is transforming into a new interface for urban communication and a new field for meaning production in the city, from a purely physical space to a programmable and interactive urban communication interface.

The theoretical intersection of media convergence and urban communication is increasingly prominent. The combination of the two is a two-way adaptation of communication technology innovation and urban development needs. Existing studies have initially revealed the intrinsic connection between them: Wei Lu (2019) pointed out when reviewing the research topics of media convergence that the expansion of the spatial dimension is an important direction for the deepening of media convergence theory [5]; Meng Jian and Zhao Yuanke's "Mediaized Society" suggests that media convergence has a reconstructive effect on the urban space communication form [3]. Urban communication, as the core path for constructing urban image, transmitting urban culture, and consolidating social consensus, faces limitations such as a single communication perspective, fixed content expression, and insufficient interactivity in its traditional practice. Media convergence provides a systematic solution to these problems. At the technical integration level, the cross-border integration of technologies such as drone flight control, AI visual generation, and remote sensing mapping breaks the ground perspective limitations of urban communication, providing a new low-altitude observation dimension for the presentation of urban space [6]. Driven by technological empowerment, the communication of urban architectural texture, ecological landscape, and cultural scenes becomes more immersive. At the content integration level, the concept of "cross-form content reconstruction" proposed by Chen Ying [7] is reflected in urban communication as transforming urban historical context and regional symbols into innovative forms such as drone light shows and VR low-altitude cultural tourism images. The Xi'an City Wall drone performance's contemporary expression of the Tang Dynasty cultural symbol realizes the visualization and enhancement of urban cultural dissemination. At the channel integration level, low-altitude live streaming through the distribution of short-video platforms and the linkage of offline viewing scenarios breaks the time and space barriers of urban communication, enabling the Liuyang River Fireworks Show and other urban events to upgrade from regional phenomena to national-level communication hotspots through the coordination of online and offline channels [8]. At the subject integration level, the regulatory guidance of the government, the technical support of technology enterprises, the content creation of media institutions, and the participation and interaction of citizens form a diversified collaborative pattern for urban communication, which conforms to the theoretical judgment of scholars Huang Dan and Li Xuan that "media convergence shifts from business form to social form" [9]. At the level of industrial integration, the cross-border integration of the low-altitude economy and the media industry not only drives the upgrading of urban cultural tourism through low-altitude cultural and tourism dissemination, but also expands the revenue boundaries of the media industry with new business models such as low-altitude advertising and live event broadcasts, achieving a two-way empowerment of urban communication value and economic value.

The integration of the above theoretical framework clearly reveals the inherent compatibility between urban communication and media integration， that is， both are jointly committed to explaining how media technology is embedded and reshapes the structure， imagery and social practice of urban space. The rise of low-altitude media is precisely the inevitable result of the deep penetration of the media integration logic into the three-di-

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mensional urban space. Whether it is the drone group performance or the Liuyang River fireworks show， which obtain a new communication dimension through the low-altitude perspective， all strongly prove this theoretical consensus， providing a powerful theoretical basis and practical cases for the subsequent in-depth analysis of how "low-altitude media" empowers the construction of new urban images， the innovation of spatial experience and the connection of community relationships in this research.

2.2.The current development status of low-altitude multimedia technology

"Low-altitude Media" is not a concept that has an academic definition first and then enters the policy agenda. Instead, its generation path is exactly the opposite: It was first proposed by the industrial authorities in the process of promoting the expansion of low-altitude economic application scenarios, and then gradually received theoretical responses from the academic community and the industry. In August 2024, the News and Publicity Center of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology jointly with various industry parties initiated the formulation of the "Low-altitude Media Innovation Application Implementation Plan", and initially expressed this concept as "Based on low-altitude technology, led by the new generation of information and communication technologies, innovate media communication channels, create low-altitude visual scenes, low-altitude public opinion platforms and low-altitude communication platforms, and give rise to a series of new technologies, new business models and new approaches". The focus of this definition lies in the triple functional positioning of "scene-position-platform": Low-altitude is first understood as a visual scene that can be operated by media, then it is endowed with the attributes of a public opinion guidance and information release position, and finally points to a communication platform system covering cultural publicity, city image, tourism and consumption upgrade. On December 30, 2024, the Low-altitude Media Professional Committee was officially established in Beijing, with the secretariat located at the News and Publicity Center of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. The first batch of members included research institutions, universities, communication enterprises, platform providers and terminal manufacturers, and its working direction was clearly defined as four main lines: technological breakthroughs, standard formulation, data empowerment and pilot promotion. From the preparation and launch in August 2024 to the establishment of the professional committee in December, it took only 161 days, and "Low-altitude Media" completed the initial institutionalization from a conceptual initiative to organizational operation.

In 2025, the Low-altitude Media Office initiated the "Low-altitude Media Application Pilot Cities" solicitation, further operationalizing the concept into assessable application conditions: policy support, industrial support, application scenarios and technical guarantees, and requiring pilot cities to build the airspace below 1000 meters as "information release hubs, city image landmarks, and consumption upgrade engines". On December 14, the first China Low-altitude Media Conference was held in Wenzhou, and 26 "Low-altitude Media Innovation Application Pilot Points" were announced, covering 16 cities including Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Jinan, Haikou, Lanzhou, Xiong'an New Area and 10 cities within Zhejiang Province.

However, the discussions on Low-altitude Media are mainly concentrated on technical governance aspects such as drone formation control, communication latency, airspace management and standard norms. Studies that truly approach it from a communication perspective and view it as a "medium" rather than a "flight application" are still limited. Some studies define it as "a new media form based on low-altitude aircraft and three-dimensional space information technology, for content collection, production and dissemination from an aerial perspective" [10], while others use the theoretical resources of the media environment school and the view of communication rituals to dis-

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cuss the dual paths of technological empowerment and cultural construction of Low-altitude Media [11]. Regarding whether Low-altitude Media constitutes a "media convergence" in what sense, whether it integrates channels, space or governance logic, how the communication elements are reconfigured in the three-dimensional airspace, and what kind of meaning production mechanism is formed between aerial images and ground reception, these questions have not yet received systematic answers, and this is also the direction that subsequent research needs to focus on and advance.

3. The Urban Communication Mechanism of "Low-altitude Multimedia"

"Low-altitude Media Integration" is a new form of media convergence. Starting from its definition, it presents a convergence feature centered on "technical integration", with "content integration", "platform integration", and "industry integration" successively advancing and mutually supporting. Through the collaborative innovation of low-altitude carriers and digital technologies, the organic unity of spatial narration and multi-modal symbols, the seamless connection of offline venues and online ecosystems, and the deep coupling of media innovation and urban governance, it brings a new perspective and approach to urban communication. In the following, starting from the five core dimensions of media convergence - content integration, technical integration, channel integration, subject integration, and industry integration - we will deeply explore the urban communication mechanism of "media convergence" from this perspective.

3.1.Content Integration: Building the Cultural Core of the City

Content integration is the core competitiveness of low-altitude media empowerment for urban communication. Its core logic lies in reconfiguring cross-form content to transform urban cultural elements into dissemination carriers suitable for low-altitude scenarios, thereby creating a distinctive "cultural core" for urban communication [7]. The specific practice mainly unfolds in three dimensions: Firstly, the visual translation of symbols, extracting and re-creating the unique historical cultural heritage and modern development landmarks of the city, and transforming them into visually impactful and culturally identifiable aerial narratives through forms such as drone formation light shows and low-altitude VR images, thereby elevating the static "urban symbols" to dynamic "urban imagery" [12]. Secondly, for differentiated communication goals and audience contexts, content production is carried out in a scenario-based manner. For example, planning drone flag performances during festivals such as National Day to strengthen national identity and collective emotions; creating low-altitude cultural tourism documentaries to comprehensively present the urban landscape and cultural atmosphere; in public events such as typhoons, using drones for real-time disaster situation live broadcasts to leverage their public service functions of information transmission and emergency communication. Thirdly, introducing public participation mechanisms, such as online voting to determine the theme of drone performances, collecting and integrating UGC content captured by citizens from a "low-altitude perspective of the city" into the official live stream, transforming the communication process from one-way indoctrination to two-way or multi-way co-creation and sharing, enriching the subjectivity and hierarchy of urban narratives [13].

Low-altitude media, through content integration, has constructed a new type of urban content system that combines "visual impact" and "cultural recognition". It not only breaks through the limitations of traditional flat expressions of text and video, but also creates unique urban memory points in a three-dimensional space through flowing

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and immersive media rituals, achieving the dissemination and recognition of urban cultural values at a deeper level.

3.2.Technological Integration: Building the "Digital Foundation" for Urban Communication

Technological integration serves as the physical foundation and innovation engine for low-altitude multimedia to be realized. It integrates a cluster of cutting-edge technologies to build a "digital foundation" that supports three-dimensional urban communication [14]. Exhibition forms such as drone formations break the limitations of traditional communication and, with drone cluster control technology as the execution terminal, AI content generation technology as the creative brain, 5G/6G high-speed transmission technology as the information artery, VR/AR immersive technology as the experience interface, jointly form a complete technical loop from content generation, precise control to real-time distribution and immersive perception [15].

Taking the leading domestic drone exhibition as an example, as an outstanding digital cultural tourism case in Zhejiang Province in 2024, the "AIGC Drone Low-altitude Landmark Cultural Tourism Scenario Application Project" in Wenzhou, with digital technology as the carrier, has constructed a unique urban communication ritual domain. This project was led and implemented by the Wenzhou News Media Center. Through more than 500 flights of drones over Jiangxin Island, it transformed the airspace below 1,000 meters into a sacred ritual space carrying the city's cultural memory. Over 34 flight performances throughout the year achieved 3 million online dissemination exposures, making low-altitude multimedia a crucial "social organism operation intermediary" for maintaining urban identity. This innovative communication model breaks the two-dimensional static paradigm of traditional city image communication and, through technological empowerment, realizes the three-dimensional dynamic construction of the "Thousand-Year Commercial Port, Happy Wenzhou" urban spirit.

Liuyang fireworks, as a national intangible cultural heritage and the core cultural symbol of the city, have deeply upgraded their modern communication through the "digital foundation" constructed by technological integration. They have achieved a leap from traditional folk activities to a city-wide participation media event, creating a spectacle of "digital fireworks" and "physical fireworks" intertwined. In 2025, Liuyang fireworks completed in-depth practice of technological integration in a series of major events and won two Guinness World Records with their highly creative visual presentation. Among them, the topic "A Firework Belonging to Me" had a playback volume of 200 million times on the Douyin platform, achieving the fission-like dissemination of urban cultural symbols.



Figure 1 Liuyang River Fireworks Show (Source: Liuyang Media and Communication Center)

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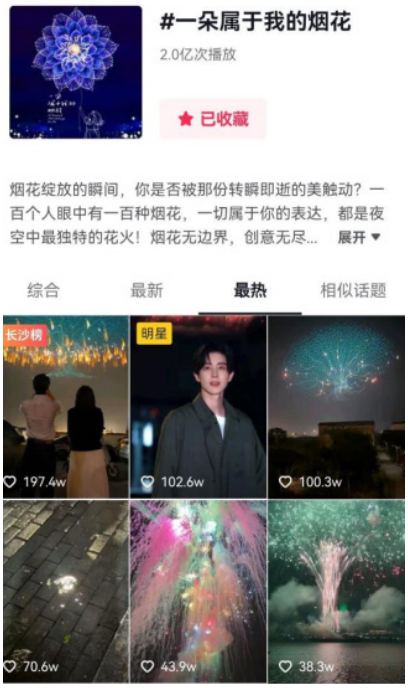

Figure 2 "A Firework Belonging to Me" has reached over 100 million views. (From: Communist Party of Liuyang Municipal Committee's Publicity Department)

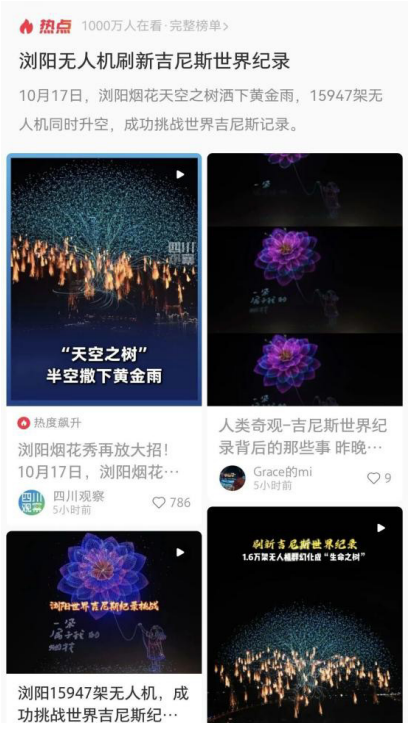

Figure 3: Longyang Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Sets New Guinness World Record (Source: Communist Party of Longyang Municipal Committee's Publicity Department)

3.3.Channel integration: Expanding the "scenario boundaries" of urban communication

Channel integration, as one of the core practical dimensions of media convergence, achieves the maximization

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of communication effectiveness through the coordinated integration and functional complementarity of multiple channels, breaking the scene limitations of traditional urban communication [7]. In the low-altitude media convergence urban communication practice, channel integration is guided by the forms of "scene adaptation" and "traffic aggregation", and builds a communication system with both breadth and depth, expanding the "scene boundary" of urban communication.

Low-altitude performance activities create a highly impactful on-site experience in offline urban spaces, attracting a large number of on-site audiences and forming embodied collective rituals [4]. The activities are simultaneously live-streamed and video-compiled and distributed on mainstream platforms such as Douyin, Kuaishou, Weibo, and even CCTV News, achieving "one creative production, multi-portals, and multi-form coverage" of communication diffusion, effectively solving the physical bottleneck of limited audience capacity for large-scale urban events, and transforming the single-site landscape into a media event that can be shared across the entire network.

In addition, the real-time live streaming of low-altitude activities meets the public's demand for on-site experience and synchronicity, forming the first peak of communication, and then through professional VR panoramic images, documentary short films, in-depth graphic reports and other contents, it is re-edited and innovated on channels such as government tourism and culture official websites, city image official accounts, and video platform special sections, through the complementarity of different media forms, continuously attracting interested people and forming a considerable long-tail communication effect, enabling the urban cultural impression to be repeatedly strengthened, and achieving the effective construction and wide dissemination of urban significance in the integrated communication scene.

3.4.Mainstream integration: Creating a "collaborative network" for urban communication

The main functions of the government lie in opening up specific airspace, establishing flight safety regulations, and determining dissemination themes that are in line with the city's strategy. It guides the dissemination of concepts such as "Smart City" or "Historic City", providing a legal basis and a macro narrative framework for low-altitude dissemination activities; enterprises, as the core suppliers of technology and operations, are responsible for providing key technologies such as unmanned aircraft equipment, cluster control algorithms, and AI content generation, and undertake the commercial planning and execution of specific projects; professional media institutions transform the raw materials collected at low altitudes into news reports, documentaries, or series of short videos with public nature and story elements. They distribute them through traditional and new media platforms to expand the coverage and social influence of the dissemination; citizens, as the most extensive fundamental entities, are both participating entities and feedback entities. They express their opinions on social media and platforms, form reputations, and directly influence the evaluation of the dissemination effect and subsequent optimization processes.

3.5.Industrial Integration: Injecting the "Sustainable Momentum" of Urban Communication

Industrial integration is the core form of media integration extending to the economic dimension. It follows the logic of "cross-border integration and value symbiosis", deeply integrating the communication attributes of low-altitude media with the functional attributes of various industries. Through resource complementarity, it realizes the two-way transformation of communication value and industrial value, providing long-term and stable power sup-

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port for urban communication.

The industrial integration of low-altitude media specifically manifests in the linkage with three major industries: tourism and culture, advertising, and public services. In the tourism and culture industry sector, by developing low-altitude tourism routes featuring drone light shows, urban tourism IPs are created; at the same time, VR low-altitude tourism products are launched, converting the aerial photography images of city landmarks into interactive virtual tour contents, achieving a closed loop of "communication attraction - consumption transformation", enabling urban communication to upgrade from "image promotion" to "enabling cultural tourism economic empowerment".

4.Challenges and Prospects

In June 2026, at the Low Altitude Multimedia Project Implementation and Standard Development Seminar, it was pointed out that "low-altitude multimedia is currently in a critical stage of transitioning from its infancy to maturity. It still faces problems such as inconsistent standard systems, unstandardized operation procedures, and an incomplete cross-departmental collaboration mechanism." This indicates that the "integration" of low-altitude multimedia currently occurs more at the technical and scenario levels, while institutional elements such as standards, security, and regional layout have not yet formed a matching integration order. In terms of regional layout, the first 26 test sites cover 16 cities and 10 cities within Zhejiang Province, presenting a pattern of dense coverage in the east and sparse coverage in the west. Wenzhou has formed a preliminary industrial chain, while small and medium-sized cities are constrained by airspace coordination, equipment and personnel costs. If the pilot experience is merely distilled as "benchmark parameters" rather than institutional tools classified and stratified, the "peak of the pilot" may recur. The three predicaments share the same logic: the "element integration" of low-altitude multimedia has not yet been completed at the institutional level, and the integration dimensions of channels, entities, industries, and the like lack a unified rule base.

When the communication channels expand from screens and platforms to three-dimensional airspace, the audience will transform from viewers to physical experiencers between the ground and the air. The above analysis has already mentioned that the content integration of low-altitude multimedia relies on the spatialized translation of symbols, the technical integration constitutes the three-dimensional digital base, the channel integration 打通 s the online and offline scenarios， the entity integration forms a diversified collaborative network， and the industry integration points to the two-way transformation of communication value and economic value. These mechanisms indicate that "low-altitude airspace" is not a simple extension of the existing multimedia logic， but a new communication field that simultaneously embodies the three attributes of physical space， symbolic space， and governance space.

Based on this， low-altitude multimedia needs to complete a triple shift under the theoretical awareness of media integration： from "test sites" to "institutional infrastructure"， to break through the interfaces between specialized standards and the national low-altitude economy standard framework， so that channel integration， entity integration， and industry integration can obtain cross-departmental mutual recognition of rule bases； from "event-based communication" to "regular urban media"， to incorporate safety compliance， airspace usage， and content production into the front end of project design， so that technical integration can truly serve sustainable urban

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communication； from "technical performance" to "culture deepening and theoretical construction"， to deeply inquire about how three-dimensional airspace reshapes the configuration of communication elements， how aerial images participate in the production of urban memory and collective identity. Only when institutional integration and theoretical integration are advanced in parallel can low-altitude multimedia evolve from policy-driven "frontier application" to a stable institutional-supported and clearly theoretically self-aware urban communication form.

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