

The Development of Local International Communication Centers in China: Core Model, Operating Logic, and Typical Characteristic



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Abstract: At the present stage, where China's international communication endeavors are advancing vigorously, the construction of local international communication centers has achieved remarkable results, which play a significant role in further enhancing the international communication effectiveness of regions and improving the international communication discourse system. Based on the current development status of multiple local international communication centers in China, this article summarizes the "geographical hub driving", "industry-integration of communication", "central-local collaborative co-construction", and "provincial-level linked-action in a gradient pattern" four core models that have emerged in the current development process of local international communication centers. Focusing on key dimensions such as content, channels, and resources, through specific practical cases, this article elaborates in detail on the operational logic and typical characteristics of each model, with the aim of providing practical references and theoretical guidance for the future development of different types of local international communication centers.

Keywords: international communication, local international communication center, national image, communication discourse system

Introduction

"Foreigners' perception of China is mostly based on specific examples such as a region, a city, or a major event. Without specific descriptions of regional images, the national image would be vague." (Zhao, 2000) Based on this, the necessity of establishing and developing local international communication centers from a regional perspective becomes evident. Since the establishment of the Chongqing International Communication Center in 2018, the construction of local international communication centers in China has been accelerating. As of June 2025, there have been over 92 local institutions named "International Communication Center", and international communication has initially formed a new

communication framework of "global-country-local", (Zhang, He & Wang, 2025) marking the further improvement of the matrix and three-dimensional large-scale external publicity pattern from the central to the local level (Guo & Ying, 2024). During this process, different local international communication centers have explored different development models based on their own resource endowments, strategic positioning, and communication practices. Based on the current situation, this paper summarizes four core models of China's current local international communication center construction, which are geographically-driven hubs, "industry-communication" integration, "central-local" collaborative co-construction, and provincial-level linked-action in a gradient pattern.

The following will analyze the operational logic,

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typical characteristics, and communication practices of different models through specific cases, in order to further clarify the direction for the future development of China's local international communication centers.

1. Geopolitical Hub-Driven Model

1.1 Operating logic

The Geopolitical hub-driven model takes geographical proximity as the core leverage, aiming to target the cultural homogeneity and development interconnections of neighboring countries and regions. It attempts to establish a close-range communication network to achieve precise reach and deep penetration of regional international communication. This model is based on the natural convenience of the regional geographical location and deeply explores common cultural symbols and shared development issues across border ethnic groups, using these as the entry points for communication, effectively reducing the "cultural discount" in cross-cultural communication (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988). In terms of content production, it focuses on local issues with regional resonance such as cross-border ecological protection, border trade cooperation, and the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, using concrete and story-like expressions to enhance the appeal of communication. In terms of channel construction, it integrates the mainstream media resources within the region to build a multilingual integrated media communication platform, and actively initiates or participates in regional media alliances to promote content exchanges and joint interviews with media of neighboring countries, ultimately forming a regional international communication pattern that covers the surrounding areas, is precise and efficient, and deeply connected.

1.2 Typical characteristics

1.2.1 Focusing on adjacent regions and precisely targeting core audiences

Under this model, the local international communication center precisely focuses on core audience groups such as neighboring countries and

member states of regional cooperation organizations. It deeply relies on the natural convenience of cross-border ethnic identity connection, language communication, and the emotional resonance based on cultural similarity. Through clear audience profiling, it achieves precise positioning, minimizing the cultural discount effect in cross-cultural communication as much as possible, laying a solid foundation for the efficient dissemination of subsequent communication content, emotional resonance, and deep penetration.

1.2.2 Based on local issues, create regional resonant content

This model emphasizes taking local issues that are closely related to the neighboring region as the core entry point. It focuses on themes with common value, such as cross-border ecological protection, like the northward migration of Asian elephants, border trade cooperation, and the mutual transmission of intangible cultural heritage. It explores the human stories and development connections behind the issues, creating authentic and compelling communication content that enhances emotional resonance among regional audiences and increases the appeal and popularity of the content.

1.2.3 Integrating multiple platforms and establishing a regional collaborative network

This model emphasizes the systematic integration of mainstream media within the region and resources from cross-border news organizations. It actively initiates and participates in the establishment of regional media alliances, such as the South Asia and Southeast Asia Media Alliance (Zhu, Luo & Yao, 2025), using the alliance as a link to promote regular content exchanges, joint interviews, and collaborative dissemination among members, forming a wide-ranging and highly coordinated communication channel matrix. This provides a solid foundation for the precise reach and wide dissemination of localized content.

1.3 Representative cases

The geoeconomic hub-driven model is widely applied in regions with geographical advantages, mainly covering border provinces such as Yunnan,

Guangxi, and Heilongjiang, as well as coastal and border cities. These areas leverage their geographical proximity or cross-border transportation advantages to establish relatively precise and efficient regional communication networks, serving as pioneering models for the construction of local international communication centers.

The International Communication and Exchange Center for South Asia and Southeast Asia in Yunnan Province is a typical example. Specifically, it targets neighboring countries such as Myanmar and Vietnam, as well as member states of regional organizations, in terms of its audience. It utilizes cross-border ethnic and language advantages to reduce cultural barriers. In terms of content, it uses activities such as "There Is a Life Called Yunnan" as carriers, exploring local issues such as cultural tourism and cross-border cooperation, with a total overseas exposure exceeding 10 million times. In terms of channels, it relies on the South Asia and Southeast Asia Media Alliance to integrate cross-border platforms to promote content creation, forming a coordinated and efficient regional communication matrix, demonstrating the effectiveness of the geoeconomic hub-driven model.

2. "Industry-Communication" Integration Model

2.1 Operating logic

The "industry-communication" integration model takes the regional advantageous industries as the core carrier, deeply integrates international communication into the entire industrial development chain, achieves the dual empowerment of "exporting the industry" and "cultural dissemination", and forms a virtuous cycle of "driving dissemination through industry and promoting industry development through dissemination". Its internal mechanism is as follows: Relying on the characteristic industries with international competitiveness within the region, such as logistics and trade, cultural tourism in coastal open cities, using industrial cooperation projects as the natural carrier of dissemination, and naturally integrating regional cultural symbols and value concepts into the industrial operation processes like

product development, overseas marketing, and cross-border cooperation, through product displays, industrial exchanges and other scenarios, achieving the effective transmission of cultural connotations. During the operation of this model, industry export broadens the natural channels for international dissemination and enhances the effectiveness of dissemination, while cultural dissemination feeds back to industrial development, increasing the brand premium and international recognition of the industry, ultimately building a sustainable development pattern where industrial development and international dissemination support each other and upgrade collaboratively.

2.2 Typical characteristics

2.2.1 Clear topic binding

The "industry-communication" integration model focuses on the distinctive industries of each region, such as the Lujin intangible cultural heritage industry in Jinan, Shandong Province, and the digital economy in Zhejiang Province. It deeply explores the vivid stories and core values within the industrial development, converting them into international communication content that is both professional and readable. This enables the precise binding of industrial topics and communication content, injecting the industrial core into international communication.

2.2.2 Appropriate scene integration

Under this model, local international communication centers mostly rely on various industrial carriers such as industry exhibitions, international forums, and overseas industrial parks to create immersive international communication scenarios. For instance, the China International Consumer Goods Expo (Hainan) and the ASEAN Expo (Guangxi) integrate industrial displays with cultural dissemination, allowing international audiences to directly experience regional culture and development vitality in industrial exchange scenarios, thereby enhancing the scene-based effectiveness of communication.

2.2.3 Significant efficiency enhancement

The "industry-communication" integration model

has established an "industry-culture-communication" value loop. It promotes the enhancement of regional culture recognition through industrial cooperation and strengthens the international competitiveness of the industry through communication. This two-way empowerment mechanism effectively breaks down the barriers between industrial development and international communication, achieving dual gains in economic value and communication value, and consolidating the internal and external support for regional development.

2.3 Representative cases

The "industry-communication" integration model is mainly concentrated in the coastal bay areas, free trade ports, and characteristic industry clusters in China that have a strong industrial foundation and a high degree of openness. It also covers inland industrial clusters and cultural tourism IP hotspots. This model effectively activates regional development momentum through the deep integration of industry and communication, and is conducive to enhancing the local international influence.

The Hainan International Communication Center is a typical practitioner of this model. It also actively recruits foreign talent to join the communication team. (Zhao & Zhou, 2025) Additionally, in terms of issue binding, it focuses on core industrial issues such as the construction of the free trade port and the development of an international tourism consumption center, and explores fresh stories of foreign talent entrepreneurship. In terms of scene integration, it builds immersive communication scenarios based on events like the China International Consumer Goods Expo and the Boao Forum for Asia. And in terms of value transformation, it amplifies the industry's voice through a multilingual communication matrix, which not only enhances the international recognition of Hainan's free trade port but also empowers tourism, duty-free, and other industries through cultural communication, achieving a win-win situation in terms of economic and communication value.

3. The "Central-Local" Collaborative Co-Construction Model

3.1 Operating logic

The core essence of the "central-local" collaborative co-construction model lies in achieving an organic combination of "borrowing a ship to go out to sea" and "building a ship to go out to sea" through in-depth cooperation between central media and local media. By integrating the international channel resources, brand influence of central media, and the local content advantages, regional observation capabilities of local media, this model enables the "going out to sea" through both external and internal means. From the perspective of the collaboration logic, central media provide a global communication network and authoritative endorsement for local international communication, helping local content break through the limitations of regional dissemination, while local media, by accurately grasping local culture and regional issues, inject vivid local elements into the communication content, enhancing the acceptance of international audiences. This complementary collaboration model not only reduces the cost of channel establishment for local international communication but also ensures the professionalism and local characteristics of the communication content, promoting the formation of an efficient and coordinated international communication force, and providing solid support for the construction of local international communication centers.

3.2 Typical characteristics

3.2.1 Organic integration of resources

The central media, leveraging its mature overseas channel network and rich experience in constructing international discourse systems, provides key channel support and discourse guidance for local international communication. At the same time, the local media, relying on their local advantages, focus on collecting distinctive content and in-depth exploration of regional issues, ensuring the localization and accuracy of the communication content. Through collaborative co-construction of communication platforms and content matrices, both

parties achieve efficient resource complementarity, significantly enhancing the coverage and influence of local international communication.

3.2.2 Collaborative regularization

This model establishes a collaborative framework through various means such as "central-local cooperation" and "strategic partnership". For instance, the Yangtze River International Communication Center is jointly established by China Daily and Wuhan Radio and Television Station. The Zhejiang International Communication Center is formed by the Zhejiang Newspaper Group based on the participation of central media units such as People's Daily, Xinhua News Agency, and China Foreign Languages Administration. All these examples have established a regularized collaborative mechanism for content creation, resource sharing, and communication linkage, effectively breaking the "central-local" barriers, providing a stable institutional guarantee for efficient collaboration, and facilitating further improvement of the collaborative efficiency of the international communication system.

3.2.3 Precise positioning

The "central-local" collaborative co-construction model has the characteristic of clear communication positioning. It precisely focuses on regional characteristics and development goals to exert efforts. It focuses on core issues such as the Yangtze River civilization, the rise of the central region, and the development of inland open areas, meticulously creating differentiated communication labels. It breaks through the dilemma of communication homogeneity with distinctive content, and at the same time, by leveraging the collaboration advantages between the central and local authorities, effectively fills the gap in international communication channels in inland regions, and enhances the regional international discourse power.

3.3 Representative cases

The "central-local" collaborative co-construction model has been widely practiced in many regions of China, with most cases concentrated in inland central cities, provincial core media clusters, and western

inland open areas. This model integrates central and local resources to establish a collaborative mechanism, precisely aligning national strategies with local development needs, effectively solving problems such as insufficient international communication channels and weak discourse power in local areas. It has become an important way to enhance regional international communication effectiveness.

The Yangtze River International Communication Center is a typical sample of this model. In terms of resource integration, it relies on China Daily's overseas channels and international discourse experience, combines the local content collection advantages of Wuhan Radio and Television Station, and forms a complementary pattern. In terms of linkage and collaboration, it signs a joint construction agreement, establishes regular cooperation mechanisms such as content creation and communication linkage, pays attention to and responds to many government departments and institutions, such as national ministries and embassies abroad, and forms friendships with many KOLs (key opinion leaders) at home and abroad, rapidly accumulating rich international communication resources. (Research Group of Hubei Radio and Television Bureau, 2025) In terms of communication positioning, it is based on Wuhan's "New Era Hero City" image, focuses on issues such as the Yangtze River Economic Belt and the rise of the central region, creates differentiated communication labels, and realizes the organic integration of China's national narrative and Wuhan's local stories.

4. Provincial-Level Linked-Action Model in a Gradient Pattern

4.1 Operating logic

The development logic of the provincial-level linked-action model in a gradient pattern is as follows: With the provincial media serving as the core for overall coordination, and the municipal media serving as the foothold for implementation, combined with the resource endowments and

functional positioning of the provincial and municipal media, differentiated construction is carried out to build a "provincial-level coordination + municipal-level implementation" tiered communication system. Among them, the provincial media, with their platform scale, resource integration capabilities, and provincial perspective, undertake the functions of top-level design, resource coordination, and cross-regional communication coordination, focusing on the international dissemination of provincial-level major issues and core cultural symbols while the municipal media, relying on their geographical proximity advantages, precisely connect local characteristic industries, cultural resources, and overseas cooperation needs, undertake tasks such as the concrete creation of content and the implementation of local scene communication. This tiered structure, through clear hierarchical division of labor and strengthened top-down linkage, not only avoids redundant resource investment but also realizes the precise connection of communication content from macro-level coordination to micro-level implementation, forming a coverage of the entire province, precise and efficient, and a collaborative international communication pattern, providing system support for the all-round construction of local international communication centers.

4.2 Typical characteristics

4.2.1 Hierarchical adaptation

The provincial-level linked-action model in a gradient pattern has distinct hierarchical collaboration characteristics: At the provincial level such as the International Communication Center of Hubei Radio and Television, it focuses on "endogenous" organizational reengineering, concentrating on strengthening content production and core capabilities for international communication while at the municipal level such as the International Communication Studio in Yichang, it adopts an "external embedding" development model, by introducing external resources and technological empowerment, precisely focusing on the international dissemination of local characteristic IPs,

forming a hierarchical adaptation and collaborative force-driven communication pattern.

4.2.2 Synergy and collaboration

The synergy and collaboration under the framework of topic connection is another important feature that cannot be ignored. It uses common topics such as regional culture, ecology, and industry as connecting links, like Qu Yuan culture and the protection of the Yangtze River ecology. It builds a media collaboration bridge at the provincial and municipal levels. At the same time, it promotes content creation and communication linkage by focusing on common topics, integrates provincial communication resources and local advantages at the municipal level, realizes the aggregation of communication power, forms a vertically integrated and highly collaborative communication synergy, and strengthens the overall international communication effectiveness of the region.

4.2.3 Precise deepening

In this development model, municipal media focus on local characteristics and delve deeply into local fresh issues, promoting the international communication content to be further refined and specialized. This precise positioning effectively compensates for the coverage shortcomings and details deficiencies of provincial media in the dissemination of grassroots issues, making international communication more closely aligned with local realities and enhancing the vividness and appeal of grassroots stories in international communication.

4.3 Representative cases

The provincial-level linked-action model in a gradient pattern mainly focuses on provinces in China with abundant media resources and significant regional development disparities, as well as municipalities with distinctive county-level characteristics and prominent industrial clusters. This model, through hierarchical resource coordination and differentiated functional positioning, effectively resolves the issue of uneven regional communication and achieves a comprehensive improvement in international communication effectiveness, becoming

an important path for local international communication system construction.

The International Communication Center of Hubei Radio and Television Station and the International Communication Studio in Yichang form a typical provincial-level tiered linkage sample. The former strengthens provincial-level coordination through "endogenous" organizational reengineering, relies on the station's editorial committee to establish an international communication joint mechanism, and cooperates with overseas matrices such as Open Hubei, achieving integrated content production across the region and integration of domestic and overseas channels, demonstrating the feature of hierarchical adaptation. (Cao, 2023) The latter adopts an "embedded" model to precisely downplay, focusing on local characteristics like Three Gorges Ecological Protection and rural revitalization, and launching a series of breakout works such as Qu Yuan Culture. Both form collaborative linkage around common issues such as the protection of the Yangtze River ecological environment, leveraging the coordination advantages of the provincial platform, and highlighting the local communication effectiveness of the municipal studio.

5. Summary

This article, based on the current situation of local international communication center construction in China and through the analysis of classic cases, summarizes four core models for the construction of local international communication centers in China, which are geographically-driven hubs, "industry-communication" integration, "central-local" collaborative co-construction, and provincial-level linked-action in a gradient pattern. They provide path references and theoretical lessons for international communication practices in different types of regions. The article holds that the key to the development and construction of local international communication centers lies in accurately positioning based on regional resource endowments. Specifically, the border areas should leverage their geographical advantages to build a communication network for

neighboring regions, coastal areas should expand their global influence by leveraging industrial openness, inland areas should rely on "central-local" collaboration to make up for channel deficiencies, and provincial-level regions should use stratified policies to unite communication efforts.

In the future, emphasizing technological empowerment, accelerating multi-party collaboration, and strengthening local expression will be important focuses for further enhancing the effectiveness of international communication. The evaluation of the effects of different international communication models, as well as the innovative paths of international communication driven by intelligent technologies, will be important topics for research in this field in the time to come.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that she has no conflicts of interest to this work.

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