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The “Deep” Advantage of Print Media in the All-Media Era: Post-Print Edition

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Abstract

[Objective] To explore methods for print media’s in-depth reporting to survive, develop, and even reconstruct its core competitive advantages in the all-media era.

[Method] Taking the in-depth reporting pieces published by Yongzhou Daily in recent years as the primary research object, this study analyzes the significance and strategies for print media to excel at in-depth reporting in the all-media era.

[Results] Through journalists’ deep engagement with the public, listening to their voices, and conducting follow-up reporting on news content, the authenticity and objectivity of content constitute the optimal advantage for print media to break out of the predicament.

[Conclusion] In-depth reporting helps print media guide public opinion and disseminate mainstream social values, promoting stable and harmonious social development. In the all-media era, it should play a greater role, innovate reporting formats, sustain the influence of print media’s in-depth reporting, and provide higher-quality in-depth reporting works.

Full Text

Preamble

ChinaXiv Cooperative Journal: The “Deep” Advantage of Print Media in the All-Media Era

(Yongzhou Daily News Agency, Yongzhou, Hunan 425000)

Abstract

[Objective] This study explores how print media’s in-depth reporting can survive, develop, and reconstruct its core competitive advantages in the all-media

era. [Methods] Using recent in-depth reports from *Yongzhou Daily* as the primary research object, we analyze the significance and strategies for effective in-depth reporting. [Results] The findings demonstrate that journalists' deep engagement with communities, attentive listening to public voices, and sustained follow-up reporting—grounded in authenticity and objectivity—constitute print media' s optimal advantage for breaking through intense media competition. [Conclusion] In-depth reporting enables print media to guide public opinion and disseminate mainstream values, fostering stable and harmonious social development. In the all-media era, it must play an enhanced role through innovative reporting forms that extend influence and deliver superior in-depth coverage.

Keywords: All-Media; Print Media; In-Depth Reporting; Internet Plus; Media Convergence

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Introduction

The advent of the all-media era has profoundly impacted the media environment, subjecting traditional print media to severe shocks. How to leverage print media' s advantages in this new landscape has become a crucial question for media professionals. In-depth reporting represents the core competitiveness of print media—one that new media cannot surpass in the short term. In-depth reporting plays a vital role in print media development and serves as a primary tool for enhancing media influence. Print media should innovate expression forms, enrich readers' experiences, and usher in-depth reporting into a new developmental stage.

1. The Significance of Quality In-Depth Reporting for Print Media in the All-Media Era

1.1 Demonstrating Print Media' s Professionalism

Before the internet era, print media served as a vital information channel. New media' s emergence has transformed reading habits, challenging print media to leverage its distinctive strengths. Quality journalism demands respect for truth, professional anchoring in news information, and targeted, specialized coverage. Print media must excavate stories behind events, consider their societal impacts, and guide audiences toward proper values—essential functions for sustainable development. Beyond identifying problems, in-depth reporting must propose solutions. For instance, on April 21, 2022, *Yongzhou Daily* published “Political and Legal ‘Five Elders’ : The People' s Mediators—Our City Actively

Explores New Paths for Grassroots Social Governance.” This article addressed the cumbersome nature of grassroots social governance by establishing “Five Elders” mediation studios at municipal and county petition centers, composed of retired judges, prosecutors, police officers, judicial administrators, and lawyers. This initiative resolves ordinary people’s disputes and complex cases at the grassroots level, nipping conflicts in the bud. The political and legal “Five Elders” activate grassroots “micro-governance,” injecting popular strength into diversified dispute prevention and resolution mechanisms—a novel exploration and innovative measure for grassroots social governance.

1.2 Deeply Demonstrating Print Media’s Value

Print media journalism should not only focus on the value of the report itself but also on its societal impact. When covering social events, print media can produce in-depth reports that uncover the social value behind incidents, enabling audiences to understand the truth and providing diversified, multi-layered news coverage that strengthens print media’s sense of authenticity and the truthfulness of news events. This guides audiences toward a deeper understanding of print media. When audiences no longer satisfy themselves with superficial reading after learning about an event, they desire complete understanding—knowing the causes, processes, results, and impacts. For example, *Yongzhou Daily* ran a series about eight caring taxi drivers in Shuangpai County who had been freely transporting a disabled girl named Han Li to and from school for a year. Following this thread, journalists dug deeper into subsequent stories, writing “ ‘Uncle Drivers, You Are My Legs!’ ” They traveled between Yongzhou and Loudi, collecting follow-up stories about the love relay between drivers in both cities and the disabled girl joining volunteer organizations to pass on the love. The series included “The Disabled Girl’s School Route” and “ ‘I’ve Become a Volunteer!’ ” allowing audiences to fully understand and be moved by this extraordinary love story among ordinary people. Xinhua News Agency, Hunan Satellite TV, and other national and provincial media subsequently reported and reposted the story, spreading positive social energy. The series won third prize in the Hunan News Awards, demonstrating the influence and journalistic value of print media’s in-depth reporting.

2. The Important Value of Quality In-Depth Reporting for Print Media in the All-Media Era

2.1 Content Remains King for Media Development

As the core competitiveness of print media, in-depth reporting holds great appeal for audiences with cognitive needs in today’s fiercely competitive media industry. By revealing current social problems in a compelling narrative manner, it enables audiences to extract key points from numerous information sources and think deeply. Therefore, in the information explosion era, print media must steadfastly pursue in-depth reporting, provide quality coverage, and thereby en-

hance its core competitiveness and promote development. By digging deep into stories behind information to produce thoughtful, profound, and warm reporting, media will maintain vigorous vitality regardless of circumstances. *Yongzhou Daily*'s front-page story “Wei Shunjiang: Practicing Original Aspiration in ‘Depths of Fire and Water’ ” reported on a fire at a bacon smoking workshop in Jianghua Yao Autonomous County on January 14, 2021. When volunteer Wei Shunjiang arrived, flames were already shooting skyward, with a liquefied gas tank still inside. After reporting the fire, he rushed in, used a water hose to cool the gas tank’s handle, then wrapped the burning area with a wet cotton-padded jacket. Only after the fire was extinguished did Wei realize he had multiple injuries, but he had no regrets. In late July 2021, Wei also participated in flood relief volunteer work, distributing supplies in Xinxiang, Henan Province. To protect people’s lives and property, he rushed to the forefront of fires and floods, becoming a “counter-runner” who interpreted the Communist Party members’ spirit of self-sacrifice and righteous courage.

2.2 Media Communication Needs More High-Quality In-Depth Reporting

In an era where everyone can voice opinions and become a news publisher, audiences struggle to distinguish truth from falsehood among mixed information and understand the full story. Media should uphold its duty and mission, bearing responsibility for leading readers to understand event truthfulness, prompting correct judgment, and guiding public opinion. Print media’s in-depth reporting can more clearly and systematically reflect the origins of events, reveal their essence, and predict future trends, holding advantages in discourse power and socialized communication channels. *Yongzhou Daily*'s April 25, 2022 article “Each Relay Baton Carries the Body Temperature of Masters—The Five Successive Party Secretaries of Huashan Village, Simaqiao Town, Daoxian County, Continue Half a Century of Mentorship” delved into the inheritance code of Huashan Village: the selfless dedication and steadfast fairness of successive party secretaries, and the villagers’ united and striving pursuit. Implementing the Party’s purpose and practicing its original aspiration by doing practical things for the village and serving the people ensures that Huashan Village’s mentorship tradition will continue and its rural revitalization path will extend far. As a responsible media, print media must consistently uphold positive-energy news reporting, produce high-quality coverage, maintain depth as its strength, excel through content, and disseminate more warm, profound, and uplifting works to audiences, promoting healthy development of the media industry.

2.3 Promoting “Slow Reading” and “Deep Thinking”

In-depth reporting encompasses a broad scope without fixed formats and is not constrained by length. Only through profound reporting can the truth of news events be restored. Even a simple message, if meaningful and capable of reflecting current issues and prompting reflection, qualifies as in-depth reporting

—significant for all-media development that emphasizes “short, flat, and fast” content. When news is available with a casual swipe, people lack patience for lengthy reports. Thus, the profundity, thoughtfulness, and enlightenment of in-depth reporting hold vital importance in the all-media era. Using *Yongzhou Daily*’s reports “Hope the Whole Society Participates in Reading to Create a Strong Atmosphere of Loving, Reading Good Books, and Reading Well” and “Our City Holds ‘Reading Together, Walking Toward the Light’ Reading Salon Activities” as examples, these stories implement General Secretary Xi Jinping’s important instructions. With party members and officials taking the lead, they strengthen reading guidance, cultivate reading customs, build urban-rural reading promotion service systems, and advance nationwide reading to expand coverage, improve quality, and enhance effectiveness. Cultivating children’s reading habits enables slow reading in a fast-paced era. Through news reports advocating quiet reading, the value of in-depth reporting is demonstrated. “Slow reading” and “deep thinking” hold significant meaning for both society and individuals.

3. Challenges Facing Print Media In-Depth Reporting

3.1 Monotonous Content Forms and Dull Presentation

In an era where information is available at the touch of a smartphone, audiences engage in superficial reading during fragmented time, breaking temporal and spatial limitations to access news anytime, anywhere. However, superficial reading only skims the surface, lacking internal logic and event completeness, often failing to prompt audience reflection. In-depth reporting requires excavating news events and understanding stories behind them, demanding authoritative documentation to ensure event authenticity. Generally, print media in-depth reporting often suffers from large time spans and neglected details during editing, relying primarily on compiled materials that cannot restore events themselves. This approach provides few details, emphasizes materials throughout the manuscript, and makes readers feel bored and unable to deeply experience the content—a process lacking appeal that prevents quiet reading. To boost audience interest, journalists tend to favor lifestyle or entertaining news, causing print media reporting to become more lifestyle-oriented and fragmented, lacking sufficient depth and failing to leverage print media’s in-depth reporting advantages.

3.2 Emphasis on Quantity Over Ideological Depth

Print media in-depth reporting primarily concerns two aspects: news information quantity and quality. Quantity demands “comprehensiveness”—objectively and completely presenting news events to help readers understand causes and effects. Quality involves excavating the social value of events themselves, reflecting social problems, and prompting reader reflection. However, in this fast-paced, superficial-reading era, print media often overemphasizes publication quantity, resulting in shallow reporting, lack of innovative forms, and ab-

sence of ideological depth. Coverage of problem causes often fails to achieve in-depth reporting, lacking exploration of event essence. To meet quantity demands, related reports become formulaic, producing similar content without depth. Without thorough investigation, new solutions cannot emerge. Print media must still explore event causes and avoid preconceptions to achieve true in-depth reporting. Currently, many print media prioritize news quantity over quality, leading to lack of innovative reporting forms and ideological height. Without substantive content in in-depth reporting, print media cannot elevate ideological height—a fatal flaw.

3.3 Superficial Interpretation Failing to Reach the Core

Because readers use fragmented time for reading, news reporting has gradually shifted from traditional methods, causing print media's in-depth reporting to lose continuity. In news event excavation, coverage often cannot focus on one issue but is pulled along by online hot topics, with content chasing traffic. Lacking resonance with events themselves, reporting content fails to touch the core, leaving audiences without curiosity for exploration after reading. Interpretation remains superficial, not only failing to guide public opinion positively but even misleading audience values. True news reporting should grasp event fermentation trends. Print media reporting remains constrained by traditional thinking, unable to innovate, appearing passive in current news development.

3.4 Declining Communication Effects and Influence

Due to new media's rapid development, audiences in the superficial-reading era increasingly depend on new media. Through new media platforms, audiences participate in news reporting, deepening media-audience interaction and making audiences more active. Print media cannot publish news instantly like new media, making exclusive news increasingly difficult to obtain. Secondly, print media's in-depth reporting quality has declined. Journalists encounter many obstacles and restrictions in news investigations, reducing their work enthusiasm and failing to achieve reporting quality. Furthermore, audiences cannot participate in print media reporting processes, creating distance between print media and audiences, leading to decreasing newspaper subscriptions and disappearing newsstands.

4. Strategies for Producing Attractive In-Depth Reporting in the All-Media Era

4.1 Integrating New Media to Enrich In-Depth Reporting Forms

Print media in-depth reporting is often perceived as rigid and serious, but in the all-media era, audiences prefer accessible, down-to-earth, interesting expressions that immediately grasp event centers. Therefore, print media must diversify reporting forms—a key to optimizing in-depth reporting. If print media stubbornly adheres to traditional forms, audiences will struggle to continue reading

and rarely think of print media when consuming news, affecting print media's dissemination and development. Diversified reporting forms require not only integrating emerging technologies but also transforming serious textual expressions, considering audience reading comfort from a humanistic perspective, and narrowing the distance with audiences. For example, print media can adapt in-depth reporting content into different formats based on various dissemination channels such as newspapers, mobile phones, and web pages. Transforming textual expression requires changing discourse patterns, avoiding overly serious, condescending language that prevents audiences from genuine understanding. Discourse expression should employ forms that masses enjoy, using popular, 通俗, and down-to-earth approaches. Content should approach audiences' side, utilizing data cases and factual integration to make in-depth reporting more vivid and accessible. By combining new media dissemination forms, focusing on online hot topics, innovating print media's voice through integration with new media, strengthening audience interaction, and enhancing dissemination effects, print media can improve. For example, *Yongzhou Daily's* electronic layout allows audiences to find related reports according to their needs. By clicking report titles, audiences can read news information, facilitating viewing and promoting print media in-depth reporting.

4.2 Deeply Excavating News Value

Journalists report based on what they see and hear, editors compile based on materials, ultimately publishing whatever is available, with similar content and unchanged structural levels. For editing convenience, unified templates are often used—a common phenomenon in current print media in-depth reporting. Most print media journalists rarely proactively excavate news events in daily life, showing insufficient initiative in innovating and discovering news content. Many news events require time to explore before obtaining clues, demanding journalists conduct field investigations to restore event truth and ensure reporting authenticity. During investigations, existing information must be analyzed and verified to avoid adverse effects from misinformation. Journalists must improve their professional capabilities, identifying effective information within complex news clues to meet audience reading needs and enhance news value. In-depth reporting must be based on facts, explaining event causes and consequences, with future trend analysis grounded in reality. Through journalists' in-depth exploration, field investigation, logical analysis and exposition of events, profound understanding of related content, accurate evaluation, and triggering audience deep thinking, the truth can be explored to excavate value behind events—prerequisites for excellent in-depth reporting. However, reporting space is limited, and print media must break fixed thinking patterns, seeking new paths in the all-media era to expand news coverage scope. While maintaining depth development advantages, print media must also innovate development, starting from audience perspectives to enhance news planning capabilities and boost audience interest in in-depth reporting.

4.3 Reporting Topics Within the Dynamics of News Facts

The all-media era imposes new requirements on print media, particularly regarding reporting topics within the dynamics of news facts—a critical aspect for breaking news events. For sudden event reporting, print media cannot wait for events to ferment before following up. Instead, it must track events timely and report immediately, reporting while thinking. Due to their sudden nature, print media journalists lack adequate preparation time and have limited event information, but they cannot postpone reporting until fully understanding events. They must promptly plan topics, report whatever content is available, and create conditions for in-depth reporting within limited content. After sudden events, print media journalists must first consider in-depth investigation to obtain comprehensive event information, transforming simple reports into in-depth coverage when conditions permit. Due to print media’s long publication cycles, news interviews require advance topic planning, with early scheduling of investigation, interview, and writing work. Topics should relate to people’s lives, focus on social hot spots, and concentrate on people’s livelihoods, such as poverty alleviation, industrial development, and ecological protection. Facing current new situations and tasks, newspaper journalists must examine issues from a global perspective and consider problems within the larger context, deeply excavating to grasp and reflect the spirit of the times, creating a favorable public opinion atmosphere for reform, opening-up, and social stability. *Yongzhou Daily*’s cover feature “The Transformation of Songjiashou” interviewed and wrote based on Yongzhou decision-makers’ “people-centered” development philosophy, combining with the “I Do Practical Things for the Masses” practical activity. It deeply explored how a formerly “dirty, chaotic, and poor” village transformed into today’s “pearl” of Xiaoxiang source, uncovering the story behind the five-month construction of Songjiashou Park. Through interviews, the conclusion was that this was a miracle—a magnificent march in Yongzhou’s urban construction history. The transformation of Songjiashou is vivid practice and testimony of the municipal party committee and government doing practical things for the people, reflecting Yongzhou’s strength, speed, and temperature in striding forward in the new era and new journey. Through in-depth reporting on current hot topics, the content and depth of in-depth reporting can be kept closer to the masses, meeting new era requirements and avoiding uniformity in reporting content.

4.4 Upholding the Advantages of Print Media Reporting

The “short, flat, fast” editing in the all-media era places higher demands on print media workers in operation and mindset, but this does not mean in-depth reporting should follow the trend and become fast-food reporting. On the contrary, the comprehensiveness and deep thinking of in-depth reporting are print media’s advantages. While steadfastly pursuing in-depth reporting, continuous innovation is needed to strengthen print media’s influence in news dissemination. As today’s society undergoes rapid transformation, wealth explosion

causes people to lose direction in thought and morality. Print media's in-depth reporting should focus on human issues. When people's livelihoods are guaranteed, discussion topics shift from subsistence to market economy, interpersonal indifference, moral decline, and other aspects, contemplating human nature and moral reconstruction. Print media needs to provide reports for deep thinking to achieve innovative development. Reporting has always centered on people, from thought to emotion. While young people focus more on emerging media and lack in-depth exploration of disseminated content and reflection on thought and life, print media is completed by professionally qualified, socially experienced editors willing to explore deeply, capable of excavating stories behind human nature and possessing special advantages in elevating ideological height—strengths for print media development. To break current dilemmas, print media in-depth reporting must prioritize value reconstruction. For example, print media can establish character 专访 columns, featuring everyone from municipal leaders to individual farmers, from craft masters to folk artists and national moral models, using their stories to spread positive energy. Through in-depth reporting, it can show their life contemplation and perspectives, excavate human weaknesses, reconstruct morality, and through online dissemination, enhance the communication power, influence, and authority of in-depth reporting.

5. Conclusion

Print media is like film cameras—not obsolete due to inherent problems, but because people have found better alternatives. Digital cameras continuously update and are widely used by photography enthusiasts, yet film cameras have become valuable collectibles due to their preciousness. Print media is similar. As the internet has become irreplaceable in daily life and paper carriers have been replaced by online dissemination, some people still enjoy reading newspapers and contemplating issues through print media in-depth reporting. As Bai Yansong said, “Some media are born old; many traditional media become old as they walk.” Yet precisely because of this, print media's depth and thoughtfulness become even more valuable, requiring continuous innovation to strengthen its influence in news dissemination.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv –Machine translation. Verify with original.