

Breaking Out of Involution and Building a “High-Quality Content + All-Media Presentation” Converged Media Brand in the Post-Print Era

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Abstract

As media information carriers undergo successive upgrades, the information acquisition habits of contemporary media audiences have consequently changed. In the context of massive news media information dissemination, issues such as content homogenization, quality degradation, superficiality, and unclear pathways for media convergence have become increasingly prominent. The “involution” phenomenon in news media has emerged as a significant factor constraining media transformation and development. Based on analyses of representative domestic local media, breaking the current state of “involution,” restructuring content supply-side reform, exploring all-media presentation modalities, and innovating media technologies constitute effective approaches for exploring all-media brand development.

Full Text

Escaping “Involution”: Building a Converged Media Brand with “Quality Content + Omnimedia Presentation”

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Abstract: As media information carriers continue to evolve, audience habits for obtaining news have fundamentally shifted. Against the backdrop of massive information dissemination, problems such as content homogenization, low quality, and superficiality, along with unclear paths for media convergence, have become increasingly prominent. This “involution” in news media has emerged as a significant constraint on media transformation and development. Based on analysis of typical local media organizations in China, breaking free from this involution requires reshaping content supply-side reforms, exploring omnimedia presentation methods, and innovating media technologies as effective approaches for developing omnimedia brands.

Keywords: media convergence; local media; omnimedia; quality content

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In this era of information explosion, news media face both opportunities to capture traffic through omnimedia dissemination and challenges to improve content quality and technological innovation. Diversified information dissemination methods have transformed how people access news, creating new opportunities for deeper media convergence. Consequently, news content across platforms has become increasingly homogeneous. As content oversupply becomes more pronounced, competition for media resources has intensified, pushing news media into “involution” amid fierce competition. To explore effective converged media development paths, local mainstream news organizations must prioritize quality content while leveraging new media technologies to create effective omnimedia presentations, thereby building three-dimensional and diversified omnimedia brands.

1. Analysis of the New-Era Media Environment and Converged Media Development

For decades, newspapers served as the primary traditional media, fulfilling the vital social function of providing news to the public. In the omnimedia era, changing public media usage habits have driven transformations in both news content and presentation formats. According to the 47th “Statistical Report on China’s Internet Development” released by CNNIC, by December 2020, China’s internet user base had reached 989 million, with 986 million mobile internet users accounting for 99.7% of total users, and online video (including short video) users exceeding 900 million [1]. In this context, numerous comprehensive newspaper groups have actively explored omnimedia development directions.

In the early stages of new media exploration, print media’s text and image reports entered public view through new media carriers, primarily by converting news content into QR codes for distribution across various platforms or printing video QR codes in newspapers to expand information capacity. This approach made news information “dynamic,” enriching readers’ experiences and making newspaper reporting more “vivid and colorful.” During this phase, basic new media production skills sufficed for editorial staff, and competition remained relatively moderate.

With the development of mobile internet and the advent of the information explosion era, many print media organizations launched online news clients and

assigned editorial staff to produce online news, competing to capture high-traffic positions and attract followers. This broke through the limitations of newspaper layouts, multiplying news output and diversifying content platforms and presentation methods. Eye-catching poster-style QR codes and video columns with attractive titles provided refreshing audio-visual experiences, characterized by convenience, speed, and richness. In this converged media landscape, capturing audience attention has become the primary “traffic password.” To expand influence, print media actively explore omnimedia presentation at new starting points, while new media platforms seek to build brand influence through various approaches—some through cooperation with traditional media entering video platforms, others through original news clients and video platforms experimenting with omnimedia news livestreaming, in-depth special reports, and news short videos to effectively enhance brand attention.

In current news content production, the editorial process has evolved from the traditional division of labor between interviewing and editing to a more integrated approach requiring comprehensive converged media literacy. Every editor and reporter now functions as an omnimedia journalist who can, with just a mobile phone at the scene, complete video shooting, editing, and uploading to the backend independently, dramatically improving production efficiency. However, while efficiency has increased alongside technological upgrades, technology serves only as the foundation of news production—content quality remains the critical factor.

Currently, news content production combining omnimedia presentation faces several problems: pursuing quantity over quality, resulting in an overflow of low-level works; serious homogenization despite numerous information channels, with few original high-quality news pieces; lack of content screening standards and mechanisms; generally low converged media literacy among editorial staff and media anxiety among print journalists; and over-reliance on technological innovation while neglecting content production. Analysis reveals that under these circumstances, print media’s advantage in text reporting has not been fully leveraged, while new media content easily falls into “involution” with quality lacking guarantees. This so-called 100% “direct reach” often results in ineffective news information, exacerbating the “information cocoon” effect and hindering access to diverse information.

To maintain content vitality, rich and diverse content must be presented through efficient and convenient information dissemination channels. Consistently producing high-quality and customized content that meets audience information needs and establishes trust can transform audiences into loyal platform followers.

2. Content-Centered Approach to Building Omnimedia Brands

Content production constitutes a crucial link in media dissemination and the core of information competition, representing the key to development in the omnimedia era. High-standard, high-quality, and high-efficiency news content remains the eternal core competitiveness. Only by mastering this can media organizations enhance their communication power, influence, and brand effect.

For years, many local newspaper groups have adhered to content as king, technology empowerment, and omnimedia presentation, deepening content supply-side structural reforms and leveraging content advantages to win integrated development advantages.

2.1 Enhancing Core News Competitiveness and Forming New Public Opinion Guidance Momentum

Quality content represents core news competitiveness. In this content-centered competitive environment, news producers and consumers maintain a benign interactive relationship through media platforms. In the information explosion era, discovering the “traffic password” requires prioritizing quality content and seizing opportunities to create traffic through superior content to build deeply resonant omnimedia brands.

Taking Lanzhou Daily Press Group as an example, *Lanzhou Daily* remembers its mission as a party newspaper, firmly grasps correct guidance of public opinion, 坚守 s the content-centered position, focuses on core competitiveness, and steadily emphasizes direction and guidance. By refining content construction, it enhances the credibility and influence of party media, building a mainstream public opinion position in western provincial capitals. Based on this, it actively builds an omnimedia matrix, launching special columns and reports around major themes such as the 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of China and civilized Lanzhou, receiving widespread acclaim. For consecutive years, editors and reporters have won numerous honors including first and second prizes in Gansu News Awards.

Producing major theme reports represents an important indicator of innovative capacity and public opinion guidance for new mainstream media. *Lanzhou Daily* has planned and launched column series such as “Journey of Struggle for a Century, Setting Sail for a New Voyage” and “Exquisite Lanzhou, Walking with Civilization,” excavating typical reports related to major themes, telling compelling local news stories, and spreading positive energy. On the new media platform ZAKER Lanzhou, it has opened relevant special topics to build an influential, credible, and branded omnimedia matrix, maximizing converged media communication effects.

It can be said that *Lanzhou Daily* has based its strategy on long-term development, striving to cultivate in-depth coverage in relevant fields. Fully leveraging

its positioning and advantages as a provincial capital party newspaper, it focuses on the strong timeliness of news and actively develops short video news, delivering news in ways that local audiences find appealing. Centering on important themes such as rural revitalization and civilized city creation, it deeply excavates diverse materials and presents quality news content in omnimedia formats, earning a trusted reputation among the people.

2.2 Ensuring Quality and Enhancing the “Gold Content” of News Content

Quality control across all stages of news production is particularly important, requiring editorial staff to fulfill their respective responsibilities and improve converged media literacy. During on-site interviews, frontline reporters must determine the most suitable presentation format for news events—whether through text and images, short videos, pure text, or audio—to achieve the most effective communication. At this stage, the reporter serves as the “first gatekeeper” for news content, ensuring quality and timeliness. In the editorial backend, editors acting as “second gatekeepers” select and further process submitted content, while department heads or chief editors as “third gatekeepers” provide revision feedback, reject unsuitable submissions, or conduct refined editing, strictly following news production standards to enhance content quality.

2.3 Refining Articles for Secondary Dissemination to Create Hotspots

Identifying the right angle and refining content for timely secondary dissemination can also create viral hits. For example, Jiaxing Daily Media Group’s articles “How Were the Four Lead Reciters Selected? One of Them Is from Jiaxing” and “Why Was This Jiaxing Native Selected as One of the Four Lead Reciters?” achieved 1.03 million and 1.45 million clicks respectively within five days, exemplifying successful traffic attraction through secondary dissemination.

Analysis shows that this secondary dissemination “dominated screens” because producers excelled at content refinement. First, they grasped proximity and identified the right angle. By analyzing previous interviews with lead reciter Feng Lin, they discovered she was from Jiaxing, Zhejiang—establishing local relevance. Second, they capitalized on timeliness to capture traffic high ground. Editors, reviewers, and other staff demonstrated professional competence, racing against time to publish and promote the content, instantly creating an “information explosion effect.” Finally, after secondary dissemination, other provincial and central media followed up, triggering a joint communication effect.

This case demonstrates that in today’s massive information environment, journalists need sensitive news-capturing abilities to identify “traffic passwords” in the ocean of information. Such production yields high-quality “hard news” — the fundamental embodiment of “content is king.” With “hard news” as the foundation and all stages working at “accelerated speed,” refined secondary dissemination news can achieve immediate communication effects.

2.4 Adopting New Discourse Styles in the Converged Media Environment

In the current converged media environment, discourse style in news production requires attention. Observing content across various platforms reveals the reality and urgency of discourse transformation. “Convergence” in converged media involves not just media integration but, more importantly, content fusion. The discourse changes reflected in textual symbols carrying this content require further research. Clickbait titles, personification, and internet slang all authentically reflect audience concerns and interests. Only by studying these new discourse changes can media find their own “voice” in the converged development environment.

High-quality content combined with new discourse styles can achieve a “1+1>2” communication effect. Analysis of many viral news stories reveals that editors often refer to themselves as “Xiao Bian” (editor) to communicate and interact with users in accessible language, helping establish close connections. However, innovative discourse must be appropriate, otherwise it may cause doubt and aversion. Many news contents now feature down-to-earth discourse styles reflecting colloquial, oral expression—so-called “speaking human language” —conveying human interest through plain, understandable language.

Regarding discourse transformation, internet language usage deserves mention. Many media outlets pursue popular online phrases to attract young users, a key target demographic. However, young audiences often reject media’s “deliberate efforts,” and inappropriate internet discourse may increase discomfort among audiences, including the loss of some loyal middle-aged and elderly users, thereby affecting long-established media brand credibility.

Converged media discourse transformation is deepening, and the resulting new discourse should be neither condescending educational discourse nor dull document-style discourse, nor inappropriate “deliberate” expressions. It should be professional expression based on media communication laws that respects user needs and psychological feelings, reflecting the media’s own linguistic style characteristics. Such new discourse can objectively state facts, calmly analyze, rationally interpret, and clearly present information without losing human touch. Only then will converged media discourse transformation be more than empty fanfare.

3. Innovating Omnimedia Presentation and Exploring New Paths for Comprehensive Effectiveness

Media convergence is the inevitable path for media development in the information age. Omnimedia presents diversified information where everyone is a communicator with a microphone, fundamentally changing the identity of news media. Based on this, deepening media integration and focusing on new and practical technologies to accelerate information sharing, content creation, tech-

nology development, platform terminals, and management system integration are essential to achieving content advantages.

Through quality content, mainstream media can enhance brand awareness and recognition, but forming omnimedia brands also requires leveraging new media technologies. How can media organizations use new communication technologies to generate new dissemination efficiency? Under the algorithm-revered backdrop, user-initiated “search” behavior is often overlooked. Compared to passive reception, user-initiated searches reflect genuine information needs. The 5G era is one where content is king and technology drives development. In this context, adhering to a user-centered approach and providing precise, differentiated, and personalized content services while innovating diversified, multi-form, and multi-level content presentation can build an omnimedia content system where mainstream values and technological innovation advance together, enabling good news to carry its own “traffic password,” thereby improving user experience, enhancing audience stickiness, and expanding brand influence.

For example, *Wenzhou Metropolitan Daily* has introduced artificial intelligence technology, innovating AI virtual anchor formats and exploring new government affairs openness models of “news + government affairs + AI + 5G” with excellent results. Its AI virtual anchor column uses virtual anchors combined with cutting-edge media technologies like MG animation and AE effects to interpret policies in multi-dimensional, three-dimensional ways, launching multiple customized programs with total views exceeding one million, broadening omnimedia development paths through technology empowerment and attracting numerous loyal fans.

It can be said that mainstream media convergence development requires further opening minds and actively promoting platform construction. Building on past competitive advantages and quality resources in premium content creation, and empowered by new technologies, media organizations should establish a complete omnimedia content evaluation standard system, index, or algorithm. Such a new platform based on mainstream media algorithms becomes a new entry point for quality omnimedia content, functioning as both a search engine and a recommendation engine that can activate existing content inventory and all quality content created by various media types. Through this entry point, the platform recommends the most suitable personalized content to users, enabling more traditional media to maintain their own initiative.

For instance, the ZAKER new media platform in Lanzhou focuses on solving issues of scalable, procedural, and intelligent content production. On this foundation, each new media account can efficiently build characteristic content pools, generating promotional effects through content interaction and enabling each account’s content pool to become a self-propagating, self-improving healthy media ecosystem. The *Lanzhou Daily* ZAKER new media platform aims for “genuine and deep integration,” striving to build a “news + government affairs + service” fingertip converged media platform that uses technology to innovate formats, enrich presentation, and promote integration, constructing a locally character-

istic omnimedia integration innovation model and creating a comprehensive, three-dimensional, and diversified promotional pattern. *Lanzhou Evening News* has created a “24-hour” all-time, all-coverage, omnimedia promotional matrix through special quality reports, online and offline activities, user-tiered promotion, and emotionally catalyzed dissemination, achieving deep reach and optimized communication effects among target audiences [3]. Through vertical and circular precise planning, content production, and event dissemination, multiple original news pieces have become viral “blockbusters” in WeChat Moments. Wenzhou Daily Press Group adheres to intelligent, smart media, and think tank orientations, jointly building the Wenzhou Smart Media Information Port and a “central kitchen,” constructing three major media matrixes for party newspapers, metropolitan media, and financial media, building a mainstream media convergence circle adapted to the regional central city at the southern gateway of the Yangtze River Delta.

In summary, in this era of changing internet communication patterns, building converged media brands through “quality content + omnimedia presentation” is key to constructing modern mainstream media communication systems. This approach achieves complementary advantages and integrated development between traditional and emerging media, organically integrating previously separate or scattered media institutions with single functions, enhancing network communication capabilities, expanding internet development space, and further leveraging media’s important role as information channels and consensus-building bonds.

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

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