

## Analysis of Innovative Pathways and Policy Recommendations for Traditional Media Content Monetization (Postprint)

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### Abstract

In the current era, the Internet is experiencing rapid development, which has laid a solid foundation for the emergence of new media. New media has exerted a tremendous impact on traditional media, resulting in massive audience loss and a sharp decline in profitability. To maintain stable development, traditional media must vigorously expand their business domains, identify new profit models, and simultaneously conduct in-depth exploration of content monetization. This paper conducts an in-depth analysis of traditional media content monetization, and based on this, explores feasible innovative pathways and strategic recommendations.

### Full Text

#### An Analysis of Innovative Paths and Countermeasure Suggestions for Traditional Media Content Monetization

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**Abstract:** In the current era, the rapid development of the Internet has laid a solid foundation for the emergence of new media. The impact of new media on traditional media has been substantial, resulting in significant audience loss and a sharp decline in profitability. To maintain stable development, traditional media must vigorously expand their business domains, identify new profit models, and conduct in-depth exploration of content monetization. This paper provides a thorough analysis of traditional media content monetization and proposes feasible innovative paths and countermeasure suggestions.

**Keywords:** content monetization; business expansion; institutional reform; technology enhancement; talent acquisition

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Media convergence has become the dominant development trend. Although traditional media have been continuously upgrading, the results have been unsatisfactory, with some outlets falling into survival difficulties. For media organizations, if they continue to rely on news content for economic benefits, their living space will inevitably be further compressed. Without solving the content monetization problem, traditional media will inevitably decline. To effectively address this issue, traditional media must substantially improve the quality of original works while achieving genuine cross-boundary integration to ensure that products and services align with user needs. Only then can audience resources be truly transformed into users, identifying new growth points and injecting strong momentum into traditional media development.

## 1. The Dilemma and Strategic Thinking of Traditional Media Content Monetization

The emergence of new media has delivered a tremendous impact to traditional media, forcing them to transform to ensure survival. In the Internet era, media no longer monopolize content production and distribution channels; production entities have become diversified, particularly with the rise of self-media, which has significantly broadened information channels. However, the resulting information is often chaotic, filled with false and negative content, making high-quality reporting from professional media particularly crucial. For traditional media to achieve successful content monetization, they can experiment with digital content payment models to demonstrate the value of quality journalism. In 2017, Caixin Media restructured its financial news offerings by adding paid services and launching four products based on user needs. Prior to this, Caixin.com had already placed some products behind a paywall, while regular news and commentary remained free. Important news and “data+” products, however, required payment. Since 2017, Caixin Media has officially implemented full-site charging, earning industry acclaim and achieving noticeable improvements in content production and distribution, providing audiences with higher-quality content. It should be noted that Caixin’s payment model possesses unique characteristics that make it unsuitable for large-scale replication. Readers are willing to pay because the content is more professional, exclusive, and carries higher added value. Caixin Media’s strong professional news capabilities and rich media resources give it inherent advantages in promoting paid content—

advantages that ordinary media lack, making successful replication extremely difficult. In 2014, the Liaoshen Evening News launched a paid electronic newspaper, but this experiment failed, resulting in massive audience loss and failing to achieve content monetization goals.

According to national media advertising revenue data, total revenue reached 550 billion yuan in 2018, with Internet advertising revenue significantly exceeding traditional media advertising and growing at a much faster rate. Although traditional media advertising has declined substantially, not all of it has been transferred to new media departments. Because distribution channels and terminals have become diversified, new media departments can achieve self-sufficiency through advertising revenue, but pulling traditional media along to improve economic benefits proves extremely difficult. Many traditional media outlets undergoing transformation and convergence simply publish information content on the Internet, still relying on news to generate advertising revenue. In the current stage, the influence of news content and media platforms has become disconnected, allowing audiences to access quality content through various platforms. For example, although the story “X Stabs Mother-Insulter to Death” was first reported by Southern Weekend, many readers encountered it through other platforms.

## 2. Innovation and Paths

### 2.1 Expanding Business Scope and Innovating Business Forms

Traditional media must not only provide appropriate content but also fully leverage their strengths to expand service offerings, particularly by developing content resource services for individual and institutional users. Such services can adopt paid models or generate revenue through advertising after acquiring large user bases. With the deepening of media convergence, new media products developed by traditional media are no longer traditional information carriers in the conventional sense; their functions have become more diverse, encompassing information distribution, resource integration, and communication services. Traditional media should fully utilize regional and industry resources, employing the Internet and big data to provide users with more targeted services, thereby substantially expanding profit margins.

**(1) Digital Content Sales.** Traditional media must recognize the importance of innovative sales methods and actively explore digital content sales. They can sell copyrights directly to institutional users while vigorously marketing digital products to individual users. From the user perspective, online payment habits are gradually forming, and awareness of paying for knowledge has significantly increased, enabling traditional media to derive economic benefits from digital content payments. Currently, the number of knowledge payment websites continues to grow, gaining public recognition and providing a solid foundation for promoting paid online reading for newspapers. Traditional media can implement “paywalls” to truly differentiate paid users from regular users, granting

them access to different information content. Common paywall models include soft walls and hard walls, with the former being more suitable for comprehensive media and the latter more feasible for specialized media. Information requiring payment is typically highly specialized with relatively high added value, requiring traditional media to comprehensively analyze user characteristics and needs to ensure accurate content positioning and select the most appropriate payment system. The Shanghai Observer App adopted a paid subscription model upon launch, and many traditional media outlets have launched dedicated paid reading content. Caixin Media, for instance, operates on a semi-paid model, offering Caixin.com news for free while charging for Caixin Data+, Caixin English, and other premium products. Since 2017, the platform has officially implemented full-site charging.

**(2) Brand and Marketing Services.** Traditional media can integrate traditional media products with Weibo, WeChat, and app platforms to provide corporate users with comprehensive communication and marketing services. Having developed over a long period, traditional media possess obvious resource advantages. While circulation has declined, their credibility and authority remain strong—factors that must be fully utilized to achieve content monetization. Traditional media should integrate online and offline resources to establish brand equity and enhance marketing effectiveness. The Luoyang Newspaper Group, for example, integrated its Luoyang Daily, Luoyang Evening News, television network, and smart news kiosks to establish a converged media business group, developing brand communication solutions that have generated satisfactory revenue.

**(3) Personal Information Services.** Traditional media must recognize the value of individual users and ensure the provision of innovative information services, delivering not only vertical information services but also comprehensive community services. With high authority and influence within certain scopes, traditional media can effectively combine online and offline channels to maximize the role of new media platforms. Merchants wishing to join these information service platforms must pay membership fees and transaction commissions, providing traditional media with ideal revenue streams. Some traditional media have already built new media platforms that offer users community services. For instance, *Beijing Youth Daily* has established a community life mobile internet platform, while *Suzhou Daily* launched the “家在苏州” platform closely connected to users’ daily lives. Other media outlets have introduced vertical content-based e-commerce platforms, such as *Sanlian Life Weekly*’s “Pinecone Life,” which combines online content with offline activities from a lifestyle perspective, and *Chengdu Business Daily*’s “Sichuan Famous Doctors” new media product, which functions as a social platform facilitating interaction between doctors and patients. These products have gained widespread audience acceptance and achieved success shortly after entering the market.

**(4) Think Tank Services.** In the Internet era, data plays a crucial role in people’ s lives, and relevant institutions can achieve ideal results by leverag-

ing massive datasets. E-commerce giants like JD.com and Alibaba can analyze consumer capabilities and habits after obtaining necessary data, while Shenzhou Zhuanche can explore travel patterns using vast amounts of data. From a media perspective, relevant data can provide feedback on lifestyle and policy implementation effects. Media organizations possess strong capabilities in data collection and information gathering, and some traditional media have begun developing toward think tank models by leveraging this advantage. Cover News and *China Business News Weekly* have fully utilized their ability to influence audiences to provide qualitative analysis services, offering effective references for problems faced by governments and enterprises. The “Youdianzhuan” App, built by the Liaoning Press and Media Group, is a mobile research platform centered on netizens that daily launches various attractive surveys, rewarding participants with cash and gifts—an approach that proves highly attractive to users. After registration, the App can obtain relevant information, laying a solid foundation for subsequent brand analysis and marketing evaluation while ensuring higher service quality. In its current phase, Youdianzhuan has established deep cooperation with numerous government departments, significantly increasing its user base and generating substantially higher revenue from its main business. Particularly noteworthy is its innovative small and micro enterprise service platform jointly established with the Municipal Science and Technology Bureau, which has yielded ideal economic benefits.

## 2.2 Cross-Boundary Integration and Industrial Model Innovation

To truly achieve industrial model innovation, traditional media must fully utilize diverse community scenarios to build online platforms that incorporate local contexts, thereby achieving value-added service goals. It must be emphasized that integration innovation is not merely about establishing platforms; more critically, it requires substantially enhancing social and market value to truly convert audiences into users. In 2015, *Liaoshen Evening News* established the Qian Duoduo Club and cooperated deeply with Zhejiang Financial Center and Tianjin Financial Exchange, leveraging its credibility to promote financial and wealth management products, thereby identifying a new profit point. In 2017, *Dalian Peninsula Morning News* partnered with Zhejiang Jiazi to launch the Peninsula Financial Club, which within a short period accumulated over 1,000 members, achieved 100 million yuan in sales, and generated profits exceeding 1 million yuan.

## 3. Countermeasure Suggestions for Traditional Media Content Monetization

### 3.1 Reforming Institutions and Mechanisms

When constructing their business systems, traditional media should focus on market segmentation, particularly emphasizing the development of new media. They should establish long-term incentive mechanisms based on their actual

conditions to meet new media needs, increase investment in core talent, and thereby generate good returns. In terms of property rights, new media belongs to the category of shared property rights, and incentive mechanisms such as stocks and options should be introduced to maintain robust development. In the media market, new media professionals exhibit independence, and traditional media should actively push them into the market while implementing necessary measures to enhance their core competitiveness. To facilitate smooth transformation, new media should become the focus, receiving necessary support in policy, funding, and talent.

### **3.2 Technology-Driven Development: Learning and Adopting Advanced Technologies for Comprehensive Integration with the Internet**

When undertaking media convergence, traditional media must not simply transfer information content to the Internet, Weibo, WeChat, and apps. The focus should be on updating dissemination forms, channels, and methods. Technology is indispensable for successful media convergence, and selecting more advanced technologies can truly transform the communication landscape. To ensure content value is fully realized, the driving force of technology must be leveraged. Applying technologies such as VR, AR, and data journalism can diversify communication content and achieve visualization goals. Additionally, traditional media must fully utilize Internet thinking to guide management and operations, truly connecting traditional media with the Internet to achieve product upgrading and sustainable digital consumption development.

### **3.3 Talent as Guarantee: Updating Talent Concepts and Recruiting New Media Technology and Operations Professionals**

To achieve content monetization in the Internet era, the role of new media technology must be leveraged while ensuring adequate talent. Traditional media currently face significant talent gaps caused by multiple factors. First, compensation and promotion opportunities fail to meet talent needs, resulting in frequent brain drain. Second, there is a shortage of professionals truly proficient in Internet technology. If talent issues remain unresolved, media convergence and transformation goals cannot be achieved, nor can content monetization. Traditional media must transform their talent concepts and effectively cultivate comprehensive talent, particularly ensuring that new media technology and operations professionals play leading roles. To meet the actual needs of technical talent, traditional media should offer competitive compensation packages or establish deep cooperation with Internet companies. They must also understand employees' intrinsic needs and build feasible compensation systems to stabilize the talent pool and substantially enhance professional capabilities.

### 3.4 Content as Foundation: Producing High-Quality Original Content and Building Content Brands

For traditional media to achieve survival and development goals, they must ensure superior content quality. Their editorial teams possess strong professional capabilities that represent the fundamental basis for traditional media's existence. As Internet development accelerates and self-media numbers continue to increase, online information quality has declined, with obvious homogenization in news and entertainment content. Against this backdrop, high-quality, original content holds extremely high value, and many audiences are willing to pay for premium content. Therefore, traditional media must improve information quality, build their own brand image, and ensure substantial increases in user stickiness.

### 3.5 Establishing Distinctive Positioning Based on Own Characteristics for Differentiated Development

In the current stage, news and public opinion communication is showing a trend toward segmentation and significant differentiation, requiring the establishment of a more sophisticated public opinion landscape. National, regional, and industry-specific media have different positions and distinct user needs, with content products exhibiting their own characteristics. Because media positioning varies considerably, differences in service targets and information content are substantial. For traditional media to achieve content monetization, they must understand their own nature, deeply analyze user characteristics, ensure personalized needs are met, and clarify monetization plans to avoid homogenization in content monetization.

In summary, the transformation and modernization of traditional media must fully leverage core advantages such as their influence, actively embrace new opportunities and requirements from the technological revolution, demonstrate courage to break through and innovate, and maximize their own value to continuously meet market demands for cultural products.

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

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