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Exploration of Marketing Strategies for Children's Books in the Era of Media Convergence (Post-Print)

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Abstract

In recent years, the process of media convergence in China has continuously accelerated, with traditional media and new media quietly breaking down barriers to achieve organic integration and upgrading. Emerging media technologies have presented new challenges and opportunities to the book publishing industry, while simultaneously providing novel pathways for children's book marketing. Children's book marketing initiatives must actively adapt to temporal changes, grasp authentic reader needs within the context of media convergence, capitalize on the strengths of traditional marketing models to leverage the opportunities of the new media era, and optimize children's book marketing through emerging media technologies, thereby expanding the developmental space for children's book marketing. The research objective of this paper is to identify existing problems in current children's book marketing, analyze the impetus and opportunities afforded to children's book marketing under the new backdrop of media convergence, and subsequently propose specific strategies for enhancing children's book marketing effectiveness in the era of media convergence, enabling children's book marketing to achieve superior outcomes and returns.

Full Text

Preamble

Title: Exploring Marketing Strategies for Children's Books in the Era of Media Convergence (Henan University Press, Kaifeng, Henan 475001)

Abstract: In recent years, China's media convergence process has continuously accelerated, with traditional and new media quietly breaking down barriers to achieve organic integration and upgrading. Emerging media technologies have brought new challenges and opportunities to the book publishing industry, while also providing new pathways for children's book marketing. Children's

book marketing must actively adapt to the changing times, grasp readers' real needs based on the context of media convergence, build upon the advantages of traditional marketing models while taking advantage of the opportunities presented by the new media era, and optimize children's book marketing through emerging media to expand its development space. The purpose of this study is to identify current problems in children's book marketing, analyze the support and opportunities obtained by children's book marketing under the new background of media convergence, and propose specific strategies to enhance children's book marketing levels in the media convergence era, thereby achieving better results and benefits.

Keywords: media convergence; children's book marketing; marketing strategies; diversified forms; brand building

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The 21st century has ushered in an era of explosive growth for children's books. According to surveys, China's children's book market has maintained positive growth in retail sales since 2017, with particularly rapid development in 2019, when the number of published children's book titles exceeded 40,000. The market covers 367 million minors in China, ranking first in the world in total volume [1]. As media convergence continues to deepen, internet and new media technologies have brought innovation-driven development, with various old and new media breaking down barriers to present a trend of multifunctional integration. Consequently, children's book marketing has also welcomed new development models. However, at the current stage, some children's book publishers have overlooked the important opportunities presented by media convergence, focusing instead on traditional offline marketing models. Their marketing mechanisms can no longer adapt to the new form of children's book market supported by media convergence, resulting in many problems during the publishing and specific marketing processes. Children's book publishing institutions must ride the wave of the media convergence era and enable both traditional and new media to play reasonable roles in order to effectively improve children's book marketing methods and levels, and help children's book marketing gain vitality in this new era.

1.1 Many in Quantity but Lacking Quality

Based on the characteristics of children's book sales, such as a large audience and high profits, combined with vague industry entry standards, numerous new

children's book publishers have continuously emerged in China's current book market. Some marketers believe that children's book publishing is simple—merely combining children's stories with illustrations can yield economic benefits. Consequently, the publishing speed of children's books continues to accelerate and the variety increases. However, due to the lack of strict quality control mechanisms, the children's book market cannot achieve a virtuous cycle, and the market is flooded with substandard products. Children's books are not reviewed and supervised by professional institutions and editors, and in severe cases, content errors may even appear in books, which not only hinders children from learning knowledge but may also mislead them. For example, there are more than ten children's versions of the Four Great Classics in the traditional Chinese education series. Taking *Journey to the West* alone, there are over a dozen versions, and each version differs in its translation from classical Chinese to vernacular Chinese, creating difficulties for children in reading and comprehension. According to statistics from national book regulatory authorities, the number of children's books with basic errors and lacking positive content continues to increase annually. The children's book marketing market faces the dilemma of having many books but poor quality, which to a certain extent impacts children's book marketing.

1.3 Insufficient Brand Marketing Thinking

China's children's book market also features many well-known children's book series brands. For instance, Cao Wenxuan's pure and beautiful children's novels, including *The Straw House*, *Bronze and Sunflower*, and *Triangular Land*, have won the "Best Children's Book of the Year" award multiple times. His works have consistently focused on children's inner worlds, writing about humanity, dignity, and ideals with simple and pure brushstrokes that are suitable for children to read and experience. Another excellent fairy tale writer, Yang Hongying, has created the Ma Xiaotiao character brand, which has formed brand benefits. However, most children's book marketing has not developed brand chain awareness, merely stopping at publishing series of paper books without continuing to explore the possibilities of brand extension and expansion. Current children's book marketing work neglects the important significance of children's book brand building, fails to integrate the concept of media convergence into children's book marketing, and thus prevents children's book marketing from leveraging brand chain reactions to harvest more economic and social benefits, thereby limiting the development space of children's book marketing.

2. Opportunities Brought by Media Convergence for Children's Book Marketing

In the context of accelerating media convergence, readers have gradually begun using mobile phones, tablets, and other devices to preview children's books online and make purchases at any time, making children's book marketing scenarios more random and flexible. With the rapid development of digital information

technology, children's book marketing has gained valuable opportunities under the new background of media convergence. Many children's book publishing institutions have changed their traditional offline sales and promotion methods, beginning to use new media platforms for information-based marketing. By leveraging the combined power of "two micros and one end" (Weibo, WeChat, and news client apps), they have achieved children's book marketing models for mobile terminals. Media convergence has also provided new ideas for the forms of children's book marketing, enabling marketers to present text through images, audio, video, and other methods on new media platforms. This makes marketing methods more in line with contemporary trends and more easily accepted and liked by readers, thereby increasing customer stickiness and enhancing the effectiveness of children's book marketing.

2.1 Optimizing the Expressive Power of Children's Book Content

Media convergence has provided more methods and means for children's book marketing, moving the children's book marketing market toward diversification. The application of virtual reality technologies such as VR and AR continuously expands children's reading horizons. Media convergence helps children's book marketing break away from traditional single text and image presentation modes [2], rendering book expressive power from various forms including text, audio, video, and animated images. Many children's book marketing departments have also equipped children's books with audio reading functions and other features to stimulate children's various audio-visual senses and enhance their reading interest. Media convergence further enhances the added value of children's books by enriching their content expression, enabling children's book marketing to achieve higher quality results.

2.2 Promoting Further Expansion of the Children's Book Market

According to the 45th *Statistical Report on China's Internet Development*, as of March 2020, China's internet user base had reached 900 million, demonstrating the enormous foundation of internet users in China today. The media convergence brought by the internet era has enabled children's book sales to no longer be limited to local offline physical bookstores, breaking geographical restrictions. Readers can now view various children's book details via the internet, including book titles, authors, and main content. The rapid retrieval technology of new media platforms helps readers find needed books more efficiently [3], enabling the children's book market to develop both online and offline simultaneously and to complete market penetration in first- and second-tier cities, thereby broadening the children's book sales market and providing broader development space for children's book marketing.

2.3 Broadening Children's Book Marketing Channels and Methods

Media convergence has achieved the broadening of children's book marketing channels and methods. In the era of integrated media, self-media and other new media forms have risen rapidly and quickly occupied the market, with the short

video industry also developing swiftly. Based on characteristics such as short production time and low cost, short video and other dissemination methods have been widely accepted and applied by people—everyone can be a self-media content creator and can use new media platforms to disseminate whatever they wish to showcase. Media convergence has brought new ideas to children’ s book marketing, shifting children’ s book marketing and promotion from traditional flyers, billboards, and offline book signings to new media soft advertising, using diversified new media to jointly expand marketing reach. Additionally, media convergence has brought new marketing models of community operation. Children’ s book marketing departments can establish their own brand promotion groups and reader exchange groups through new media platforms and other channels, leveraging the important role of opinion leaders in the era of integrated media, and partnering with celebrity hosts on Weibo, Douyin, and other platforms for book recommendations [4], making their branded children’ s books known and accepted by more and more people, thereby enhancing the influence of children’ s book marketing.

2.4 Promoting Diversification of Children’ s Book Publishing Forms

Media convergence has further promoted the realization of paperless children’ s book publishing. Traditional children’ s book publishing has always used actual paper printing, but in the era of integrated media, various audio reading software and reading apps have developed rapidly, achieving online paperless reading models that meet readers’ personalized consumption needs. According to surveys by China’ s book management authorities, media convergence has driven changes in readers’ reading habits. At the current stage, the “paper-electricity same sales” marketing model has been accepted by more and more people [5], prompting children’ s book marketing management departments to continuously deepen e-book creation and achieve diversification in children’ s book publishing. Additionally, when children use audio reading to understand children’ s book content, they can learn through sound, thereby protecting their vision, which is more conducive to children’ s healthy growth.

3. Specific Strategies for Children’ s Book Marketing in the Media Convergence Era

3.1 Building Platform Cooperation Linkage to Achieve Optimal Publicity Effects

In the new era of media convergence, children’ s book marketing management departments should unite the new media matrix, develop online and offline marketing work simultaneously, create cooperative linkage benefits between new media and traditional media platforms, increase reader attention, harvest traffic, improve attention economy conversion rates, and thus achieve optimal children’ s book marketing publicity effects. While leveraging the significant advantages of new media platforms, children’ s book marketing departments must not neglect the solid foundation of traditional media. They should grasp the respective advantages of traditional and new media, seize the core concept of media convergence, and enable each to perform well. Traditional media has the

advantage of closeness to readers, so offline marketing should capitalize on this characteristic to establish close relationships with readers and provide quality reading services. Children's book marketing departments should pay attention to creating clean and bright offline sales environments and improving the texture of paper books. When new high-quality children's books are published, marketing departments can organize new book exchange meetings and offline reading clubs, allowing children to discuss new stories face-to-face with their peers to enhance their reading experience, thereby laying a good foundation for subsequent sales conversion in first- and second-tier cities. New media has the characteristics of fast dissemination speed and wide reach, so the purpose of online marketing is to seize new media platforms and community channels. First, children's book publishers can establish their own official flagship stores on internet shopping platforms, display new children's book products in these online flagship stores, and provide home delivery services for readers to increase their own sales volume. Second, they can partner with hosts for live streaming marketing, which facilitates effective communication between children's book marketers and readers during live broadcasts [6], making it easier for marketers to convey the product philosophy of children's books to readers, thereby enhancing readers' sense of participation and purchase desire. Finally, children's book marketing departments should base themselves on their actual products and do well in community operation work, designing share-and-forward activities to disseminate children's book information more widely and enhance the influence of children's book sales. They can also establish specialized media promotion teams responsible for operating content construction on new media platforms such as "two micros and one end," Xiaohongshu, and Douyin [7], creating a "reputation + traffic" marketing model that enables various media to jointly exert force and continuously improve the effectiveness of children's book marketing publicity.

3.2 Enhancing Cross-Border Integration Capability to Improve Marketing Competitiveness Media convergence has not only brought new models of content operation to children's book marketing but also provided new ideas for cross-border integration. Children's book marketing can enhance attractiveness and marketing novelty by improving its own cross-border integration capability. The current integration trend has been promoted across various industries, and children's book marketing departments should seize sales inflection points in organic integration, utilize the educational and cultural nature of children's book products themselves, and find suitable and appropriate partners. For example, children's book marketing can establish cooperation with children's television stations to create programs such as children's book story clubs, stimulating children's reading interest by designing cartoon characters to tell stories in the programs. They can also cooperate with self-media platforms, such as opening relevant WeChat mini-programs so that children can read rich children's books anytime and anywhere. The marketing power brought by cross-border integration still has great development space, and compared with traditional

single marketing models, it can bring more benefits to children's book operations. Therefore, children's book marketing departments should base themselves on actual conditions, pay attention to changes in the children's book market, seek suitable integration paths that can help children's book sales, break down inter-industry barriers, and enable readers to obtain diversified reading service experiences.

3.3 Focusing on Brand Marketing Building to Enhance Industrial Benefits Children's book marketing departments should focus on building children's book brand benefits and design and carry out certain brand marketing activities to increase the exposure rate of children's books to gain traffic attention and convert it into subsequent sales volume. First, children's book marketing departments should select high-quality children's book products, create exclusive brand series for publicity, and attract readers to accumulate customer resources. Children's book marketing departments should choose representative time points and influential platforms to carry out brand marketing activities based on their own children's book brand's actual conditions, and design and conduct continuous brand derivative activities, such as establishing public welfare projects or carrying out public welfare reading lectures and exchange meetings in the name of children's book brands, to enhance the social benefits of children's book brands and increase influence, thereby harvesting sales growth. Children's book brand marketing can also develop its own long-term product lines, analyze the matching degree between its own advantages and characteristics and reader needs, adjust children's book brand design, and create related derivative products, such as stationery series and doll pillows featuring cartoon images from children's books, and launch special activities during special festivals such as the Spring Festival and Dragon Boat Festival to provide continuous vitality for children's book brands, thereby consolidating the attraction of children's books themselves and reader stickiness, thus achieving successful children's book brand series marketing.

3.4 Returning to the Reader-Centered Concept and Optimizing Service Levels In the media convergence era, the diversity and novelty of self-media platforms may cause children to lose themselves in the massive amount of internet information. Therefore, while leveraging the power of media convergence, children's book marketing should not forget its original intention and should return to the initial reader-centered concept to provide readers with the highest quality reading services. Children's book marketing departments should provide rich and thoughtful value-added services to readers, enhance readers' service experience to increase stickiness. Children's book marketing work should pay attention to customer accumulation, not forgetting to consolidate existing customers while developing new ones, analyze existing customers' reading behavior data, combine their reading traces, and provide personalized and precise services for readers. Children's book marketing departments can conduct reading habit questionnaire surveys, understand readers' actual needs

for children's book products by having readers fill out specific questions on the questionnaire, and then carry out targeted precision marketing. Children's book marketing departments can also enter campuses to hold celebrity writer symposiums and other activities for children, allowing children to open their minds and enhance reading enthusiasm through communication with teachers. They can create personalized reading lists for children, recommending different children's book works based on children's personality differences. Children's book marketing departments should strengthen the construction of reading service work, enhance the social benefits of children's books by providing readers with complete and accurate reading services, and thereby also improve economic benefits to a certain extent.

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

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