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Research on Innovation Paths for Book Publishing Business Models in the Digital Context: Post-print

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Abstract

In the context of digitalization, China's mobile internet technology has witnessed unprecedented advancement, fundamentally disrupting the established landscape of social resources and media. While the rise and proliferation of new media has enhanced the timeliness of information dissemination, it has simultaneously plunged the traditional book publishing industry into a developmental quandary. Historically, the publishing industry has predominantly relied on print books as its primary medium—a model that no longer satisfies the demands of high-quality development in the new era. Consequently, the book publishing industry must adapt to the prevailing trends, explore novel development pathways, and bolster its competitive edge. This paper examines the current state and challenges confronting the book publishing industry within the digital landscape, investigates the viability of business model innovation, and proposes corresponding innovative strategies.

Full Text

Preamble

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Research on Innovation Paths for Book Publishing Formats Under the Digital Background

(Xi'an Publishing House, Xi'an, Shaanxi 710061)

Abstract: Against the digital backdrop, China's mobile internet technology has advanced by leaps and bounds, fundamentally disrupting the existing landscape of social resources and media. The rise and expansion of new media have enhanced the timeliness of information dissemination, while simultaneously

plunging traditional book publishing into developmental difficulties. Traditionally, the publishing industry has relied primarily on paper books as its carrier, which can no longer meet the demands of high-quality development in the new era. Therefore, the book publishing industry should ride the wave of the times, explore new development paths, and enhance its competitiveness. This paper examines the current development status and existing problems of the book publishing industry under digitalization, discusses the feasibility of innovation in publishing formats, and proposes corresponding innovation pathways.

Keywords: Digital Background; Book Publishing; Innovation Path Exploration

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Current Challenges in Book Publishing

Faced with challenges such as industry growth slowdown, overcapacity, and developmental lag, traditional management models and strategies are no longer applicable. For instance, publishing management overly focuses on the publishing process and channel marketing while lacking understanding and research of new media, new culture, and new business formats. Publishing enterprises have narrow business scopes, with few and scattered investment projects beyond book publishing, resulting in high concentration of business risks. Constrained by institutional mechanisms, some book publishing enterprises lag in deep-level reforms of organizational structure, human resources, and corporate systems when undergoing transformation, lacking the courage and capacity to confront challenges and implement self-reform. Traditional publishing houses, having long held a monopoly over publishing resources in the market, have developed fixed modes of thinking, ideologies, and strategies, making self-transformation extremely difficult. Some publishing enterprises engaged in digital or integrated publishing rely primarily on applying for government project support funds, lacking corresponding human, financial, and material support, resulting in relatively slow development and low publishing returns.

1.1 Single Publication Type

First, the traditional book publishing industry focuses primarily on paper book publishing and distribution, typically concentrating high-quality resources on topic selection, editing, typesetting, and printing for certain categories of books. With the popularization of the internet and changes in reading habits, the resource advantages traditionally enjoyed by book publishing are gradually diminishing. Second, conventional paper books are limited to specific fields with

systematic and professional content, narrow readership, and must undergo processes including market research, topic demonstration, planning and commissioning, editing and proofreading, design, and printing and distribution, resulting in long publishing cycles and difficult cost control. Third, in the mobile internet era, new digital economy business formats are developing rapidly. Various new media platforms are accelerating their deployment in quality resource areas such as content, authors, and channels by leveraging their advantages. Traditional publishing industries still confined to paper book operations often find themselves at a competitive disadvantage.

1.2 Lack of Management Innovation

At present, traditional book publishing faces enormous difficulties and challenges under the digital background, including industry growth slowdown, overcapacity, and developmental lag, rendering existing management models and strategies obsolete. For example, publishing management overly focuses on the publishing process and channel marketing while lacking understanding and research of new media, new culture, and new business formats. Publishing enterprises have narrow business scopes, with few and scattered investment projects beyond book publishing, resulting in high concentration of business risks. Constrained by institutional mechanisms, some book publishing enterprises lag in deep-level reforms of organizational structure, human resources, and corporate systems when undergoing transformation, lacking the courage and capacity to confront challenges and implement self-reform. Traditional publishing houses, having long held a monopoly over publishing resources in the market, have developed fixed modes of thinking, ideologies, and strategies, making self-transformation extremely difficult. Some publishing enterprises engaged in digital or integrated publishing rely primarily on applying for government project support funds, lacking corresponding human, financial, and material support, resulting in relatively slow development and low publishing returns.

1.3 Severe Fragmentation of Information Channels

Nowadays, an increasing number of people choose to read books using electronic devices such as mobile phones and tablets. The surge in internet users has severely fragmented reading audiences, who increasingly prefer to utilize fragmented time for reading, with reading habits gradually developing toward fast-food-style consumption. First, traditional paper books are gradually losing competitiveness due to factors such as lengthy volumes, extensive content, inconvenience in portability, and high demands on readers' appreciation abilities. Under the digital background, the traditional book publishing industry, impacted by new technologies and new media, has generally experienced shrinking book circulation, lack of diversity in marketing channels, and continuous loss and reduction of audiences. People increasingly favor concise and condensed literary works.[1] Second, readers can access e-books through more convenient and diverse channels, whereas paper books require purchase from bookstores, news-

stands, online platforms, and other venues, often demanding greater time and monetary investment, which seriously hinders the fluidity and dissemination of information.

1.4 Market Structural Imbalance

With the transformation of people's reading methods, a large number of online works have entered the public eye, and popular culture prevails. However, most such works suffer from poor content depth and breadth. First, according to actual surveys, although China's book sales show an increasing trend, most are teaching supplementary books, indicating a serious market structural imbalance. Compared with popular books such as literature and vocational categories, both online and offline book sales platforms tend to favor fast-food-style online works. Second, some publishing enterprises engage in follow-up publishing, repeatedly publishing or mass-publishing books with identical content or concepts to cater to public psychology and actual reading demands, resulting in declining publishing quality. For example, with the continuous increase in family education expenses, sales of early education, enlightenment, cartoon, and popular science children's books have risen rapidly. The surge in publication quantity has squeezed the market share of other book categories, which is detrimental to the healthy development of the book publishing industry.

1.5 Rapid New Media Development

Under the digital background, internet technology development provides technical support for the new media industry, and emerging digital publishing formats such as online journals, e-books, digital newspapers, blog applications, web animation, mobile publishing, and online education are developing rapidly. Information has also shifted from previous linear, one-way transmission to networked, multi-directional dissemination, which not only enhances the timeliness of information delivery but also significantly expands its reach. Compared with traditional promotion forms, new media platforms can grasp readers' past reading habits and interests based on big data feedback, conduct more targeted promotion, attract readers' interest through personalized content, and deliver better user experiences. On new media platforms, literary works appear not only in text form but also combine sound, video, and other elements to disseminate information more diversely and three-dimensionally.[2] Consequently, the rapid development of mobile internet has changed market shares, with more and more readers choosing to read books through mobile media, which is also an important factor affecting paper media publishing.

1.6 Lack of Interdisciplinary Talent

The core competitiveness of enterprises ultimately stems from talent. For the traditional book publishing industry, there are many conventional editors but a severe shortage of interdisciplinary talent, mainly manifested in three aspects:

(1) Traditional publishing enterprises are mostly composed of management personnel, professional editors, marketing staff, and financial personnel, generally lacking various media professionals and interdisciplinary talent necessary for integrated media publishing. (2) Most editors have long been engaged in topic selection planning and editing of traditional books, knowing little about new publishing formats and lacking the professional knowledge and skills required for emerging publishing. (3) The traditional book publishing industry lacks flexible mechanisms for talent flow with industries such as journalism and communication, resulting in few cross-industry, cross-disciplinary, and cross-system talent imports. Interdisciplinary publishing talent proficient in planning, technology, and operations is particularly scarce.

Favorable Conditions for Publishing Innovation

2.1 Preliminary Policy Support System

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television and the Ministry of Finance have successively issued documents such as the “Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Digital Transformation and Upgrading of the Press and Publication Industry” and the “Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Integrated Development of Traditional and Emerging Publishing,” which have pointed out the direction for promoting integrated development and effectively facilitated the digital transformation and upgrading of the press and publication industry, providing strong support for improving productivity, dissemination capacity, and influence.

2.2 New Media Providing Communication Channels

The 47th “Statistical Report on Internet Development in China” released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) shows that as of December 2020, China’s mobile internet users reached 986 million, accounting for 99.7% of all internet users. In the mobile internet era, traditional book publishing and distribution models can hardly stimulate consumers’ reading and purchase interest. The industry must leverage the dissemination advantages of new media to innovate book publishing formats. With the prevalence of new media, social platforms such as Toutiao, Douyin, Weibo, and WeChat have developed rapidly, with well-known bloggers and internet celebrities everywhere, and live-stream marketing becoming a new trend. Marketing methods have also shifted from holistic and niche-oriented to individual and mass-oriented, becoming more acceptable to consumers. The dissemination advantages of new media not only create entirely new information transmission methods but also create opportunities for building networked reading platforms. Communication through new media can enhance interactivity with readers, who can express their opinions on platforms and engage in in-depth exchanges with other readers, ultimately achieving interactive marketing of products.

2.3 Emerging Technologies Supporting Innovation

Emerging technologies such as 5G, artificial intelligence, big data, cloud computing, and blockchain are becoming increasingly mature. Widely applied in digital content production, information interconnectivity and sharing, integrated media dissemination, and industrial chain development, these technologies have become important driving forces for transformation in the publishing industry. They accelerate the development of mobile internet, open up greater space for publishing development, promote continuous innovation in content presentation, product forms, dissemination methods, and service models, and provide infinite possibilities for innovation and development of publishing formats.

Innovation Paths for Book Publishing Formats

3.1 Integrating Information and Innovating Topic Selection

The quality of topic selection directly affects book quality and sales. If the selected topic fails to resonate with the public, readers' purchase and reading interest will be greatly diminished. Traditional paper books typically attract readers through titles, promotional slogans, tables of contents, and prefaces. If they cannot immediately capture readers' attention and stimulate reading interest, subsequent marketing becomes difficult. Therefore, in addition to innovating carriers and optimizing editing, efforts must be made to innovate topic selection angles. Topic selection is the source of publishing, directly influencing the content scope and expression mode of books. Consequently, before planning topics, relevant editors should research readers' actual needs in advance, be guided by the pulse of era development, and focus on high-quality themes that are more representative, typical, and marketable, which are more likely to resonate with the public and stimulate reading and purchase interest. For example, the sudden COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 brought severe tests to the nation and its people. During the fight against the epidemic, many touching and heroic stories emerged. If such topics are selected, appropriately edited, and compiled into books, they can not only gain public resonance but also demonstrate the cohesion and perseverance of Chinese people.[3] Such topics that align with current political hotspots and easily inspire public resonance can significantly enhance book publishing quality, ultimately driving sales and increasing publishing revenue.

3.2 Optimizing Editing Forms Through Multiple Measures

Nowadays, people invest more time, energy, and money in spiritual pursuits, placing higher demands on book content and quality. Therefore, when editing books, whether in the initial selection of specific content or later-stage overall planning, systematic and scientific strategizing is required. Under the digital background, editors can incorporate new editing methods such as computer graphics and text modes in addition to traditional pen-and-paper editing, skillfully and reasonably integrating multiple elements including text, images, audio,

and video to create more vivid and three-dimensional reading experiences for readers. Innovation in editing forms can break the monotony of traditional books. Single-text expression inevitably creates a sense of dryness for readers, limiting reading interest and hindering the development of the publishing industry. Diversified content presentation can better stimulate readers' interest, immerse them deeply, and provide a stronger sense of immersion. Additionally, beyond traditional literature and science and technology books, big data can be utilized to discover more high-quality book topics close to current events, society, and daily life, leveraging public opinion hotspots to stimulate readers' interest and expand the audience base, laying a solid foundation for the sustainable development of book publishing.

3.3 Innovating Book Carriers to Keep Pace with the Times

The traditional book publishing industry uses paper books as its carrier, which entails disadvantages such as high printing costs, low recovery rates, and difficulty in storage and portability. With the development of science and technology, electronic devices such as mobile phones, computers, and e-readers have become indispensable parts of people's lives, and reading methods have gradually changed under this background, forming a new reading mode centered on electronic devices. Reading books using electronic devices as carriers is unrestricted by time and location. For example, when taking buses, subways, or high-speed trains, people can use mobile phones as carriers to fully utilize fragmented time for reading and enhancing their cultural literacy.[4] Therefore, the book publishing industry should keep pace with the times, be oriented by readers' actual reading needs, and actively integrate resources to develop e-books suitable for digital reading in addition to producing traditional paper books, providing readers with more choices and higher-quality services while contributing to the innovative development of the book industry.

3.4 Precise Positioning for Precision Marketing

Under the digital background, marketing in the traditional book publishing industry must identify its positioning correctly. Only by relying on high-quality content, building distinctive brands, leveraging quality channels such as e-commerce platforms and new media, analyzing market characteristics, and formulating optimal marketing strategies can effective marketing promotion be achieved. (1) Optimize publishing processes and construct a reader-centered marketing model. Conduct big data analysis on readers' different characteristics including age, gender, occupation, region, and education level, segment reader groups, push personalized book information, and truly achieve real-time and precision marketing. (2) Build marketing platforms and create suitable media matrices. Use big data technology to collect, organize, and analyze reader information, track readers' consumption and reading behaviors, deeply explore readers' reading needs, interests, and concerns, and build big data platform networks suitable for enterprise development. Simultaneously, achieve data

docking and sharing with external platforms to realize multi-dimensional data interaction, laying a solid foundation for precision marketing of books. (3) Cultivate new models by building platform-supported architectures for high-quality content production and services, fostering fans' payment habits, and tailoring marketing strategies for specific target reader groups to achieve precision marketing.

3.5 Practicing the “Four Abilities” to Cultivate Interdisciplinary Talent

In the mobile internet era, new industry technologies, customer needs, and product services are constantly emerging in the publishing industry. How to innovatively cultivate interdisciplinary publishing talent is a problem we must consider and solve. Interdisciplinary publishing talent in the new era must possess not only strong political qualities, sufficiently accumulated humanistic qualities, and solid comprehensive professional qualities but also achieve multiple integration of editing work, industry technology, and all-media operations—being familiar with traditional publishing, understanding all-media operations, and excelling in marketing. First, strengthen the cultivation of the “Four Abilities” in teams. “Observation ability, thinking ability, practical ability, and writing ability” constitute important components of publishing competence and represent methods and pathways for improving overall team quality. Differential training can be conducted based on personnel' s knowledge, skills, abilities, and professional requirements to continuously enhance publishing professionalism, becoming publishing “generalists” and experts. Second, strengthen talent system construction. Firmly establish talent awareness, respect knowledge and talent; formulate talent development strategies and establish selection and appointment mechanisms for talent to undertake entrepreneurial endeavors; strengthen external recruitment to absorb outstanding talents from media, journalism, and internet industries related to publishing, creating an environment that widely gathers talent. Third, strengthen training in new professional skills. Address the shortcomings of traditional book publishing editors through project-driven initiatives, professional training, study visits, and cooperative development to help editors master skills in emerging publishing and new communication methods, enhancing their ability to engage in dialogue with the new era.

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

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