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The Development Path for Civic News in Newspapers and Periodicals in the New Media Environment: The Post-Print Era

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Date: 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

With the advent of the new media era, China's media landscape has undergone tremendous transformations. Propelled by robust capital operations, new media has aggressively expanded in the media market, fundamentally altering how people receive and disseminate information. In contrast, traditional print media has suffered successive defeats in the fierce market competition, experiencing substantial losses in audience and traffic, with significant contractions in market share and advertising revenue. Confronted with a grave survival crisis, the advantage of newspaper people's livelihood news has traditionally resided in its populist orientation and proximity to the masses, offering audiences refreshing perspectives in news discourse, subject matter, and value orientation. However, in the new media environment, the smartphone—owned by virtually everyone—has nearly eradicated these aforementioned advantages of newspaper people's livelihood news. Faced with the onslaught of new media, can newspaper people's livelihood news enhance its core competitiveness and achieve sustainable development through reform and transformation? Based on this question, this paper will explore the predicaments and developmental pathways of newspaper people's livelihood news within the new media environment, aiming to foster discussion and exchange with fellow professionals.

Full Text

The Development Path of Newspaper People's Livelihood News in the New Media Environment

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Abstract: With the advent of the new media era, China' s media landscape has undergone tremendous transformation. Propelled by powerful capital operations, new media has aggressively expanded its presence in the media market, fundamentally altering how people receive and disseminate information. Traditional newspaper media, meanwhile, has suffered successive setbacks in fierce market competition, experiencing significant losses in audience and traffic, with both market share and advertising revenue shrinking substantially. While newspaper people' s livelihood news possesses inherent advantages in its populist orientation and proximity to everyday life, offering audiences refreshing perspectives in news discourse, subject matter, and value orientation, these advantages have nearly evaporated in an environment where smartphones are ubiquitous. Confronted with the new media onslaught, can newspaper people' s livelihood news enhance its core competitiveness and achieve sustainable development through transformation? This paper explores the dilemmas and development pathways for newspaper people' s livelihood news in the new media environment, aiming to facilitate discussion and exchange among industry peers.

Keywords: new media; media landscape; newspaper people' s livelihood news; development strategies

2.1 The Diminishing Influence of Newspaper People' s Livelihood News

Before the emergence of new media, people primarily relied on television and newspapers for information, with newspapers serving as an indispensable source of daily news. However, the rise of new media has fundamentally changed audience information consumption habits. Many now prefer using smartphones, tablets, or other mobile terminals to access news programs, which has considerably weakened the influence of newspaper people' s livelihood news [4]. Furthermore, new media has empowered audiences to participate actively in information dissemination. Audiences can now share their own experiences online, transforming from passive information recipients to active information publishers and elevating their status in the communication process. Simultaneously, traditional newspaper people' s livelihood news often carries a didactic tone, whereas new media better respects audience rights to express public opinion and discourse, leading people to increasingly favor new media platforms for content dissemination. In today' s information society, news can emerge at any moment, diminishing the timeliness of newspaper people' s livelihood news while granting new media the advantage of publishing information anytime, anywhere—an edge that newspapers simply cannot match.

Integration between newspapers and new media has become an imperative of the times, enabling complementary advantages and mutual benefits that can restore the prominent position of newspaper people' s livelihood news in the

public consciousness. In summary, the interactive fusion of newspapers and new media, leveraging new media strengths to build the newspaper people' s livelihood news brand, represents a crucial pathway for development in the new media environment [1].

1. Interpreting the “Core Competitiveness” of Newspaper People' s Livelihood News

People' s livelihood news constitutes a category of social news that focuses on issues closely related to ordinary people' s lives. Its content primarily derives from the daily lives and work of common citizens, paying attention to their living spaces and employing humanistic narratives to bridge the distance with the public. This media form emphasizes the survival, livelihood, and everyday existence of the masses [2].

The development and success of any endeavor must adhere to objective laws. As a long-standing media form, newspaper people' s livelihood news possesses distinctive “core competitiveness” that differentiates it from other media and news formats, manifesting primarily in two aspects: First, in content selection, it draws material from fresh events in neighborhoods and trivial matters in daily life, maintaining natural proximity to ordinary people. Citizens can both learn about local stories through newspaper people' s livelihood news and enjoy reading it as leisure and entertainment, thereby serving the public' s spiritual life. Second, in terms of news carriers, newspapers offer the advantage of being lightweight and portable. For many groups, newspaper reading remains a hobby —not primarily for acquiring vast amounts of information, but as a leisurely lifestyle choice. The tactile sensation of holding paper in one' s fingertips is obviously something that television and mobile phones cannot provide [3].

2. The Dilemma of Newspaper People' s Livelihood News in the New Media Environment

2.2 Audience Fragmentation of Newspaper People' s Livelihood News

As the pace of life accelerates and digital communication technology advances, digital multimedia terminals have begun replacing traditional media such as newspapers, television, and radio. People increasingly prefer convenient and efficient new media [5]. For instance, the convenience of mobile phones makes modern individuals willing to use them for information acquisition and idea dissemination, deriving pleasure, satisfaction, and stress relief. This has diverted a portion of the original audience of newspaper people' s livelihood news to new media platforms, resulting in a reduced readership for newspapers.

2.3 The Dominant Discourse Power of New Media Channels

The more people use the internet, the more prominent the role of online public opin-

ion becomes. Whether on commercial websites or various online communities, users enjoy the freedom to express their viewpoints. On platforms like WeChat and Weibo, the public can freely post, repost, or comment, and online opinion leaders wield increasingly powerful influence and mobilization capacity—a single post can plunge an individual into the vortex of online public opinion. Overall, the internet has attracted a large number of audiences from newspaper people’s livelihood news, and new media demonstrates stronger advantages than newspapers in competing for discourse power [6]. Under these circumstances, people clearly prefer platforms where they can express their own ideas and see their supported opinions generate real-world impact, while media platforms like newspaper people’s livelihood news that emphasize entertainment and didacticism hold relatively less appeal.

However, we must also recognize that while the diversity of online voices promotes the development of online public opinion, it simultaneously hinders the dissemination of mainstream values to some extent. The internet is not lacking in deliberate defamation and rumor-mongering. When utilizing new media, newspaper people’s livelihood news should strengthen its information screening capabilities and remain aware of new media’s shortcomings and defects.

2.4 Weak Capacity of Practitioners to Utilize New Media In the new media environment, some practitioners of newspaper people’s livelihood news have failed to keep pace with the times and lack the ability to apply new media, which manifests prominently in three aspects: First, some practitioners have not grasped media development trends and remain stuck in old mindsets, believing that mastering traditional media communication methods and knowing how to film and interview suffice—an idea that no longer meets contemporary development requirements. Second, some practitioners still obtain news leads from conference rooms and telephone calls, or wait for others to provide leads; they do not know how to use new media platforms like WeChat and Weibo to find news clues, adopting a spectator attitude toward new media and demonstrating insufficient appreciation for its importance. Third, some practitioners hold pessimistic views about the future of newspaper people’s livelihood news, believing that since almost all news has already appeared on new media platforms, it has lost its news value and they are unwilling to conduct in-depth reporting. However, while it is understandable for important information to spread rapidly online, failing to provide in-depth reporting and interpretation prevents the public from understanding information at deeper levels. Relying on traditional media for news interpretation and excavation remains profoundly significant.

3. Development Pathways for Newspaper People' s Livelihood News in the New Media Environment

As discussed above, the decline of newspaper people' s livelihood news in the new media era seems inevitable, but in reality, traditional media and new media are like a person' s two arms—they complement each other. Effective integration of the two can achieve mutual success. It can be said that for traditional media to achieve better development, it must leverage the new media platform [7]. For newspaper people' s livelihood news specifically, its development can proceed along the following lines:

3.1 Strengthening Innovation Consciousness In the new media era, the “small” people' s livelihood news events concerning daily necessities and household matters can no longer satisfy current audience demands, as people' s need for “big” people' s livelihood news concerning medical care and education has increased significantly. In response, newspaper people' s livelihood news should innovate in both content and form, pursuing distinctive reporting paths to provide audiences with more compelling content and achieve long-term development.

First, innovate the content of newspaper people' s livelihood news. Newspaper people' s livelihood news must increase the depth and breadth of its content. Currently, newspaper people' s livelihood news shows a clear populist orientation, with insufficient coverage of mainstream news such as economic and current affairs news. This actually neglects different audience segments and can bore the public. In this regard, newspaper people' s livelihood news must pay attention to people' s spiritual needs, shifting its focus from family trivialities to substantive livelihood issues such as “employment difficulties, education difficulties, and medical difficulties.” Second, it must address the problem of homogenization in newspaper people' s livelihood news, making earnest efforts in reporting content by deeply excavating news connotations so that audiences can access deeper-level news information—only such news can better cater to public tastes [8]. For instance, for a people' s livelihood report, it should not only clarify the course of events but also present the causes, consequences, and significance of the event, thereby providing the public with more comprehensive information related to the issue.

Second, innovate the form of newspaper people' s livelihood news. Form and content are interdependent, and innovating form helps better present news content, creating visual and spiritual impact that leaves lasting impressions on audiences [9]. Form innovation in newspaper people' s livelihood news can proceed from the following aspects: (1) Innovate news layout to make priorities immediately clear, grouping important news together while placing less important news in secondary sections to more effectively attract audience attention and win their favor; (2) Innovate reporting language. The closer newspaper people' s livelihood news is to popular taste, the more welcomed it is by the public, whereas procedural and stereotyped language can cause audience aversion. Newspaper people' s livelihood news should use concise, accessible, and vivid language to

highlight news value and timeliness.

3.2 Actively Promoting Media Convergence First, newspaper people' s livelihood news should be new media-oriented to achieve convergent development. Currently, many newspaper media have established electronic editions, creating people' s livelihood columns on online newspapers to quickly deliver people' s livelihood news to the public through the internet. Audiences can access relevant news immediately by opening apps or web pages. For example, *Zhuzhou Evening News* has established a people' s livelihood news section on the Zhuzhou News Network, where all visiting netizens can freely discuss topics, and staff then select the most popular comments for follow-up reporting. Since *Zhuzhou Evening News* primarily serves local residents, its emphasis on public opinion has gained widespread recognition from local communities, making the people' s livelihood column a "highlight" of the newspaper. Building on this, *Zhuzhou Evening News* also created an "Echo" section where visiting netizens can raise their questions, which the column team then answers or investigates through interviews, reflecting issues of concern to netizens in the newspaper. Similarly, the online edition of *Henan Daily* and *Kaifeng Daily*, called *Kaifeng Online Forum*, allows netizens to freely post through the "People' s Voice" section while selecting high-popularity comments, a practice also welcomed by local communities. From the practices of *Zhuzhou Evening News*, *Henan Daily*, and *Kaifeng Daily*, newspaper people' s livelihood news should not only respond to hot issues of public concern but also solve problems raised by the people, fully leveraging the advantages of new media and the credibility of traditional media to jointly serve the public.

Second, newspaper people' s livelihood news must continuously enhance its credibility through solid and trustworthy reporting. Currently, the public primarily accesses news through online channels, but the credibility of online news is not particularly high, leading many audiences to hope for more reliable and authentic newspaper media to provide in-depth coverage of hot news topics. In this regard, newspaper people' s livelihood news should continuously track issues of public concern to ensure news authenticity and readability [10]. For example, when Typhoon "Mangkut" made landfall in Guangdong Province in September 2019, newspaper people' s livelihood news reporting on such events should first popularize knowledge about typhoons, then track the storm' s path over land, enabling the public to understand the typhoon while taking safety precautions and providing psychological reassurance. Through such reporting forms, the speed of online hot topics and the credibility of newspaper media can form excellent complementary advantages, jointly providing news services for the public.

Third, newspaper people' s livelihood news must continuously expand its utilization of new media. From Weibo to WeChat, and then to various apps favored by young people, all can serve as public opinion arenas for newspaper people' s livelihood news to expand into. Newspaper people' s livelihood news should constantly discover high-popularity new media platforms and extend its presence

to these platforms to continuously enhance its influence.

3.3 Building the Newspaper People' s Livelihood News Brand Pursuing a differentiated and distinctive path through continuous innovation to build its own brand and continuously enhance program competitiveness and influence constitutes the core strategy for the survival and development of newspaper people' s livelihood news. To build a unique newspaper people' s livelihood news brand, efforts can proceed from the following angles:

First, continuously improve the content and quality of newspaper people' s livelihood news. Practitioners should strictly control news content, seeking news leads from real life and the internet, particularly selecting those topics with strong public concern and high news value. While reporting, they should deeply process the news through diverse content and innovative presentation forms, enhancing news watchability while ensuring authenticity, making audiences willing to watch.

Second, build brands around column hosts and writers. Excellent hosts and writers can attract large fan groups who become regular audiences for news columns. In past newspaper people' s livelihood news reporting, hosts and writers often lacked flexibility in language, appearing rigid and constrained with didactic tones. In response, hosts and writers of various columns should adopt gentle and approachable writing styles to report news and express opinions, standing from the perspective and values of the masses to shorten the emotional distance between audiences and media, thereby enhancing column reputation.

3.4 Enhancing the Competence of All-Media Journalists First, continuously enhance the sense of responsibility among newspaper people' s livelihood journalists, strengthen supervision of them, and raise the entry threshold to make newspaper people' s livelihood news more fair, objective, and authentic, thereby making audiences more willing to accept it. Second, newspaper people' s livelihood journalists should report news based on the principle of authenticity. Both ideologically and professionally, they must firmly establish that truth is the lifeblood of news and report according to principles of fairness, justice, and objectivity. Third, newspaper people' s livelihood journalists should prioritize people' s interests, making people' s livelihood news a tool for serving the people rather than reporting vulgar content merely to attract eyeballs. Fourth, newspaper people' s livelihood journalists must continuously enhance their sensitivity to and application level of new media, becoming versatile journalists capable of writing, filming, and using new media independently for news gathering and editing without relying on others, making news reporting timely and observable.

In summary, in the new media era, for newspaper people' s livelihood news to develop, it must continuously improve itself, deepen content, innovate forms, create news based on people' s needs, deepen information according to people' s cognition, and on this foundation achieve deep integration and complementary advantages with new media technology. By building people-oriented media that

care about, value, and develop people' s livelihood, it can continuously enhance the initiative and enthusiasm to serve the people and promote the sustainable development of newspaper media.

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

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