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Exploring the Development Path of Media Convergence Transformation for Elderly Periodicals (Postprint)

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Abstract

Nowadays, as China's economic level continues to improve, the problem of population aging is intensifying. Under such circumstances, the living needs of the elderly are no longer confined to material aspects but have shifted towards spiritual dimensions. Based on this, this article takes the reading needs and habits of the elderly as a starting point to briefly analyze the types and development characteristics of elderly periodicals in China; grounded in the trend of media convergence, it elaborates on the necessity and importance of transformation and development through media convergence for elderly periodicals, and proposes strategies for achieving such transformation based on their current development status, hoping to provide references for relevant practitioners.

Full Text

Preamble

Exploring the Path of Media Convergence and Transformation Development for Senior Periodicals

Abstract: As China's economic level continues to rise, the aging problem is intensifying. Under these circumstances, the needs of the elderly are no longer limited to material aspects but have shifted to spiritual dimensions. Based on this, this paper takes the reading needs and habits of the elderly as its starting point to briefly analyze the types and development characteristics of senior periodicals in China. Grounded in the trend of media convergence, it elaborates on the necessity and importance of media convergence transformation and development for senior periodicals, and proposes strategies for achieving this transformation based on current development status, hoping to provide references for relevant practitioners.

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2. The Necessity of Media Convergence Development for Senior Periodicals

Although the emergence of senior periodicals has greatly enriched the spiritual lives of the elderly and satisfied their reading needs, most elderly individuals still maintain the habit of reading paper books, which is the primary reason why senior periodicals predominantly exist in print form. However, as we have entered the information age, new media technologies and communication methods are constantly emerging, creating a certain impact on the development of traditional senior periodicals. How to respond to new media developments and achieve media convergence transformation has become an essential question for practitioners. Therefore, enriching the content of senior periodicals, enhancing their interactivity, and improving their digitalization level are current professional priorities, making the advancement of media convergence both crucial and necessary.

First, considering contemporary elderly reading patterns, the widespread adoption of smartphones and computers has significantly improved older adults' ability to master information technology. Many "trendsetters" among the elderly are no less proficient than younger generations when using electronic devices. Based on this shift in attitudes toward new media and changes in their reading and social methods, ensuring the sustainability of senior periodicals requires integrated improvements to their communication methods.

Second, from a long-term development perspective, although the primary audience of senior periodicals is the elderly, with proper planning of their modules and content, such publications could attract a broader readership. After all, people's pursuits of health, beauty, culture, and fine food know no age boundaries. Currently, the single-form paper media model not only subjects senior periodicals to temporal and spatial limitations but also confronts them with difficulties in long-term viability. Therefore, relevant personnel must promote media convergence transformation, a long-term project that can help identify development problems and potential while injecting new vitality into these publications.

Finally, from the perspective of the journal publishing industry as a whole, senior periodicals constitute an important component. The path of media con-

vergence for senior periodicals will inevitably reflect the current state of media convergence across the journal industry, allowing us to “see the whole leopard from a single spot.”

1. Types and Development Characteristics of Senior Periodicals

Periodicals that target elderly readers are considered senior periodicals. Founded in 1980, *Longevity* was China’s first senior periodical. After decades of development, senior periodicals not only play a role in popularizing current affairs, literature, and health knowledge among the elderly but also bear the responsibility of disseminating advanced lifestyles and guiding correct public opinion. Existing senior periodicals mainly fall into the following categories:

The first category is medical and healthcare journals. These publications primarily contain disease prevention knowledge, health information, and fitness techniques, such as *Modern Health Preservation*, *Health Care Guide*, and *Health Expo*.

The second category is current affairs journals. These collect and publish numerous current affairs articles, interspersed with some political content, providing the elderly with political information and serving as an excellent channel for them to understand news developments and senior policies, such as *China Elderly* and *Global Aging*.

The third category is academic journals. These mainly publish the latest achievements in geriatric medicine while also covering geriatric sociology, geriatric psychology, aging biology, and anti-aging research. Their target readers are primarily researchers, teaching staff, medical personnel, and students engaged in gerontology and related disciplines, such as *Chinese Journal of Gerontology*.

The fourth category is comprehensive journals. In the senior periodical market, comprehensive journals occupy an extremely important position and are widely welcomed by readers. With rich content covering current affairs, literature, healthcare, history, culture, travel, and diet, they provide readers with extremely rich reading experiences, such as *Home for Retired Cadres*, *Elderly Spring and Autumn*, *Evening Glow*, and *Elderly Expo*.

3. Methods for Media Convergence and Transformation Development of Senior Periodicals

In the Internet era, the integration of traditional publications with information technology has become inevitable. To capture greater market share, promoting diversified and converged media communication models has become a consensus across both new and old media. For senior periodicals that have long relied on traditional media forms, the impact of constantly evolving new media technologies is unprecedented. If senior periodicals cannot seize opportunities, adapt to the times, and achieve media convergence transformation, they will inevitably

be eliminated by historical trends. Therefore, editorial and management teams of senior periodicals must strengthen their learning of new media technologies and propose targeted methods based on the characteristics, dilemmas, and needs of senior periodicals.

3.1 Changing Reading Habits of Senior Periodical Readers

At present, China's senior periodical media convergence transformation has begun, but the development path remains unclear, with transformation speed and effects far below expectations. Since the emergence of new media, the industry has conducted research and preparation for senior periodical media convergence transformation, and today this need and trend have become increasingly significant, forcing practitioners to prioritize this work. However, existing senior periodicals remain primarily paper-based publications, and elderly people still meet their spiritual and cultural needs through traditional methods.

Two main reasons account for this situation: First, among senior periodical readers, retired cadres, retired intellectuals, and retired cultural workers constitute a high proportion, and their paper reading habits formed from youth are difficult to change. Second, many elderly individuals have relatively low education levels, and coupled with age-related memory and learning decline, they struggle to flexibly master modern media platforms. Consequently, they are unaccustomed to modern media communication forms for senior periodicals, significantly hindering the pace of media convergence development.

Therefore, practitioners should begin by changing the reading habits of senior periodical readers, guiding and helping them adapt to modern media means to pave the way for media convergence transformation. For instance, staff can investigate the popularity of senior periodicals, readers' habits, and their acceptance of new media in elderly universities, nursing homes, and senior communities. Based on these findings, they can develop targeted education and publicity programs, organizing readers to receive unified guidance and teaching them electronic device usage methods in the simplest language possible to improve their acceptance of electronic media. Simultaneously, they should guide elderly people to read both electronic and paper periodicals, experiencing the differences between various media communication forms and helping senior readers appreciate the advantages of new media platforms. Throughout this process, science popularization staff must use effective publicity to help senior periodical readers truly understand that after achieving media convergence transformation, they can access richer, more diverse, and more abundant periodical content. This media form can provide higher-quality services for their reading, ensuring that elderly readers psychologically accept this change and preventing massive reader loss during the transformation process.

3.2 Enriching Content Types of Senior Periodicals

From a content perspective, current senior periodical media convergence transformation efforts exhibit obvious deficiencies, mainly manifested in incomplete content coverage, overly narrow reader positioning, and excessively obscure topics. Traditional senior periodical content primarily covers health knowledge, wellness tips, life skills, and current affairs news, occasionally including culture, food, film, or travel. The attitudes and language styles revealed between the lines are also easily accepted by young people, yet severe homogenization exists among different publications. From the perspective of new media development characteristics, many new media platforms fabricate topics for so-called popularity, with exaggerated language styles and highly fragmented information that does not align with elderly reading habits and perspectives. Therefore, current senior periodical media convergence transformation faces content insufficiency issues that require urgent resolution.

3.2.1 Reducing Homogenization To meet the content expansion needs of senior periodicals and align them with media convergence transformation requirements, practitioners must innovate content styles. Most critically, they must address the severe homogenization problem. Most senior periodicals are similar in content selection, layout, illustration, and language style, which greatly reduces reader interest and makes elderly readers feel that paper journals already satisfy their reading needs, rendering new media models with broader reach and richer resources unnecessary.

To address this, senior periodical editorial staff can introduce more topics of interest to elderly readers to ensure content richness. Additionally, producers should create distinctive modules within periodicals to attract senior readers' attention and increase reader stickiness. For example, creating a module comparing official and unofficial historical stories allows elderly readers to appreciate both the rigor of official history and the interest of unofficial history while learning about historical events.

3.2.2 Enriching Content Topicality The problem of weak and single-topic articles in senior periodicals has long existed, with overly obscure topics limiting readership to the elderly. While senior periodicals are positioned for elderly readers, their content can also be read by young people, with medical or health knowledge benefiting them considerably. In promoting senior periodical media convergence transformation, practitioners must have the courage to break barriers, expand topic influence and reach, extend publication audiences, and enable more people to pay attention to and read senior periodicals.

Therefore, practitioners should proceed from reality, conducting field investigations to identify overlapping topics of interest across old, middle-aged, and young generations. Based on these common points, they can develop single-issue themes and styles to expand the readership of senior periodicals. For example, staff can publish content on the prevention, treatment, and care of major dis-

eases, which can help elderly readers develop healthy lifestyle habits and prevent illness while also providing assistance for young family members caring for seriously ill elderly relatives. Of course, to more accurately select topics beloved by elderly readers, staff can use big data technology to establish databases and conduct targeted analysis, providing content that interests them.

3.3 Strengthening Development Mechanism Construction

The media convergence transformation path for senior periodicals requires necessary institutional constraints to stay on track. Currently, the absence of transformation mechanisms leads to disordered and chaotic work, resulting in poorly targeted and ineffective strategies. Moreover, integrating traditional and new media is no easy task—it requires practitioners to invest substantial time, energy, and funding. Without institutional constraints, the development path may deviate, not only failing to improve senior periodicals' adaptability to the information age but even reducing their long-term development prospects. Therefore, in practice, practitioners must conduct strategic planning and build mechanisms conducive to transformation, providing institutional guarantees for related work.

Specifically, they should develop a comprehensive, systematic long-term plan that clarifies goals, methods, and management to accelerate transformation speed. Naturally, when formulating strategies and overall plans, they should establish phased goals for senior periodical media convergence transformation based on the need for rhythm control and flexible adjustment. For example, editors can set doubling quarterly sales as a phased goal. To achieve this, staff should conduct stricter content screening based on the characteristics of various media communication forms to boost subscriptions of both paper and electronic journals. Marketing personnel should deeply explore market potential and use flexible, innovative marketing methods to increase circulation. In the increasingly evident media convergence context, senior periodicals' market coverage and influence will greatly expand, and diversified publishing models will become a new driving force for further development.

Additionally, during development, practitioners should actively build confidence by clarifying publication positioning, expanding readership, streamlining development sequences, and achieving phased goals to establish purpose and confidence for transformation, laying a solid foundation for implementing strategic plans and leveraging institutional mechanisms.

3.4 Deepening Modern Technology Application

Media convergence transformation for senior periodicals signifies the organic integration of traditional and modern media forms, meaning modern technology will be effectively applied throughout the innovation process. Currently, senior periodical media convergence transformation forms are relatively 单一. Although cooperation with new media communication platforms has been established, col-

laboration mostly remains limited to text reading, rarely involving audio, video, or images. Consequently, so-called senior periodical media convergence transformation is narrowly restricted to digitizing paper journals. For elderly readers, this innovation only forces them to change long-standing reading habits without providing any benefits, inevitably causing massive reader loss and severely harming long-term development.

To solve this problem, practitioners should vigorously promote modern technology application to truly achieve senior periodical media convergence transformation. First, expand communication channels by cooperating with different new media platforms, ensuring senior periodicals have a presence on Weibo, WeChat, mobile reading apps, and other e-journal applications to maximize influence. Simultaneously, strengthen big data technology applications by integrating and analyzing online needs and preferences of senior periodical customer groups to customize recommended content and use this data as a basis for adjusting journal content. This will not only ensure content completeness and richness but also enhance timeliness.

Second, optimize page design. For most elderly readers, vision decline is an unavoidable issue, often requiring them to wear reading glasses when reading periodicals. Through media convergence transformation, they can read publications on electronic devices, so technicians should design more concise browsing pages, more prominent function buttons, and maintain scalable pages and fonts to enhance reading experience through technological applications.

Finally, in promoting senior periodical media convergence transformation, practitioners should strengthen audio, video, and image processing technology applications, cleverly integrating these elements into new media platforms to provide more diverse reading experiences for elderly readers. For example, by inserting audio settings, journal content displayed on new media platforms can be read aloud; or videos can be inserted when explaining manual operations like massage techniques. Through these modern technology applications, the attractiveness of senior periodicals will greatly increase, and their media convergence transformation path will be smoother.

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In conclusion, the characteristics of senior periodicals' readership determine the traditional nature of their communication media. However, with the application of new technologies and methods, promoting media convergence transformation for senior periodicals is imperative. To this end, practitioners must deeply analyze the current development status of senior periodicals, understand their operational mechanisms, content forms, and development characteristics, and propose innovative recommendations to ensure a smoother media convergence transformation path.

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

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