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The Path of Print Media Transformation in the Digital Age: Post-print

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Abstract

In the digital era, the emergence of new technologies represented by internet technology and information technology has significantly impacted print media. The combined effects of declining advertising revenue, readership loss, and profit reduction have severely constrained the survival and development of print media. The rapid development and widespread adoption of digital media technology have fundamentally transformed information production and dissemination, rendering the digital transformation of print media an inevitable trend. In light of this, this paper examines the transformation pathway of print media, grounded in the context of print media development in the digital age.

Full Text

Preamble

Abstract: In the digital era, the rise of new technologies represented by Internet and information technology has significantly impacted print media. Factors such as declining advertising revenue, reader attrition, and reduced profits have severely constrained the survival and development of print media. The rapid development and widespread application of digital media technology have fundamentally transformed information production and dissemination, making digital transformation of print media an inevitable trend. In light of this, this paper analyzes the transformation path of print media based on its development in the digital age.

Keywords: print media; digitalization; transformation; digital media technology

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As the digitalization process accelerates, the decline of print media has attracted widespread attention from all sectors of society. Regarding the future development of print media, some analyses suggest that its digital transformation toward Internet-based new media has become an inevitable trend. From the perspective of China's print media digital transformation, on the one hand, the living space of print media has been greatly restricted; on the other hand, print media's digital transformation lacks effective and replicable successful experiences. Considering the relationship between transformation investment and resulting benefits, print media's digital transformation is currently facing a rather awkward situation.

1. The Inevitability and Necessity of Print Media Transformation

Since its inception, print media has shouldered important responsibilities such as information transmission, commentary publication, and public opinion guidance. Therefore, print media serves as a communication bridge between people and regions, and is also an important tool for inheriting national culture. Some even argue that print media possesses eternal charm. However, faced with the rise and development of Internet technology, digital media technology, and the emergence of new media, the survival and development of print media face enormous challenges.

Throughout the development history of print media, significant improvements have been made in content layout, printing quality, and presentation form. Under the impact of Internet technology and the digitalization process, although print media has not reached the extent of "print is dead," it must undergo transformation to survive and reform to maintain authority in the new era. Therefore, print media transformation is necessary.

In the digital age, how should traditional print media develop? In what form should newspapers continue to exist? How can print media retain its original characteristics while generating new advantages during transformation and integration? These questions have gradually become important issues for print media development. Although print media has its own advantages, such as specific audience groups and rigid demand from people—for most audiences, print media provides not only the information it contains but also a unique experience and precious psychological sentiment. This is particularly true for elderly groups who are not proficient in using mobile devices and Internet technology, or for remote areas with underdeveloped communication conditions, where print media remains an important channel for obtaining external information. Regarding print media's issues with timeliness and personalized customization, the emergence of new media provides important solutions, namely completing the digital transformation of print media through relevant technologies. Therefore, print media transformation is an inevitable trend in its development.

2. The Transformation Path of Print Media

Faced with the development of digital technology and the rise of social media, the “ship” of print media is experiencing tremendous impact. In just over two decades, countless well-known newspapers and periodicals have fallen after undergoing the baptism of digital media technology, and the efficiency issues of traditional media placement forms have become increasingly prominent. Nevertheless, some print media have achieved relatively ideal results in the new environment, such as *The Economist* and *The Guardian*, which have completed their transformation through membership programs, paid subscriptions, and user donations. In the digital transformation of print media, accelerating the overall upgrade of traditional media and achieving integrated development between print and new media is of extremely important practical significance.

2.1 The Concept and Characteristics of New Media

New media is a new form of communication and media that utilizes digital technology, mobile Internet technology, and digital terminals to provide users with needed information and entertainment, where “new” is relative to traditional media. New media is a broad concept that encompasses almost all forms of digital media, such as traditional media, digital newspapers and magazines, mobile media, online media, and digital television. Regarding the definition of new media, UNESCO offers the following explanation: “media that use digital technology as the foundation and networks as the carrier for information dissemination.” However, a definitive consensus on the boundaries of new media is still lacking.

In terms of characteristics, new media possesses strong interactivity and immediacy, which can effectively address the timeliness issues of traditional print media by transmitting various types of information promptly and accurately, and facilitating user interaction through corresponding platforms. Furthermore, compared with traditional media, new media breaks through geographical restrictions, enabling users to access needed information anytime and anywhere, making it more personalized. Information presentation is no longer limited to paper books, newspapers, etc., and information carriers are no longer confined to text and images.

2.2 The Integrated Development of Print Media and New Media

In the transformation and development of print media, retaining the inherent characteristics of print media while absorbing the advantages and essence of new media is an important pathway to achieve integrated development. From a regional perspective, localized management of print media has created favorable conditions for its development, but the dissemination of news content under new media breaks geographical restrictions, meaning print media must face competition from national media. Against this backdrop, relying solely on existing news concepts, communication methods, and management models will make it

extremely difficult to enhance the core competitiveness of print media. Therefore, on the transformation path of print media, learning from and drawing on the transformation experiences of other print media and the advantages of new media to improve its own competitiveness is of important practical significance.

From the perspective of distribution, print media circulation has declined due to impact from other media; on the other hand, limitations in print media distribution channels have also hindered its development to some extent. In an era of information overload and declining media credibility, print media can highlight its characteristics through in-depth information processing, and provide comprehensive and accurate information to the public in a timely manner. From a content perspective, the media nature itself is closely related to the depth of thinking of readers (or viewers). Compared with online media, print media possesses strong stability, allowing readers to carefully contemplate and fully digest information, which plays an important role in understanding the full picture reflected by the information and cultivating their own depth of thinking. Additionally, print media has strong inclusiveness. In the process of blending perceptual and rational cognition, it enriches readers' knowledge and improves their information synthesis ability and thinking agility—this is the survival philosophy of print media and also the expectation of the broad audience.

Both print media and new media are important communication forms and media types in information dissemination, each with its own advantages and characteristics, but also with some problems, particularly print media. Under the impact of mobile Internet, the living space and development prospects of print media have been greatly constrained. To achieve new development, print media must adhere to professional spirit, maintain quality content, absorb the advantages of new media, complete integrated development with new media, and ultimately achieve digitalization and personalization.

Overemphasis on reporting content and relying on content to gain loyal users is the operational model of print media. However, in the digital age, being user-demand-oriented and providing users with needed information through digital media technology and corresponding interactive platforms is not only an inevitable requirement of the fast-paced modern life but also an important means to gain loyal users and enhance influence. In view of this, print media transformation needs to combine with new media to build new communication platforms, achieve complementary advantages, and improve content update speed while ensuring depth of reporting.

In terms of communication channels, print media initially explored its transformation path through digital forms such as mobile newspapers and electronic newspapers, but the actual results were not ideal and failed to meet the demands of the digital age. With the popularization of smartphones and the rise of social media, promotional methods utilizing platforms such as WeChat Moments and Weibo have gradually gained attention, and interacting with readers based on this approach has indeed attracted many readers. Additionally, in the transformation process, some print media have launched distinctive client appli-

cations based on their own exploratory experiences. The exploration of print media transformation paths clearly indicates the future development direction: through multiple communication channels and multi-level communication forms, meeting the different reading needs of different audience groups, and enabling them to obtain more timely, accurate, and comprehensive media information.

In the Internet context, media interactivity is of great significance. Particularly, customized personalized media information needs to be based on user behavior collection and data analysis. In print media transformation, fully utilizing big data technology and cloud computing methods to collect user behavior, comprehensively analyze relevant data, and thereby obtain readers' preferences and reading habits to formulate corresponding media information can effectively enhance readers' trust and satisfaction. Taking the "People's Daily" client as an example, effective interaction between media and readers enhances their sense of participation; through news comments and replies, it increases readers' attention to the news and encourages them to follow subsequent reports; through information sharing, it increases readers' reprocessing and secondary dissemination of information. Based on these interactive methods, reader stickiness can be effectively cultivated.

Furthermore, in print media transformation, to ensure readers can quickly obtain needed information, support from relevant retrieval systems or software is also necessary. Considering the characteristics and transformation requirements of print media, news retrieval needs to enable rapid search of news from different cities and fields. Users only need to input keywords, and the retrieval system can extract news matching those keywords. Based on news retrieval systems, the cumbersome steps of flipping through newspapers and searching for information in traditional print media have been greatly simplified.

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