

Postprint of Media Convergence Technology Applications in the “Self-Media Era”

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Abstract

Self-media exhibits characteristics of electronic form, democratization, strong interactivity, personalization, low entry barriers, operational simplicity, and rapid dissemination. These features are all influenced by the rapid development of media convergence technology in recent years, whose emphasis on client-side orientation, accessibility, and strong integration capabilities have, to a certain extent, determined the developmental direction of self-media. This article proceeds from these characteristics, categorizes them according to their attributes, and summarizes the application of convergence technology in the “self-media era” and its manifestations in contemporary society.

Full Text

The Application of Media Convergence Technology in the “We-Media Era”

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Abstract: We-media is characterized by electronic form, civilian nature, strong interactivity, personalization, low barrier to entry, simple operation, and rapid dissemination. These features have been shaped by the rapid development of media convergence technology in recent years, whose emphasis on client-side applications, accessibility, and strong integration capabilities have, to a considerable extent, determined the direction of we-media development. This article examines these characteristics, categorizes them according to their attributes, and summarizes the application of convergence technology in the “we-media era” and its manifestations in contemporary society.

Keywords: we-media; media convergence technology

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1. We-Media

In recent years, research on we-media has become a prominent focus in Chinese academia, with numerous publications addressing its definition, though researchers employ varying terminology. Synthesizing interpretations from multiple experts reveals that most have adopted the essence of Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis's definition of we-media, building upon it with their own elaborations. A key point of consensus holds that “we-media must possess interactivity”—it is widely recognized as “an instant interactive platform for information sharing” [1], enabling individuals to independently publish information using new network technologies. It represents a new form of media where individuals, as primary agents, employ modern means to transmit information to others [2]. The characteristics of electronic form, civilian nature, strong interactivity, personalization, low barrier to entry, simple operation, and rapid dissemination are all products of media convergence technology's influence.

2. Media Convergence

The concept of “media convergence” encompasses various perspectives within the industry. In general, it refers to the effective integration of editorial operations across newspapers, television stations, radio broadcasters, and internet sites, enabling resource sharing and centralized processing to derive different forms of information products, which are then disseminated to audiences through various platforms. Cai Wen, a professor at Renmin University of China's School of Journalism, proposes that “media convergence” comprises three essential core components: convergence of media content, convergence of communication channels, and convergence of media terminals. In other words, through advanced technologies such as electronics, network technology, and digital media, resources from various industries and organizations are integrated through cooperation, consolidation, division, and reshaping to fuse content, channels, and terminals. As traditional media upgrade and transform, and as new media technologies continuously evolve, the boundaries between traditional media (television, radio, outdoor advertising) and new media (digital television, internet, mobile terminals) have become increasingly blurred—a phenomenon observable in all aspects of our daily lives.

3. Application of Media Convergence Technology in the We-Media Era

The rapid development of media convergence technology and its inherent characteristics have provided a significant boost to we-media's growth. First, the

electronic form of we-media is a product of media convergence technology; second, its civilian nature is determined by the accessibility and mass appeal of converged media; third, its strong personalization and interactivity represent important manifestations of media convergence features; fourth, the low barrier to entry and simple operation demonstrate the sophistication of media convergence technology; and fifth, media convergence technology enables the wide and rapid dissemination of information on we-media platforms.

3.1 Electronic Form of We-Media as a Product of Convergence Technology

We-media development relies on the foundation of digital technology and network technology, with each new wave of internet technological advancement driving a new form of we-media. In recent years, as new media technologies have continuously evolved, we-media profit models have become increasingly optimistic, social recognition has grown, and the low barrier to entry has fueled rapid expansion, forming a unique “we-media era.” The shift from PC-based to mobile-based platforms has been particularly notable. Today, BBS forums, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, forums, Weibo, and WeChat have all become new forms in the we-media era. In fact, the coexistence of web-based forum platforms and mobile forum apps represents terminal convergence; publishing unified content across Weibo, WeChat, and Twitter constitutes channel convergence; and releasing messages in video, text, audio, and other formats on these platforms represents content convergence. Thus, the electronic platforms that we-media relies upon, as well as the content and presentation forms published on these platforms, are all products of media convergence technology. Weibo and WeChat themselves represent the convergence of television with mobile devices, radio with mobile devices, and other forms of media fusion.

3.2 Civilian Nature Determined by Accessibility and Mass Appeal

“We-media originates from the masses and serves the masses”—its most fundamental characteristic is “civilian nature.” Every ordinary citizen can transform from a passive “spectator” into an active “participant,” freely expressing opinions on their own “media.” This transformation is determined by the accessibility of converged media. A crucial trend in media convergence is the development of mobile terminals, with wireless network construction enabling more people to access the internet via mobile devices. For instance, apps on tablets and smartphones have greatly facilitated both information reception and publication, making any message easily obtainable. Simultaneously, the development of mobile terminals and wireless networks driven by media convergence technology has exhibited mass appeal characteristics. As long as they have network access, all netizens can equally publish or forward information online without limitations of print space or broadcast time. Like a vast information repository with powerful search, tracking, and storage functions, it greatly enriches news content and background materials. In this context, “everyone can be a journal-

ist,” and we-media increasingly develops toward civilianization, making social messages and discourse more diverse, comprehensive, objective, and free—all stemming from the development of media convergence technology.

3.3 Personalization and Strong Interactivity as Key Features

The development trend of media convergence has enabled many mobile clients to combine features of traditional media like television and radio, publishing multimedia information such as video and audio. This application of media convergence technology helps people report events happening around them anytime and anywhere on we-media platforms, making the reporting process interesting, diverse, and authentic while fully demonstrating individual personalization. These personalized communication methods also enhance we-media dissemination effectiveness, making it easier to capture public attention and response. Furthermore, media convergence technology has made we-media platforms highly interactive. The application of this technology blurs the boundary between information publishers and receivers, enabling two-way interactive communication. When applied to the we-media era, this technology manifests as: we-media platforms feature numerous unique functions that facilitate communication, such as “reply” features in Weibo, WeChat, and blog applications, allowing the public to freely express opinions based on their perspectives. Additionally, audiences can discuss and reprocess information transmitted by communicators through Weibo, WeChat, and forums, thereby transforming from receivers into disseminators. Moreover, the accessibility of converged media makes we-media platforms unrestricted by class, profession, or capability, becoming the ideal venue for ordinary people to express individuality, exchange viewpoints, and freely manifest themselves.

3.4 Low Barrier to Entry and Simple Operation as Advanced Technology

Traditional media operations such as television, radio, and newspapers require complex approval processes from relevant state agencies and substantial investment in human, material, and financial resources. In today’s era of highly developed internet culture, media convergence technology integrates traditional media into new media, allowing people to become we-media practitioners without cost or professional skills—simply by registering an account on blog, Weibo, or WeChat sites to easily publish information. Furthermore, media convergence technology enables many new media clients to incorporate functions of traditional media like television and radio, such as video shooting and uploading features in Weibo and WeChat, which are simple, convenient, and unrestricted. These characteristics allow we-media to shoot videos, record audio, and publish online anytime and anywhere. They also facilitate easy reposting of text and video content, enabling everyone to become a citizen journalist with the right to publish news on their own “media.” The emergence, development, and application of media convergence technology have resulted in low barriers to

entry and simple operation in the we-media era—precisely demonstrating the sophistication of this technology.

3.5 Wide and Rapid Information Dissemination

Due to resource integration and multi-platform collaboration effects, media convergence technology exhibits immediacy and broad reach in its application within the we-media era. Immediacy and broad reach enable information to reach the maximum possible audience in the first instance. Against the backdrop of China having 630 million netizens, 1.2 billion mobile phone users, and 500 million Weibo and WeChat users sending over 20 billion messages daily, audiences can also transmit information to more people in real time. This greatly shortens the information dissemination cycle and significantly expands its scope. In the we-media era, people can quickly transmit messages they control to the masses anytime and anywhere, and the masses can rely on convenient we-media platforms to rapidly forward content or provide feedback using media convergence technology—all benefiting from the development of this technology.

Today, we-media has become one of the important forms of media development. As a branch of new media, it is in fact an important manifestation of media convergence. In recent years, we-media has influenced the entire industry and society at large. In this we-media era, the application of media convergence technology has provided tremendous technical support for we-media development and promoted its healthy growth, while we-media development has, in turn, provided broad development space for the application and evolution of media convergence technology. In the future, the we-media era will continue to evolve, and media convergence technology will further develop, affecting not only we-media but the entire media environment and even the media industry. The further development of we-media may also influence the media market environment and help open new horizons for media convergence technology. The two influence and promote each other, ensuring a brighter future for “the application of media convergence technology in the we-media era.”

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

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