

Paths and Keys to Media Convergence (Post-print)

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Abstract

As communication technology continues to develop, new media represented by the Internet are constantly emerging, marking the advent of a new media era. In this new media environment, the freedom of information flow is continuously enhanced, communication channels are personalized, and information content is diversified, which collectively form information dissemination characteristics markedly different from those of the traditional media era. From the perspective of communication characteristics and effects, both traditional media and new media possess their respective strengths. To foster better development of the media landscape, media convergence is imperative. This paper focuses on exploring the pathways of media convergence and several decisive factors.

Full Text

Abstract

With the continuous development of communication technology, new media represented by the Internet have been emerging constantly, heralding the arrival of a new media era. In this new media environment, information flows with greater freedom, communication channels become personalized, and information content grows increasingly diversified, forming distinctly different characteristics of information dissemination compared with the traditional media era. Analyzing from the perspectives of communication features and effects, both traditional and new media have their respective strengths. To promote better development of the media landscape, media convergence is imperative. This paper focuses on exploring the pathways of media convergence and some decisive factors involved.

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In recent years, scholarly writings and articles discussing media convergence have proliferated. The rapid development of new media has captured the attention of media professionals, while the decline of traditional media and the prosperity of new media are reshaping the overall media landscape. In the current era of convergent development, media practitioners must seriously consider the general pathways for mutual promotion between traditional and new media, as well as the key factors that warrant attention during the convergence process.

1.1 Advantages of Traditional Media

The characteristics of traditional media are defined in comparison with network communication media. Overall, traditional media possesses several key features: First, it maintains strong authority. Information published in newspapers, television, and radio generally carries high credibility and persuasive power, often serving as important reference material for audiences. Second, information disseminated through traditional media frequently becomes a primary basis for decision-makers.

The deficiencies of traditional media manifest in several aspects: (1) Poor timeliness. Information in traditional media often requires hours, days, or even weeks from production to audience reception, causing temporal delays that diminish its impact. (2) Limited dissemination scope. Traditional media has constrained content space, generally carrying only major, prominent news items, and directly reaching relatively elite audience segments, thus restricting its overall reach. (3) Under the impact of new media, traditional media shows clear signs of decline. Incessant discussions about the extinction of traditional media represent the most obvious manifestation of new media's challenge.

2.2 Characteristics of New Media

New media brings a brand-new media environment, profoundly influencing how people obtain and interpret information and generating many novel and complex factors that affect the formation of their values. To analyze the current state of journalism in China's new media environment, we must begin by examining the characteristics of new media.

2.2.1 Participation and Equality

New media features extremely low entry barriers and usage costs; audiences need not possess high media literacy or spend significantly to use it, resulting in high participation rates. This participation affords audiences a sense of equal

status: everyone can voice their opinions freely. For instance, the anonymity of online media largely dissolves class differences based on social relationships within the new media environment, bringing about the equalization of users' identities and status. This participation and equality somewhat weakens the authority and visibility of traditional "communicators." The increased power of civil discourse worries professionals and may further lead to the prevalence of populism, posing significant challenges to the previous "top-down," "I-speak-you-listen" propaganda model.

2.2.2 Autonomy and Selectivity

With the rise of online media, audiences have gained tremendous enhancement in information selectivity and initiative. New media audiences can choose specific media tools and content according to their needs and preferences. Audiences are no longer passive receivers of information but are gradually becoming true masters of media usage. This raises the issue of audience media literacy. For audiences lacking sufficient media usage skills and content discrimination ability, they can easily lose themselves in the vast ocean of information brought by new media, finding it difficult to maintain a definite direction of thought and belief. Therefore, while enhancing the influence and appeal of mainstream values, we must also focus on improving audience media literacy.

2.2.3 Openness and Diversity

New media possesses extremely high information capacity, undoubtedly inseparable from the development of new media technology. Information barriers between countries and cultures are continuously eliminated under the impetus of new communication technology, and borderless information flow is increasingly becoming a reality. The openness of new media, on one hand, brings massive information expansion; on the other hand, the thoughts and values encompassed within this vast amount of information also show a trend of diversification. In an open media environment with diversified information content, the improvement of audience cognitive ability is also crucial. Therefore, how to highlight mainstream value concepts among diverse information, promote the establishment of a socialist core value system, and thereby enhance public cohesion becomes exceptionally important.

3. Convergence of Traditional and New Media

Traditional media and new media each have their own advantages and disadvantages. In the current environment that emphasizes media convergence, seeking convergence paths between these two communication media has become industry consensus and the future direction that numerous media organizations are exploring.

3.1 Leveraging New Media Communication Advantages to Expand News Influence

We should innovate communication methods and employ multimedia expression techniques that new media excels in to enhance news influence. A major characteristic of new media is its strong ability to integrate information expression methods, combining features of traditional media like newspapers, radio, and television while further integrating text, images, sound, and video into more vivid and direct information sources. This makes news itself more appealing, attractive, and influential. Additionally, we should give full play to new media's interactivity, increase multi-directional interaction, and actively respond to audience feedback. While using new forms to disseminate socialist core values, we must also abandon rigid and dull approaches of the past. We cannot simply preach but must respect news laws, keep pace with the times, and continuously innovate, allowing core values to penetrate deeply into people's hearts through rich, colorful, authentic, and credible news reports.

3.2 Relying on Traditional Media to Increase Content Richness and Readability

On the path of convergence between old and new media, we must continuously explore the integration of communication content. The general principle is to increase lively, readable content and enhance the closeness between news information and socialist core values. We should make full use of lively, colloquial language—even internet language—that is widely accepted by audiences to enhance linguistic appeal, truly “enlivening” the dissemination of socialist core values. We can also guide and inspire audiences through typical demonstration effects, such as the widely praised “Most Beautiful XX” format, selecting fresh, lively, and vivid examples from grassroots and daily life, letting audiences feel the universal presence of socialist core values and eliminating the impression that the socialist core value system is theoretically empty and abstract.

3.3 Emphasizing Audience Interaction to Mobilize Society's Participation Enthusiasm

Strong interactivity is a major feature of new media. Deeply influenced by this characteristic, traditional media should learn from new media's openness and timely information feedback, promptly collecting scattered audience opinions online as a basis for revising communication behavior and decision-making. In the traditional era, information dissemination was noticeably one-way, with untimely feedback on audience opinions and viewpoints, weak audience participation in the news communication process, and thus limited effect. With the arrival of new media, this situation has greatly improved. New media makes everyone a self-media holder; everyone can become information disseminators, forwarders, opinion guides, and participants, leading to expanded audience influence on public opinion and deepened impact. The rise and continuous growth of grassroots classes is the most powerful proof.

4. Key Factors in Media Convergence

In the media convergence process, certain factors play very important roles. This paper summarizes these factors as follows: (1) Media technology. Technology is the driving force behind new media's rapid development. New media editing and layout technology, application development technology, information dissemination technology, and other hardware support new media development. In the convergence process with traditional media, continued R&D and innovation in technology remain necessary. (2) New media talent. Although some Chinese universities have offered new media courses in recent years, they have not yet formed scale in new media talent cultivation. Media convergence requires large numbers of professionals who understand both traditional and new media. Therefore, universities must continue strengthening the cultivation of media talent, especially new media talent. (3) Application of channel strategy. Many situations have changed in the new media era. Media profit models and revenue sources are diversifying. Only by occupying media resources and information dissemination channels can we master discourse power. Media convergence cannot be separated from channel support. Only by enriching media channel resources and building better cooperation platforms between traditional and new media can we promote healthy, orderly development of media undertakings and industries.

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