

## Reflections on the Convergence Transformation and Development of Print Media in the Mobile Internet Era: Postprint

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### Abstract

In the contemporary mobile internet era, pathways for information acquisition have undergone fundamental transformation. Individuals predominantly utilize smartphones as a medium, achieving mastery and comprehension of information through mobile client applications while simultaneously enabling bidirectional interaction. Information consumption is no longer limited to passive reception; users can actively participate in various programmatic contexts. These characteristics—exceptional interactivity, participatory capacity, and personalization—pose substantial challenges to traditional print media. Although print media possesses a longstanding history and loyal audiences, failure to innovate inevitably engenders progressive audience fatigue. By contrast, new media exhibits high efficiency and rapid dissemination, attracting substantial audiences. Under present circumstances, print media can only secure its position in the competition between legacy and emerging media by undertaking digital transformation and leveraging internet tools to maximize strengths while circumventing weaknesses.

### Full Text

#### Abstract

In today's mobile internet era, the pathways for information access have fundamentally changed. People now rely on smartphones as their primary vehicle, using mobile applications to acquire and comprehend information while enabling two-way interaction. Information consumption is no longer passive; audiences can actively participate in broader communication processes. These characteristics—strong interactivity, high participation, and personalization—pose significant challenges to traditional print media. Despite its long history and loyal

readership, print media risks gradual obsolescence without innovation. In contrast, new media offers superior efficiency and speed, attracting vast audiences. Under current conditions, print media can only find its path forward in the clash between old and new media by transforming digitally and leveraging internet tools to maximize strengths while mitigating weaknesses.

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## 1. The Dilemma Facing Traditional Print Media

Traditional mass communication refers to media that disseminate information regularly to the public through mechanical devices, primarily including newspapers, outdoor media, communications, broadcasting, television, and pre-self-media internet platforms. Compared to internet-based media, traditional media is characterized by high production costs and thresholds, along with longer production cycles. While this confers greater authority and credibility, it also results in poorer selectivity and timeliness relative to the internet. Simultaneously, traditional media suffers from a severe phenomenon of prioritizing editorial work over business operations. Management personnel are often transitioned from editorial roles, and their relatively lower status leads to significant brain drain among talented managers. This scarcity of market-oriented, high-caliber management talent not only constrains traditional media's development but also hinders expansion into other industries.

## 2. Reasons for the Continued Low Market Share of Traditional Media

With the rapid development of technology and the swift proliferation of smartphone-based new media, traditional media faces intense disruption. The widespread availability of communication infrastructure and extensive use of big data in network communication have enabled new communication paradigms that, when combined with technology, give new media an almost unparalleled advantage over traditional media in terms of timeliness, impact, storage capacity, portability, feedback convenience, and selectivity. Meanwhile, the internet spirit of sharing has grown stronger with increasing internet penetration. Audiences can access vast amounts of free information via mobile internet, diminishing the demand for paid newspaper subscriptions. A comprehensive analysis reveals additional reasons for traditional media's persistently low market share.

## 2.1 Difficulty Profiting from Diversified Transformation

The critical factor in current traditional media diversification is the profit model. Examining existing mobile strategies, most simply transplant traditional media content onto the internet with minimal changes to content or format. Because these approaches fail to align with new media's communication characteristics, patterns, and market demands, operating diversified media businesses with traditional communication thinking yields limited results. This over-reliance on content production for profit, combined with single-channel distribution, creates a difficult situation for profitability. This dilemma manifests specifically in the struggle of network newspapers and websites to generate profits. Even after digitization, traditional media organizations must still bear considerable costs beyond printing expenses. Except for a small number of professionals who may pay for specialized information, most audiences merely browse news content. In this regard, traditional media's online newspapers and websites cannot compete with major internet portals.

## 2.2 Rigid Institutional Constraints on Media Management Talent

Institutional organizational structures are more difficult to enter and navigate compared to emerging commercial media organizations. Although most media organizations have essentially adopted enterprise-style operations, their public institution attributes cannot be ignored. Some enter for institutional benefits, while others leave due to institutional rigidity—often the most forward-thinking, sharp, and strategic individuals. This movement is no longer purely market-driven but influenced by institutional factors, inevitably causing talent to flow toward more flexible enterprises where personal strengths can be better utilized. Corporate systems are essential for healthy enterprise development. Because traditional media have not yet widely established scientific and rational corporate systems, they suffer from inadequate incentive and constraint mechanisms, internal management systems, and corporate governance structures. This institutional disadvantage becomes evident in competition with new media companies, which have poached large numbers of high-quality talent from traditional media units through superior systems, further weakening traditional media's competitiveness.

## 3. Integration as the Main Path for Print Media Transformation

In August 2017, Jiangxi Daily Newspaper Group announced the integration and development of its *Information Daily*, a newspaper with 34 years of history, with China Jiangxi Net. Following this integration, China Jiangxi Net and *Information Daily* pledged to support central China's rise with a more open and innovative posture, demonstrating new media vitality. Media convergence represents a new product for media survival under international and global trends, a new means for historically distinct communication technologies

to achieve integrated, multifunctional communication, and a new model that facilitates effective integration of editorial operations across newspapers, radio, television, internet, and mobile platforms to achieve resource sharing, centralized processing, cost savings, and scale effects. Drawing on practical experience, we recommend the following approaches.

### **3.1 Ensuring Authenticity and Winning with Quality**

New media greatly enhances audience agency, enabling them to voice their opinions and express their will. Unlike the fixed content volume of newspapers, new media can provide richer understanding through layered links and unlimited data capacity. However, higher reporting efficiency and low participation thresholds fragment information, sometimes producing invalid or false information that inconveniences audiences and even causes panic. As traditional media, print media may lack immediacy but guarantees information accuracy, safeguarding fundamental audience needs. Moreover, audiences consume information passively—they not only need to understand events but also desire professional journalists' incisive analysis for deeper insights. Therefore, in media convergence, print media must first maintain its authenticity and credibility while offering distinctive perspectives on news events to expand influence, maintain competitive advantages, and attract readers with professionalism while integrating with new media to some extent. Facing the growing influence and impact of citizen journalism, print media must strengthen follow-up reporting on citizen journalism, continuously expanding coverage scope and scale through original and investigative reporting to add depth and substance to online hotspots, thereby achieving benign interaction and integration between newspapers and networks.

### **3.2 Combining Online and Offline with Targeted Approaches**

Print media readers can be divided into three categories based on smartphone usage intensity. The first comprises older audiences who are loyal newspaper readers. They trust tangible print more than the virtual internet. The second includes younger audiences with limited smartphone access who do not use phones as their primary news source, as parents prefer they obtain information through print reading. The third consists of “mobile phone addicts” who, while not constantly holding their phones, receive most information online and have low demand for print media. Consequently, print media must adopt tailored measures for different groups. For the first group, media should maintain their own quality and appeal while exploring more socially relevant news that resonates with audiences or interpreting topics of interest to satisfy their needs. For the second group, media can design more engaging sections, such as presenting news in comic formats to capture attention. Regarding “mobile phone addicts,” many traditional print media have already forged new paths by integrating with the internet and developing dedicated departments to serve online audiences, implementing “two micro and one end” strategies (Weibo, WeChat, and apps) with accounts that push content to audiences regularly or irregularly. Readers can

also communicate with media through these channels, enhancing print media's internet influence. Additionally, print media can establish interactive columns for reader engagement, providing dual-way experiences even within traditional platforms. Organizing physical activities combined with internet dissemination can achieve online-offline prosperity and enhance media dissemination power.

### 3.3 Learning Relevant Technologies and Utilizing Big Data

As more people flock to the internet, new technologies and talents become essential. Media organizations need to establish specialized departments for digital research to avoid development limitations due to technical deficiencies. They must organize high-quality news teams that, beyond solid writing skills, possess news photography and video editing capabilities. Unlike print media, which can only carry text and images, new media can also use audio, video, and emerging 3D news formats that present images from three-dimensional perspectives, offering audiences novel experiences. Such new methods represent a viable research direction. Simultaneously, media can analyze online audience needs and feedback through big data to understand their psychology. These analytical conclusions are equally applicable to print content publication, allowing content to have certain orientations. The relationship between media and readers has two dimensions: media both restrict the types and scope of information readers can access and, within reasonable limits, satisfy and cater to reader demands.

### 3.4 Seeking New Paths and Diversified Transformation

When facing new media, print media should not only integrate with them but also seek transformation beyond this sphere. For example, *China Newsweek* launched a UK edition, *Reader* introduced handheld e-readers, Zhejiang Daily Media acquired Shanda's game companies Hangzhou Bianfeng and Shanghai Haofang, and *Yangtze Evening Post* conducted investment promotion for its self-owned brand and organized automobile exhibitions across 12 cities, generating revenue while expanding influence. These examples demonstrate how seeking new ideas and exploring different fields can bring benefits to media organizations.

In summary, whether regarding newspaper content or new media interaction strategies, content should be targeted with refined sections—that is, refined audiences. More targeted content delivery not only better satisfies reader needs but also cultivates reader stickiness and recognition.

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

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