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## Discussion on Development Strategies for Media Convergence of Industry Journals (Post-print)

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### Abstract

With the development of information technology and the impact of new media, traditional print journals are confronted with unprecedented challenges, with both brand influence and economic benefits experiencing severe declines, and industry journals encountering grave challenges. To break through this dilemma, most industry journals have targeted the path of promoting transformation and convergence of traditional media. This paper discusses aspects such as the characteristics of industry journals, the challenges and opportunities they face, and how to achieve media convergence.

### Full Text

#### Abstract

With the development of information technology and the impact of new media, traditional print journals are facing unprecedented challenges, with both brand influence and economic benefits declining severely. Industry journals in particular are encountering severe challenges. To break through this predicament, most industry journals have targeted the path of promoting transformation and convergence of traditional media. This paper explores the characteristics of industry journals, the challenges and opportunities they face, and how to achieve media convergence.

### 1. Connotation of Industry Journals and Challenges Under New Circumstances

Industry journals primarily refer to periodicals that are based on specific industries, extending to the industry itself or related sectors, focusing on industry-specific content, and relying on industry channels for distribution and operations. These journals exhibit strong dependence on the development status of their respective industries and systems. In 2014, the State Administration of

Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television officially launched the accreditation process for academic journals, during which four key characteristics of industry journals were identified: First, the specificity of their sponsoring organizations, which are mainly industry regulatory departments and their affiliated institutions, industry-related research institutes, professional associations, and enterprises within the industry. Second, the directed nature of their content, which focuses on specialized technical knowledge, conceptual innovation, policy information, work experience exchange, and development trends within particular industries. Third, the typologization of their readership, which is primarily oriented toward industry stakeholders, including practitioners, researchers, and management and service targets. Fourth, the limitations of their distribution channels, which mostly depend on industry and systemic channels and resources. Rather than blindly pursuing circulation figures, these journals place greater emphasis on enhancing brand power and influence within their industries.

Therefore, industry journals are not equivalent to academic journals and generally do not have such strict requirements regarding paper publication. Some industry journals even exhibit characteristics of news-oriented current affairs publications and are unwilling to be classified as academic journals. For instance, *China Work Safety* magazine, supervised by the State Administration of Work Safety and hosted by the Information Research Institute of the State Administration of Work Safety, has long positioned itself as a mainstream media outlet in the work safety field, following the path of a comprehensive current affairs publication on work safety news. Although it features one or two columns that regularly publish high-level authoritative papers in the work safety field, its primary function remains that of a comprehensive journal with service and guidance roles—consistent with most journals hosted by ministries, industry associations, or societies, and unlike academic journals that emphasize various indexing metrics. This paper examines the media convergence path for this category of industry journals.

With the development of media information technology, such industry journals are facing unprecedented challenges. The rapid development of media information technology, the unobstructed channels for self-media information dissemination, the proactivity and selectivity of audiences in accessing information, and the challenges and developments of new technologies confronting industries have all posed significant challenges to industry journals. In 2016, both the distribution and operations of industry journals experienced certain impacts, making media convergence development a breakthrough strategy chosen by many industry journals. While the state has demonstrated considerable determination in promoting media convergence, the results have been limited, primarily because profitable models for media convergence are difficult to identify, with few achieving revenue growth through new media. However, some industry journals have achieved remarkable success. For example, *Auto Fan*, *Automobile*, and *National Geographic* (the latter's Chinese edition known as 博物) have made substantial achievements in media convergence, with their new media economic scale already showing momentum to surpass that of traditional media.

## 2. Media Convergence Must Be Based on Traditional Journals

Industry journals must deepen their main business, diversify their development, accelerate transformation, and achieve integrated development. Deepening the main business is fundamental—media convergence efforts that abandon traditional journals become rootless, as microblogs, WeChat official accounts, mobile apps, and customized user services all rely on traditional journals and their editorial models. The integrated development of journal media should be based on traditional journals. Whether transitioning from traditional journals to new media or to emerging converged journals, the emphasis remains on the foundation of traditional journals. Merely publishing digital journals does not constitute media convergence. Only by introducing new technologies, creating digital journals, and integrating them with traditional operations can true transformation and upgrading be achieved. This is especially true for industry journals, as industries, systems, and sectors constitute the very foundation of their existence. Without these, industry journals would be rootless. The integrated development of industry journals represents an upgrade and transformation built upon traditional journals, expanding their communication channels and enabling editorial teams to repackage and upgrade their original content for dissemination through newer, faster, and more effective channels. Experience demonstrates that industry journals that have successfully integrated with new media have not abandoned traditional journals but have instead sought new models for media convergence based on traditional journals. For example, *Auto Fan* magazine, grounded in its traditional journal, developed a mobile app that prioritizes the release of urgently needed car purchase information for auto enthusiasts through its app and WeChat official account, with the content later compiled and published in the traditional journal. Although the sequence of release channels has been adjusted, the content remains centered on the traditional journal.

## 3. Media Convergence Must Be Built on the Foundation of “Content is King”

“Content is king” has always been an iron law in the press and publishing industry. To build a journal brand and establish core influence, one cannot bypass the dissemination of “content.” The survival and development of industry journals depend on their brand influence within their industries and systems. Without authoritative and mainstream status in disseminating content within their industry domains, development becomes difficult. Under the new media landscape, even greater emphasis should be placed on content quality because information technology development has enabled more information publishers to emerge. The only winning weapon for securing discourse power in news dissemination amid numerous information sources is the quality of disseminated content. Due to the long-standing authority of traditional media in information release, industry journals enjoy advantages in information planning, collection, editing, and release within their industry systems. Therefore, industry journals

must firmly hold the “content is king” position, continuously providing content products that satisfy readers’ diverse and personalized needs, expanding channels to increase reader participation and attention, and firmly capturing the attention of audiences within their industry domains. Conversely, some newspapers and periodicals that failed to maintain content standards while blindly developing new media and pursuing diversified or expedited information release forms have often become hotbeds for fake news. Many well-known journals or prominent journalists have released stories based merely on phone inquiries or past impressions and opinions about events, simply to beat the clock. This not only leads readers to question the influence of these journals’ new media platforms but also causes greater impact and damage to the traditional journals themselves.

#### 4. Media Convergence Should Incorporate Internet Company Operation Mechanisms

The integrated development of industry journals should incorporate the operational mechanisms of internet companies. Industry journals are often affiliated with state organs, public institutions, industry associations, or research institutions, exhibiting obvious characteristics of government-style management in public institutions. Exploring media convergence development relying solely on a journal’s editorial board members or editorial teams enthusiastic about innovative media integration makes comprehensive or overall progress difficult. In reality, most industry journals have launched new media projects hastily in response to new media technology trends, establishing new media frameworks of “dual microblogs and one network plus one app” (referring to Weibo, WeChat, website, and mobile app), while often being clueless about how to operate them. Media convergence of industry journals represents an upgrade of traditional journals and requires fully learning from the operation and management mechanisms of internet companies to form a completely new editorial management and competition system.

Under the premise of adhering to Party media management, industry journals should explore market-oriented and corporate-style new media management models to achieve deep integration between traditional journals and new media in content, channels, platforms, operations, and management. *Today’s Headlines* (今日头条) adopts an internet company development model with flexible management that can effectively leverage the advantages of editorial media technology and corporate management to achieve rapid development. Similarly, self-media official accounts are often operated by just one or two people with flexible and convenient operation models, using their content to serve related industry enterprises. Some enterprises even invest two to three million in advertising, generating more profit than one or two journal publishers.

## 5. Media Convergence Must Achieve All-Staff Transformation

The integrated development of industry journals should be guaranteed by all-staff media convergence transformation. Traditional industry journals have been significantly impacted by the new media environment, and readers have undergone considerable changes during this process. Traditional editorial models must be adjusted to truly achieve media convergence. Changes in media technology have transformed content dissemination methods, making information content more abundant and diverse. Audio, animation, video, and other formats have changed the single “text + image” dissemination model. Editorial staff of industry journals must adapt to these changes, learn new media technologies, and achieve diversification of content dissemination channels to meet reader demands. Industry journals must also adjust their editorial team distribution, shifting core editorial staff toward new media to ensure that new media content quality keeps pace with technological development. *National Geographic* magazine’s Chinese edition, 博物 (BOWU), has seen its new media economic scale surpass that of traditional media, prompting major adjustments to its editorial team by transferring core editorial staff from the traditional journal to its new media editorial department. This has ensured the staffing needs for new media growth while achieving media transformation for industry media editorial personnel.

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