

The Challenges and Innovations of Print Media in the New Media Environment: A Postprint

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Date: 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

With the continuous innovation of new media technologies and the rapid advent of the converged media era, the development of traditional print media is facing a tremendous crisis. Print media that have withstood the crisis have repeatedly tapped into their potential, continuously overcoming difficulties and resistance, and forging ahead through innovative development mechanisms, thereby carving out their own unique path in the converged media era. This paper takes the current media environment as an important background, uses the current development status of print media as an entry point, conducts an in-depth analysis of the current predicament of print media, and proposes targeted recommendations, with the aim of providing practical and feasible suggestions for the development of print media in the new media environment.

Full Text

Abstract

With the continuous innovation of new media technologies and the rapid advent of the converged media era, traditional print media faces a profound crisis. Yet print media, refusing to collapse in the face of adversity, has repeatedly tapped into its potential, overcoming obstacles and resistance through innovative development mechanisms to forge its own path in this new landscape. This paper takes the current media environment as its backdrop and the development status of print media as its starting point, offering an in-depth analysis of print media's predicament and proposing targeted recommendations to provide practical and feasible guidance for print media development in the new media environment.

Keywords: new media technology; traditional print media; innovation; predicament

CLC Number: G124

Document Code: A

Article ID: 1671-0134(2017)10-057-02
DOI: 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2017.10.021

1. The Evolution and Characteristics of Print Media

1.1 Historical Development of Print Media

As the most ancient form of mass communication, print media has traversed every era of media evolution. From Caesar's recording of events on wooden tablets in 60 BC to the emergence of printing technology in China, print media continuously optimized its development to become the "king of media" and a mass-level information dissemination channel. By the mid-14th century, Gutenberg's invention of movable metal type printing brought printed newspapers into public view, forming the prototype of modern and contemporary newspapers. During the Industrial Revolution, the era of mass communication dominated by newspapers officially arrived. With the subsequent emergence of radio, television, and the new media era, print media has weathered numerous transformations. Despite its declining fortunes, it remains active in the public eye.

1.2 Defining Characteristics of Print Media

Print media is characterized by three main attributes: singularity, lag, and specificity. Singularity refers to its reliance on paper as the primary information carrier—newspapers, magazines, books—demonstrating strong dependence on a single medium. This is the typical feature of traditional print media. Lag pertains to the temporal delay in information delivery; timeliness is the lifeblood of news, yet print media's editorial systems and printing schedules severely compromise its immediacy. Specificity concerns its audience: the text and images of print media demand certain levels of literacy and intellectual maturity from readers, thereby creating barriers to information access for some segments of the population.

2. Analysis of Print Media's Predicament in the Converged Media Era

Print media's current dilemma stems primarily from its own limitations and the diversified impact of new media. On one hand, print media suffers from narrow distribution channels and lacks a multi-channel strategy, making its text-and-image messages no match for the audio-visual effects of other media. On the other hand, the optimized new media environment has spawned powerful self-media and online media that have become primary targets for audiences, weakening print media's influence and exerting tremendous negative pressure on its operations.

2.1 The “Diversified Impact” of New Media

The “diversified impact” of new media refers to the intensified industry competition in today’s media environment that exerts severe survival pressure on print media. This includes vertical competition from print media at different levels, traffic competition from branded print media, user acquisition battles from major social media platforms, and content production rivalry from UGC (User-Generated Content) industries. This diversified impact clearly demonstrates how media technology development in the new media era profoundly affects media operations. Multi-functional, multi-channel strategies have gradually become essential for media survival, yet print media, constrained by its own limitations, lacks mature and effective communication strategies. Consequently, it faces continuous industry suppression, and combined with traditional thinking patterns, struggles to operate effectively and compete with emerging media. This diversified impact represents the most significant factor in print media’s current predicament. Particularly for internet-based new media, whose information gathering and dissemination capabilities far surpass traditional media in timeliness, the resulting loss of value in print media messages leads to declining audience attention and shrinking circulation, signaling print media’s gradual decline.

2.2 “Inherent Deficiencies” of Print Media

Compared to television, online media, and today’s self-media and multimedia audio-visual feasts, print media’s “inherent deficiencies” constitute a major factor in its current predicament. These deficiencies manifest in two aspects: First, the singularity of print media’s communication form and information carrier offers limited appeal to contemporary audiences. Video messages tend to satisfy audience demands for authenticity and representation, making print media—despite its thoroughness and pragmatism—easily overlooked in the converged media era, thereby hindering its development. Second, beyond its own communication philosophy and cultural identity, print media subconsciously stratifies its audience. Print media consumers require certain levels of literacy, experience, and logical thinking skills to actively interpret the information presented. This “secondary reading” approach neither meets broad audience needs nor accommodates those lacking these prerequisite conditions.

2.3 “Counterfeit Innovation” in Branding and Innovation

The erosion of brand value and lack of genuine innovation represent crucial manifestations of print media’s predicament. In terms of brand value, many media outlets resort to sensationalist news or vulgar, pandering content to expand their influence, even resorting to “fake news” for attention. Brand value erosion also appears in the absence of a core value system; for instance, some publications lack cultural philosophy and direction, constantly testing moral and legal boundaries for sensationalism. Regarding innovation, the convenient resource sharing in the converged media era has weakened print media’s creativ-

ity, making imitation the most economical and “effective” innovation strategy. Furthermore, while print media platforms possess varying levels of advantage and recognition, their content production systems, styles, and modes are largely similar. When regional monopolies are broken and print media face national and online competition, this simple imitation becomes an awkward “counterfeit innovation.”

3. Strategic Pathways for Print Media Innovation

3.1 Embracing the New Media Environment

The new media environment provides ample development momentum and technical support for emerging media while offering powerful opportunities for traditional media innovation, including print media. To rapidly escape its current predicament, print media must integrate with the new media environment, leveraging media convergence trends to incorporate new technologies into its development process. This involves continuously exploring new distribution channels and formats to capture the attention and affection of audiences across all ages and social strata. Cases such as People’s Daily Online and Xinhua Net, which combine online platforms with traditional print media, address the editorial deficiencies of online media while opening new digital channels for print media. Through audio-visual effects, these hybrid models complement each other’s strengths, forming interactive media organizations that attract audiences with maximum volume and rich content, thereby enhancing market influence and achieving optimal media operation goals. In summary, embracing the new media environment is not only the sole path for print media’s transformation but also the cornerstone of its innovation strategy.

3.2 Strengthening Professionalism and Authority

New media forms represented by online media and self-media are newcomers to the converged media era with endless potential, yet their rapid development and lack of experience create fundamental “defects”—deficiencies in professionalism and authority. These qualities happen to be print media’s key advantages. In-depth reporting, for instance, not only authentically restores information and events but also provides multi-dimensional perspectives through thorough investigation. This effectively filters the mixed information in today’s information explosion era, satisfying audience demands for truth and accuracy. Print media possesses core competitive advantages that new media cannot enjoy, forming a crucial component of its development momentum. The “content is king” philosophy must be upheld by print media, establishing itself as a “clear stream” in the new media ecosystem through professional and authoritative information dissemination—a distinctive feature and powerful weapon for success.

3.3 Building Innovation and Brand Value

Innovation is not mere mutual learning or imitation. Uniform media styles and copied content formats often trigger audience resistance; this is not innovation but mere imitation, even “plagiarism.” Contemporary innovation strategies for print media involve two main approaches: First, accelerating integration with other advantageous media such as online platforms and self-media. Second, innovating media style and content format to be distinctive while providing quality service, which can be achieved through specialized media orientation and refined functional approaches. Additionally, brand building is essential for print media’s rebirth: it must maintain and strengthen the professionalism and authority of its content while continuously improving itself, emphasizing the construction of a core brand value system. Only through superior service philosophy and efficient brand value can print media promote its development and stand firm in the converged media era.

4. Conclusion

Print media’s predicament is historically inevitable, as the arrival of the new media environment and converged media era has spawned novel communication media that significantly increase competitive pressure on traditional print media. However, amidst declining circulation and difficult operations, the era and environment also present tremendous development opportunities. By examining its current status, leveraging new media to address its deficiencies while preserving its advantages, print media can emerge with a renewed presence. Print media will not vanish into history; having endured these trials, its transformation is assuredly imminent.

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