

Post-print: The Convergence and Transformation of Traditional Media and Micro-film Industry

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Abstract

Faced with the severe downward trend of traditional media, numerous domestic traditional media outlets have actively embarked on new explorations and attempts, including various models of cross-boundary integration. Meanwhile, micro-films, as an emerging communication vehicle, have demonstrated strong growth momentum by capitalizing on the mobile internet era. Their commercial value lies not only in low production and distribution costs, but also in their ability to integrate with social media platforms such as WeChat and Weibo; enhanced interactivity and topicality render micro-films a compelling medium for brand-consumer communication. However, the current development of the domestic micro-film industry remains in a fragmented state. Based on the current situation and advantages of both the domestic media industry and the micro-film industry, this paper proposes that traditional media and the micro-film industry achieve mutual organic integration to overcome their respective dilemmas and further promote and refine industry development.

Full Text

Integration and Transformation of Traditional Media and the Microfilm Industry

Abstract: Faced with the severe and ongoing decline of traditional media, numerous domestic traditional media outlets have actively pursued new explorations and experiments, with many attempting various models of cross-industry integration. Meanwhile, microfilm, as an emerging communication carrier, has demonstrated strong momentum by capitalizing on the mobile internet era. Its commercial value lies not only in low production and distribution costs but also in its capacity to integrate with social media platforms such as WeChat and Weibo. This enhanced interactivity and topicality makes microfilm the

most compelling means for brands to communicate with consumers. However, a comprehensive view of China's current microfilm industry reveals a persistently fragmented state. Based on the present conditions and inherent strengths of China's media and microfilm industries, this paper proposes that through mutual organic integration, traditional media and the microfilm industry can extricate themselves from their respective predicaments and further promote and refine industrial development.

Keywords: traditional media; microfilm; industry; integration; transformation

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In recent years, traditional media has maintained a consistent downward trajectory, with little optimism regarding when this trend might stabilize. Nevertheless, decades of accumulation have endowed traditional media with distinct advantages in credibility, influence, and talent cultivation. Confronted with increasingly severe market conditions, numerous domestic traditional media outlets have taken proactive measures to pursue industrial integration by leveraging their inherent strengths.

Print media advertising revenue exemplifies this crisis. Beginning in 2012, China's newspaper advertising growth rate plummeted from an 11.2% increase the previous year to a 7.3% decline. This downturn continued with an 8.1% drop in 2013, followed by negative growth from 2014 onward: -18.3% in 2014, -35.4% in 2015, and -41.4% during the first half of 2016. Advertisements in automotive, real estate, and medical sectors experienced particularly severe declines. While the rise of e-commerce and sluggish physical business operations exacerbated the decline in print advertising, the erosion of newspaper competitiveness by new media represents only one factor; broader macroeconomic environmental shifts constitute a primary cause.

These dramatic changes have generated numerous derivative problems. Publications such as Yunnan's *Life News*, Hebei's *Yanzhao Metropolis Daily*, and Shanxi's *Sanjin Metropolis Daily* have all experienced employee wage disputes. Unresolved issues and persistent difficulties, compounded by increasingly fierce competition from diverse new media, have forced numerous newspapers to cease publication or merge. According to incomplete statistics, since 2014, over one hundred newspapers have closed or consolidated, including historically significant titles like *News Evening Post* and *Essay Newspaper*, as well as more recent casualties such as *Jiujiang Morning News* and *Beijing Times*, all unable to adapt to intense market competition.

2. Microfilm Industry as a Transformation Pathway for Print Media

Given the absence of any near-term stabilization in this downward trend, traditional media outlets have pursued various transformation strategies. Shandong's mass media group adopted an approach of "property rights linkage, interest connection, administrative promotion, and cultural integration" to consolidate municipal party newspapers across the province, using Qilu Media and Peninsula Media as platforms to advance cross-regional mergers and reorganizations. This resource optimization significantly improved partner newspapers' quality and economic performance.

In central China's Henan province, the Zhengzhou Media Group proposed a development strategy of "multi-channel publicity and diversified development," optimizing a diversified industrial chain with cultural creative industries as the breakthrough point. This approach facilitated the implementation of cultural creativity, policies, and projects while expanding development space and quality through capital markets. The group focused on developing internet finance and cultural film/television sectors, with major productions such as *The Origins of Chinese Surnames* and the anti-corruption warning film *The Number One Case* demonstrating initial social and economic benefits.

In Jiangxi province, the *Information Daily*, with over three decades of history, entered the microfilm industry in 2014. By collaborating with professional technical teams and leveraging its promotional platforms and talent support, the newspaper produced microfilms for industries and municipal governments, achieving both social impact and economic returns. Its works *Lotus Heart* and *Choice* won four awards, including "Most Popular Online," in a provincial microfilm competition organized by the Jiangxi Provincial Propaganda Department. *Lotus Heart*, an anti-corruption themed production, also attracted attention from major online media outlets including the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection's official website, People's Daily Online, and China National Radio.

As microfilm's influence has grown, increasing numbers of traditional media outlets have entered this sector. Jiangxi Television established a dedicated microfilm studio, with multiple works winning awards in national competitions. Print media including *China Youth Daily*, *Henan Business Daily*, and *Tonight News* have all leveraged microfilm production, distribution, and competition sponsorship as cross-industry transformation strategies, capitalizing on this mobile-era phenomenon.

Utilizing traditional media advantages for microfilm industry transformation yields significant results. Mainstream media's brand credibility, substantial and loyal readership, and promotional capabilities constitute the microfilm industry's most competitive strengths.

Conversely, the microfilm industry, as an emerging art form characterized by

short duration, rapid development, grassroots creative teams, and fast-food-style productions, exhibits a sluggish industrialization process. Many so-called microfilm creative teams are merely advertising agencies or photography studios that rebrand their commercial video production as microfilm without incorporating essential cinematic elements such as thematic depth, narrative structure, cinematography, or film techniques. This excessive commercialization, which devalues artistic and research qualities, has led to arbitrary production methods and prevented the formation of a sustainable industrial structure.

3. Recommendations for Integrated Transformation

To fully manifest traditional media's transformation needs within the microfilm industry, we propose three strategic approaches—media voice, media participation, and media guidance—to facilitate microfilm industrialization while providing a replicable pathway for traditional media transformation.

First, **media voice**: Establish microfilm creative industry bases. Leveraging key local ecological civilization construction initiatives, media outlets should advocate for and develop “microfilm creative industry cities” encompassing the entire industrial chain from creative planning and platform design to production and distribution. These bases would serve as important vehicles for local cultural prosperity by organically integrating with regional tourism and culture.

Second, **media participation**: Implement microfilm industry support and youth talent training programs. Adopting a crowdfunding model involving relevant departments, enterprises, and individuals, establish an innovative microfilm industry support fund—“Micro Fund”—to support both the industry and its practitioners. Through stable financial returns, this fund would provide capital and environmental support for microfilm industry incubation and talent development. Regular microfilm art festivals and industry development summits would facilitate commercial exchanges covering technological transformation, technological application, and creative design of microfilm derivatives. Traditional media's inherent talent advantages and credibility position it as a rule-maker and driver for industry development.

Third, **media guidance**: Construct full-media communication platforms. A full-media platform represents a comprehensive microfilm dissemination system integrating traditional media, new media, and terminal carriers. Through information integration of various resources and interconnectivity among the three systems, this approach creatively establishes an O2O operational model for the microfilm industry, encompassing both traditional media convergence and new media linkage.

Currently, traditional media development has become a significant component of China's cultural advancement, while the microfilm industry requires industrial upgrading. These two sectors possess inherent integration foundations: they struggle separately but thrive together.

Furthermore, integrating emerging media with microfilm is essential for traditional media's transformation. This can be implemented at three levels: (1) Collaborate with mainstream video platforms such as Youku, Xunlei, and Tencent to become major content providers through quality and volume, generating revenue through click-sharing and recommended purchases while achieving national influence. (2) Develop a professional "Microfilm Industry Network" website as an authoritative industry platform for work distribution, industry cooperation, and crowdfunding-based public participation. (3) Actively develop mobile APP clients to create interactive, low-data-consumption mobile communities that transform text reading into video consumption during high mobile-usage scenarios such as commuting.

4. Conclusion

After decades of rapid development, traditional media in the mobile internet era faces multiple challenges and severe difficulties. Only through continuous reform, industrial adjustment, and full organic integration with new communication media such as microfilm can traditional media achieve mutual benefit, co-development, and shared survival.

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

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