

Development of Paper Media in the Age of Media Convergence: Taking China's Newspaper Industry as an Example

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Abstract: *The all-round integration of the media and the vigorous development of new media have made the traditional media industry represented by paper media face unprecedented challenges. This article combines the development trend of the global media industry and the China's media environment to analyze the survival status of China's newspaper industry and make recommendations for its development.*

Keywords: *Paper media; Media convergence; Newspaper industry*

1. Introduction

At present, the era of paper media has passed, and the emergence of new media has impacted the paper media industry. Today, with the rapid development of Internet technology, new media has become the communication tool of people's daily life and work, and also the main medium of various information dissemination. The paper media industry is gradually declining, and more and more paper media companies are facing the risk of bankruptcy.

The influence and communication ability of paper media gradually showed a downward trend, and the closure of paper media has become one of the signs of the development crisis of traditional media [1]. In 2008, *The Yomiuri Weekly* under *The Yomiuri Shimbun* in Japan announced that it had ceased publication due to the decline in circulation. In order to cut costs, *The Wall Street Journal* stopped publishing Asian and European print editions in October 2017. In China, the publication of newspapers is also facing severe challenges.

It can be seen that the paper media industry around the world is facing severe challenges. This paper analyzes the generation and development process of paper media, and discusses the survival status and challenges faced by the paper media industry under the background of the vigorous development of new media platforms, and then puts forward feasible suggestions for the future development direction of the traditional paper media industry according to the current development of paper media and new media in China.

2. The status quo of China's newspaper industry

Since 1994, the Printing Committee of China Newspaper Association has been conducting nationwide statistical work on the printing volume of newspapers. The total print volume of newspapers nationwide increased from 31 billion to 167.8 billion at the peak in 2011, during which the average annual growth rate from 1997 to 2004 reached double digits [2]. After 2005, the rapid growth of the total print volume of newspapers came to an end, and there were fluctuations. Since 2012, the total print volume has declined for nine consecutive years.

Compared with new media, newspapers are subject to deadlines and publications, and cannot provide the timely reports and information corrections. Timeliness is far less than new media, which can be released and updated in a timely manner. Especially after social media is involved in traditional media, all users can become "journalists" to release "news", reducing the threshold for news editing and publishing. For example, social media such as Weibo and WeChat use the characteristics of mass communication and interpersonal communication to seize the traditional media's voice. In the past, the newspaper industry pursued circulation, and the larger the circulation, the stronger the profitability. After the advent of the new media era, the distribution scale of newspapers was gradually covered by network

communication channels [3].

At the same time, new media is more communicative and interactive than the newspaper when it comes to news reporting. Readers can upload their opinions and opinions about the news and interact with other readers. The audience's media contact time for paper media is decreasing year by year, the audience's reading mode is gradually shifting from paper media to new media, and the fragmented reading habits make the audience more inclined to obtain fragmented information in social media such as Weibo and WeChat, instead of spending a relatively long time reading newspaper.

Moreover, the cost of operating in traditional newspapers is relatively high compared to the UGC production platform represented by YouTube. In the context of the gradual decline in the circulation of newspapers, it is undoubtedly worse.

3. The development advantage of newspapers in China

However, newspapers still have the advantage that new media cannot replace. In the new media era, although everyone can become a journalist, most netizens simply record the people and things around them, lacking the professionalism and depth of professional journalists when they report on news. Therefore, the reportable topic that can be carried out has limitations. In terms of the authenticity of the news, although the Internet has a large number of news reports, the new media, especially the online media, lacks supervision of professional ethics and professional norms, so the authenticity of the reports cannot be compared with newspapers [4].

In China, all news media, including paper media, are party media, "the mouthpiece of the party and the government," and have a special status and role of subsistence. Although some urban newspapers will stop publications with the development and changes of the media, some mainstream newspapers such as the party newspaper will never die in a certain period of time. In the political context of China, no new media can replace the status of the party newspaper.

4. Advice for China's newspaper industry

Faced with the rapid development momentum of new media and the changes in the way news is disseminated, the transformation of paper media is imperative [5]. *People's Daily* has been redesigned since January 1, 2019, and has been color-printed. On weekdays it has been adjusted from 24 to 20 editions, and on weekends it has been adjusted from 12 to 8 editions. The revision of *People's Daily* is an important adjustment of China's most authoritative newspapers in the face of new trends in media development, as well as an important signal for the transformation of Chinese newspapers. The more streamlined layout and all-color printing are more suitable for the current readers' fragmented reading habits and higher reading needs.

In addition to the changes in the layout, newspapers should also take advantage of the paper media in the process of selecting topics. In China, online media has limited access to news, and at the same time, the journalist team is not professional enough. Many online media sources are still sourced from traditional media such as paper media. Therefore, the paper media should continue to grasp the initiative in producing content, dig deep into the truth of the news and report [7].

Urban newspapers should strive for exclusive news coverage. For example, when *Qianjiang Evening News* reported the "Wenzhou Girl Was Killed by a Didi Carpooling Driver", it published five editorials. From different dimensions, it put forward professional and operational suggestions on "how to build a network car appointment security system", which showed its attitude and views [6].

The discourse system of news reports should also be appropriately transformed in conjunction with the advantages of social media reporting. For example, in the process of Xinhua News Agency's "Jade Rabbit Lunar Rover" reporting, it takes lunar rover as the first perspective and uses diary-style to write news releases, breaking people's stereotyped impression that Xinhua News Agency's newsletter is solemn and in a high rack, and making readers more interested in reading [10].

For the reference of social media reporting discourse, while improving readability, it can avoid some of the "post-truth" problems that exist in social media. Unlike social media, which uses individuals as communication nodes and social networks as communication channels, [8] the professional news production of newspaper practitioners ensures the authenticity of news, while the relatively one-way mode of communication avoids the possibility that people can override personal feelings and positions

and infiltrate facts into factual statements. Although it cannot be completely returned to the era of traditional media, paper media has an irreplaceable advantage in the report of "close to the truth" [9].

The establishment of a new media matrix by traditional media is one of the means to increase the influence of communication [3]. Launching a news application based on the newspaper, and establish an official Weibo account and a WeChat public account. Develop corresponding content push, according to the reading habits of different types of audiences on different platforms. The content on each platform is transformed into a new media product that is formally separated from the newspaper but whose content relies on the newspaper. Utilize the advantages of strong timeliness and wide dissemination of new media to promote themselves, preheat reports for news report, and create more powerful media influence than single-format paper media. In the past, the news production of paper media was centered on newspapers, and now news production must be centered on the mobile side.

Commercial media represented by paper media often derives profits from advertising and readers. With the diversion of advertising by Internet platforms, especially social networking platforms, the profitability of the media is more dependent on readers. In 2018, a number of well-known media such as *Wired*, *The Atlantic*, and Bloomberg launched a paid subscription system, and the Chinese newspaper *Southern Weekly* also launched a paid membership system in August. Digiday also called the global media's paid subscription trend "pivot to paid" [10].

Therefore, the "paid subscription system" will also become an important means for paper media to profit from the new media platform [11]. The jumbled information on the network platform makes it impossible for users to quickly obtain high-quality news reports and content. The paper media reporting team can guarantee high-level content push during the content distribution process in the network platform, creating an effective and wide-ranging content distribution channel [12]. Readers who are plagued by false news and spam are increasingly willing to pay for premium content. However, it is worth noting that as more and more media shifts to the payment model, the standard for readers to choose a paid media platform will also become higher and higher. Therefore, in the process of profit model innovation, the quality of the content should still be put in the first place.

5. Conclusion

The reason for the suspension of publications in some industry newspapers is not necessarily due to economic factors, but most of the reasons for the suspension of publications in urban newspapers and subway newspapers are mainly due to optimization of economic and structural factors. The suspension of the publication of newspapers is only an inevitable act of the recession of the industry, and it is also the market's abandonment of newspapers published for blind expansion [13].

Whether in terms of form or content, paper media is a media that pursues eternity compared to other medias. Today, with new media and digital media prevailing, only products that have been deeply processed and incorporate more innovative ideas and values have vitality. The vitality of the media in the information age is determined by the quality of the news and the level of communication, without being tied to communication tools.

In fact, the media is the product of a combination of content and channels. While media practitioners produce specific content, they are building their own channels—a specific audience. The long-term audience of newspapers has a high demand for information that is difficult to satisfy in other media channels [14]. Therefore, in the process of media integration and media change, paper media should grasp its own advantages, strengthen brand awareness, and explore a more suitable way for the development of paper media.

To sum up, even in the environment of the rise of new media platforms, paper media still has great hope for survival. New media are not necessarily competitors of paper media, but also partners. If the paper media industry wants to achieve long-term development, it must formulate a scientific sustainable development strategy according to the current social development trend, constantly enrich the communication content and form, shape the brand image, and meet the needs of the current social audience. In other words, with the rapid development of Internet technology today, paper media can not only maintain the traditional industry model, but also develop online platforms to spread in the form of electronic versions, so as to adapt the development of paper media to the development of the current society.

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