

Media Convergence and Media Persistence from the Perspective of Structural Functionalism

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Abstract

The Internet has brought revolutionary changes to our lives. Media convergence and media deconvergence are the hot issues in the research field at present. There are both fusion and conflict between the media. The structure determines the function, the function is the reason for the existence of the structure. If the Internet can not achieve the functions of the traditional media in the short term, then the media convergence can not be realized in the short term. Newspapers are suitable for communication theory with a strong depth of information. The dissemination of paper newspapers does not need special reading terminal equipment. Compared with the network media, newspapers have a strong convenience in this point. The sound propagation characteristics of broadcasting make it occupy a certain advantage in a specific communication scenario, which is an advantage that it keeps firmly in the media. Television is a "hypsokinesis" media, the PC Internet is a "forward leaning" media, television is more comfortable and easy to operate, which is a favorable factor for the television media to adhere to. But with the rapid development of the low media, the advantage of TV will also face greater challenges.

Keywords

Structural functionalism, media integration, and media adherence.

1. Introduction

On April 20, 1994, China officially joined the Internet international family. [1] Although the development of the Internet in China is not long, it has brought great changes to our way of life. One year in the information society is equivalent to five years in the traditional industrial society. 1998 was the first year of Internet popularization in China. The three major portals represented by Sina, Netease and Sohu have made Chinese Internet users feel the great charm of the Internet. 2005 was the first year of blogging in China, where self media emerged and achieved the transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. From one-way information dissemination to two-way information exchange and communication. 2009 was the first year of Weibo in China, and social media gradually took shape. 2011 was the first year of WeChat in China. WeChat has achieved the precipitation of people's relationships and become the largest application at the national level. Subsequently, hot phenomena such as the "Hundred Group Battle" on group buying websites emerged. 2015 is the first year of Internet finance, and people's payment habits have changed dramatically. 2016 was the first year of online live streaming in China. In the trend of online live streaming, platforms such as YY Live, Panda Live, Douyu Live, and Sichuan Pepper Live have launched a "hundred broadcast war" where you sing and I appear. 2017 is the first year of China's sharing economy, with innovative forms of sharing economy such as shared bicycles, shared power banks, and shared umbrellas constantly emerging. Although the development trend has declined recently, it still deeply affects people's daily lives. 2018 is the first year of mobile short video in China. Mobile short video, represented by Tiktok, has a particularly rapid development trend. Algorithm push has revolutionized the information dissemination on the Internet. 2019 is the first year of 5G in China, and the change from 4G to

5G is not only an improvement in transmission speed, but also a revolutionary change in communication methods. In 2024, the China Internet Conference released the China Internet Development Report (2024). The deployment of new network infrastructure represented by 6G and satellite Internet will be accelerated. The implementation of "AI+" action and the rapid development of multimodal large models will promote the accelerated expansion of application scenarios of new generation AI technology. The core role of algorithms, computing power, and data will become more prominent. With the development of mobile Internet, mobile Internet media represented by mobile phones enable us to meet our various information needs anytime, anywhere. It is an all-weather media. Users make full use of their fragmented time to use this media. Mobile Internet has brought great information convenience to people's lives.

Mobile Internet has changed the connotation of the traditional media term "audience". With the development of self media, netizens can not only actively and selectively receive information, but also actively spread the information they have mastered. Can such netizens still be called "audiences"? In the dissemination mode of user generated content, they are both recipients and disseminators of information, which conforms to the concept of "producers and consumers" proposed by Toffler. 'Producer consumer' refers to the integration of producers and consumers, and we can regard netizens in the era of self media as typical representatives of 'producer consumer'. The dominant producers and consumers in the first wave have returned to the center of economic activity in the third wave. [2] The development of computer network technology is an important aspect of what Toffler referred to as the third wave.

Through the above analysis, we can see that the Internet has brought revolutionary changes to our lives. The emergence of the Internet is not only a change in information transmission channels, but also marks the arrival of a new era. As Ennis said: "The advantages of a new medium will lead to a new civilization." [3] It can be seen that the role and influence of the Internet is huge. In this context, media convergence has become the current trend in the development of the media industry. Negroponte first proposed the concept of media convergence, [4] stating that "the rapid development of personal computers has made future television, which adopts an open architecture, equivalent to a computer." [5] Negroponte's discourse depicts the prospects of media convergence for us. Meng Jian pointed out that media integration is the core driving force behind the formation of a "media society". [6] Some people even say that media convergence is a euphemism for the Internet to replace traditional media and traditional media to die. This statement is an analysis and judgment of media convergence from a futurist perspective, but in the short term, this situation will not immediately become a reality.

Merton, the master of structural functionalism, once said: "Any attempt to eliminate the existing social structure without providing an appropriate replacement structure to realize the functions originally realized by the abolished organization is doomed to failure." [7] The function is the reason for the existence of the structure. If the Internet cannot realize the functions of traditional media in. At the same time, we must also be aware that in addition to the aspect of media convergence, there is also the aspect of media anti convergence. Because both traditional media and the Internet belong to mass media, they have many similar common characteristics and appeal for influence. Traditional media will not sit idly by and let the Internet embezzle their own territory, which is an important reason for the existence of media conflicts. Turgan pointed out that the closer the functions are and the more touchpoints they have, the more likely they are to conflict. [8] So there are both fusion and anti fusion between media, so next we need to discuss how traditional media can use their own characteristics to achieve adherence in media fusion.

2. Organization of the Text

2.1. **Newspaper media is suitable for disseminating information with theoretical depth. Although many paper editions of evening newspapers and urban newspapers face the fate of suspension or closure, daily newspapers, as party media with the function of ears, eyes, and tongue, still have the necessity to exist.**

Print media represented by newspapers allow readers to read repeatedly and have ample time to understand the deeper meaning of information. Traditional radio and television, due to their linear transmission and fleeting limitations, do not have enough time for listeners and viewers to receive content with strong theoretical depth. Therefore, in people's minds, the information depth of radio and television media is not high, while paper media has high theoretical depth. Traditional print media institutions have a profound historical accumulation and have attracted a large number of high-level and high-quality media professionals with their institutional advantages. Famous commentators like Cao Lin from China Youth Daily all come from print media. News organizations not only need to disseminate simple news information, but also need to spread in-depth news commentary, vivid descriptions of details, and complete plot communication. In this regard, print media has its own advantages. Many commentators of traditional paper media set up various official account and comment columns on the new media, which were warmly welcomed by netizens. These reflect the talent advantages of traditional paper media.

Radio or mobile internet media such as mobile phones, lithographic computers and other terminal devices are needed for the transmission of broadcast information. TV or mobile internet media such as mobile phones, lithographic computers and other terminal devices are needed for television, and computers, mobile phones and other terminal devices are needed for the Internet. This makes newspapers have less restrictions and limitations in information transmission. Readers buy newspaper information as well as newspaper "reading equipment" (newsprint printed with words). As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, mobile internet media, represented by mobile phones, has fulfilled the requirement for people to access information 24/7. But we also need to recognize that this feature is built on the reliable operation of the "mobile phone" as a reading device, but the standby time of smartphones is a major issue that cannot be ignored. In addition, there are many problems such as whether the phone has a signal. If there is a problem with the reading equipment, it will directly affect the spread of mobile Internet information, but newspapers do not have the above problems. The paper-based nature of newspapers gives them the characteristics of portability and flexible reading time selection. Above, we have only discussed the limitations of mobile phones as a carrier. As for the inconvenience of carrying devices such as computers and televisions, it is even more obvious. Although the emergence of tablets and LCD TVs has made them very lightweight, LCD TVs are obviously not practical for carrying around. At the same time, they cannot achieve the simultaneous purchase of information and carriers like newspapers. As for the characteristics of a radio, it is similar to the convenience of carrying a mobile phone, but there is also a problem of not being able to purchase both information and equipment at the same time. Paper newspapers do not have the above-mentioned issues.

From the current situation, the circulation of paper newspapers is showing a downward trend year by year, and a large number of paper newspapers have ceased publication. The author has conducted in-depth interviews with personnel from print media institutions, and the biggest feeling is that paper media practitioners have a particularly strong sense of crisis. They are searching for new information release windows through various means, but this process faces many difficulties. The attempt of print media and electronic newspapers reflects the integration of business forms, markets, carriers, and institutions. [9] Some information published in print

media may be reprinted by portal websites, which can increase the influence of print media information. However, some portal websites have to charge partial fees to print media for reprinting print media information, which increases the operating cost burden of print media. Some paper media set up an official account on WeChat to optimize the information collected and edited by newspapers and publish it on the official account of WeChat. The effect of information dissemination is much better than that of pure paper dissemination. However, in this process, the advertising revenue of paper media will be affected, because the advertising content published on the official account will be limited by the WeChat platform, which will directly affect the advertising revenue of the WeChat platform itself. The solution to this problem is for print media to build and promote their own news clients, publishing advertising information on their own news clients. However, it is also very difficult and costly for media to build their own news clients. All of these indicate that in the process of media convergence, print media faces enormous challenges. Only by fully leveraging its own advantages can it achieve media persistence in the process of media convergence.

In the face of the impact of the Internet, traditional newspapers and periodicals should adhere to the concept of content as the king and enhance their core competitiveness through content innovation. Firstly, traditional newspapers and magazines should fully leverage their advantages in in-depth reporting, investigative reporting, and commentary, providing content with depth, ideas, and insights to meet readers' demands for high-quality news. Secondly, traditional newspapers and magazines should focus on localization and specialization, deeply cultivate local news, provide unique perspectives and content, and enhance reader stickiness. Finally, traditional newspapers and magazines should strengthen the utilization of user-generated content, encourage readers to participate in content production, and improve the diversity and interactivity of content. Traditional newspapers and magazines should establish their own websites and mobile clients to achieve digital and networked dissemination of content. Social media platforms, such as Weibo, WeChat, Tiktok, etc., should be actively used to expand the dissemination scope and influence of content. We should explore cooperation with other media, such as television stations, radio stations, online media, etc., to achieve resource sharing and complementary advantages.

Technology empowerment is an important means for traditional newspapers and periodicals to deal with Internet challenges. Traditional newspapers and magazines should actively utilize new technologies to improve production efficiency and quality. Firstly, traditional newspapers and magazines should utilize big data and artificial intelligence technology to achieve intelligent production and personalized recommendations of content, improving the production efficiency and dissemination effect of content. Secondly, traditional newspapers and magazines should utilize technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality to innovate their reporting forms and enhance readers' reading experience. Finally, traditional newspapers and magazines should strengthen technology research and application, build independent and controllable technology platforms, and improve their technical support capabilities.

The transformation of business model is the key for traditional newspapers and periodicals to meet the challenge of the Internet. Traditional newspapers and magazines should actively explore new business models to achieve sustainable development. Firstly, traditional newspapers and magazines should strengthen the development of paid content, attracting readers to subscribe by providing high-quality, exclusive, and in-depth content. Secondly, traditional newspapers and magazines should explore diversified sources of income, such as organizing offline events, providing consulting services, developing derivative products, etc., to reduce their dependence on advertising revenue. Finally, traditional newspapers and periodicals should strengthen cooperation with Internet enterprises and explore new business models, such as content payment sharing, joint advertising, etc., to achieve mutual benefit and win-win results.

Internet convergence has brought great challenges to traditional newspapers and periodicals, but it has also provided new opportunities for their transformation and development. Traditional newspapers and periodicals should actively respond to the challenge of Internet integration, enhance core competitiveness through content innovation, improve production efficiency through technology empowerment, and achieve sustainable development through business model transformation. Only in this way can traditional newspapers and periodicals maintain their competitiveness in the Internet era and achieve transformation, upgrading and sustainable development.

2.2. The sound propagation characteristics of broadcasting give it a certain advantage in specific communication scenarios, which can be used to achieve persistence in media convergence.

On November 2, 1920, KDKA radio station in Pittsburgh, USA began broadcasting. The academic community generally believes that this is the earliest radio station in the world. [10] The emergence of broadcasting has revolutionized the means of mass media from text to sound, breaking the monopoly of newspapers and achieving auditory communication in mass media. The radio drama 'Mars Attack on Earth' caused significant panic among the American public solely through sound as a means of communication. Of course, this is also due to the historical context in which the United States is facing the threat of German fascist war. But we should also recognize that auditory broadcasting brings visual imagination, a truly immersive feeling. During World War II, broadcasting played a huge role. Merrow's "Here's London" program brought the voice of the German Air Force's air attack on London to the ears of the American audience, so that Americans really felt the cruelty of the war. These examples are all manifestations of the characteristics of broadcasting sound propagation.

The sound signal transmitted by broadcasting only occupies human hearing during reception, with a small proportion of sensory occupancy, while other organs of the human body can also engage in other activities such as physical labor, household chores, driving, walking, etc. [11] After the emergence of television, people believed that broadcasting would disappear because television had obvious communication advantages compared to radio: broadcasting only had sound, while television used both audio and video, which was rich, intuitive, vivid and realistic. But the reality is that broadcasting did not disappear after the emergence of television. For example, people often listen to the radio while driving because watching TV while driving is a traffic violation. At this point, the characteristic of broadcasting relying solely on sound transmission has become its own advantage.

For some special groups such as blind friends, the sound propagation characteristics of radios can perfectly meet their auditory reception needs due to visual impairments. There are many inconveniences for blind friends when they go online, but the radio is easy to operate, with fewer buttons and can be touched, so it is very popular among blind friends. For the elderly population, they have a habit of morning exercise because they have relatively short sleep time and are accustomed to waking up early. During morning exercise, the radio is a great choice to increase the fun of morning exercise. For the elderly population, many of them are more fond of radio, the "old media" that has accompanied them for many years.

More and more listeners are choosing to listen to radio through mobile apps, such as Himalaya and Dragonfly FM, which are popular among netizens. This type of broadcasting mobile software can overcome the shortcomings of traditional broadcasting linear propagation and transience, and can not only leverage the advantages of broadcasting pure sound propagation, but also overcome its own shortcomings. From this perspective, we can conclude that the disappearance of radio does not necessarily mean the demise of broadcasting. The content production carried out by traditional broadcasting institutions still has strong vitality. Mobile phones are a type of 24/7 media, and carrying them with people is like carrying a radio. Not

only can they listen to broadcasts anytime through radio apps, but they can also selectively listen back. From this perspective, the influence of broadcasting has been further enhanced.

Overall, broadcast media has unique advantages: firstly, the advantage of audio dissemination. In today's era of visual information overload, the pure audio transmission method of broadcasting media has become an advantage, providing audiences with an easy and convenient information acquisition experience. The accompanying nature and low interference of audio content make it an ideal choice for multitasking scenarios. Secondly, the advantage of low-cost production. Compared to video content, audio content has lower production costs, which gives broadcast media greater flexibility and sustainability in content production. Broadcast media can quickly respond to hot events, produce high-quality audio content, and meet the audience's instant information needs. Again, the advantage of mobile listening. With the popularity of smart phones and mobile Internet, broadcast media can better meet the audience's mobile listening needs and expand the communication scene. The development of mobile applications enables broadcast media to break through the limitations of traditional radios and achieve a listening experience anytime, anywhere. Finally, broadcast media has unique advantages in car scenarios. With the development of intelligent connected vehicles, in car broadcasting will become an important channel for information dissemination. Broadcast media can develop customized content for in car scenarios, such as real-time road conditions and in car entertainment, to enhance the driving experience.

In the context of media convergence, broadcasting media should adopt the following strategies to achieve innovative development: firstly, strengthen content innovation and develop audio products that are suitable for all media communication. Broadcast media should fully utilize the advantages of audio communication, develop new audio content such as podcasts and audiobooks, and meet the diverse needs of audiences. Secondly, deepen the application of technology and enhance the level of intelligence. Broadcast media should actively apply technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data to achieve intelligent and personalized content production, improve operational efficiency and user experience. Once again, expand communication channels and build a multimedia communication matrix. Broadcast media should actively participate in major audio platforms and social media, expand the scope of content dissemination, and enhance brand influence. Finally, strengthen talent cultivation and build a composite talent team. Broadcast media should focus on cultivating composite talents who are proficient in both traditional broadcasting and new media, providing talent support for innovative development.

2.3. TV is a kind of "backward" media, while PC Internet is a kind of "forward" media. TV viewing status is comfortable and the operation mode is simple. However, with the rapid development of mobile Internet, a "lying down" media, this advantage of TV will also face greater challenges.

On November 2, 1936, the BBC established a television program at the Alexandra Palace in London, which is generally regarded as the world's first officially broadcasted television program. [12] After its emergence, television has shown broad development prospects with its advantages in both audio and video communication. Although the popularity of television was affected by the outbreak of World War II, it experienced rapid development in the 1950s and 1960s. At that time, television entered ordinary American households. Even the US presidential election can be influenced by television media, for example, when Nixon and Kennedy ran for president, Nixon lost a lot of points due to his inferior screen image compared to Kennedy. In 1958, Beijing Television, the predecessor of China's first television station, Central Television, was officially established, pioneering the history of television in China. The position of television as the primary media remains unshakable to this day.

Television is a type of "back up" media, which refers to people leaning against the backrest of a sofa or chair while watching TV. The body is relatively relaxed, and it is a way to relax after work. In addition, the remote control of the television is easy to operate, making watching TV a very relaxed and enjoyable process for people. PC Internet is a kind of "forward leaning" media, which means that people should lean forward when surfing the Internet, operate the mouse and keyboard, and concentrate on their mental state. During the process of surfing the internet, I only found spiritual satisfaction, but did not experience significant physical relaxation. We can put it simply: the more you watch TV, the more comfortable it becomes, and the more you go online, the more tired it becomes. Some people may point out that if the main purpose of surfing the internet is to watch videos, then during the process of watching videos, isn't it also possible to adopt a "back up" posture? This statement has some truth, but the "backward" state of watching videos online is only one of the various states in which netizens receive Internet information. When netizens express their opinions and read news, most of the time they still adopt a "forward leaning" approach. In addition, before netizens adopt the "back up" state to watch videos, they need to do some preliminary preparation work, such as searching for videos. When doing these tasks, most netizens still use the "forward leaning" method. So we call TV a "backward" media and the Internet a "forward" media. The advantages of television in terms of viewing comfort and ease of operation have become important factors in its adherence to media convergence.

In addition, TV is better than the Internet in ease of operation and video consistency. The operation of the television can be completed with a simple remote control, and there are generally no unexpected situations such as interruptions during the program playback process. While the Internet may be affected by computer performance, network speed, bandwidth, video website server and other factors when playing video. Video buffering and program interruption often occur, which will affect the viewing effect and information receiving quality. From this perspective, the stability of video programs on the Internet is not as high as that of TV programs. When using the mobile Internet, such as mobile phones, to surf the Internet, netizens can lean on the sofa or even lie in bed. Mobile Internet media is a kind of "lying flat" media. This avoids the disadvantage of getting tired as you go online. With the popularization of 4G technology, the spread of video content on the mobile Internet has broken through the network speed limit. With the gradual recovery of the promotion cost of 4G technology by communication operators, the traffic tariff has been gradually lowered, and the unlimited traffic tariff package has been continuously launched. The traffic limit of video viewing is gradually broken, and netizens' watching video through the mobile Internet has increasingly become the main channel for them to receive video information. Mobile internet media, represented by mobile phones, is increasingly approaching the comfort level of traditional televisions in terms of viewing comfort. The advantages of TV in viewing experience comfort face challenges from mobile Internet.

Overall, the advantages of television media mainly include the following aspects: firstly, the advantage of large screen experience. In today's era of widespread mobile devices, the large screen experience of television has become a scarce resource, providing viewers with immersive audiovisual enjoyment. Next is the advantage of professional content production. Compared with the massive UGC content on the Internet, the professional production ability of TV media can ensure the quality and depth of content and meet the audience's demand for high-quality content. Again, the advantages of live streaming interaction. TV media has rich experience in live broadcast of large-scale activities, sports events and other events. Combining Internet technology, it can achieve richer interactive experience. Finally, the advantage of family sharing. Television media remains the center of home entertainment, promoting interaction and sharing among family members that cannot be replaced by personalized mobile devices.

Faced with the impact of Internet convergence, TV media should adopt the following development strategies: first, strengthen content innovation and enhance core competitiveness. Television media should fully utilize the advantages of professional production and develop high-quality content that is suitable for all media dissemination, such as documentaries, variety shows, TV dramas, etc. At the same time, attention should be paid to the differentiation and uniqueness of content, and IP with unique value should be created. Secondly, deepen the application of technology and promote intelligent transformation. Television media should actively apply technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, and 4K/8K ultra high definition to improve content production efficiency and quality. At the same time, an intelligent recommendation system should be developed to provide personalized content services to the audience. Once again, expand communication channels and build a multimedia communication matrix. Television media should actively enter major video platforms and social media to expand the scope of content dissemination. At the same time, we should develop our own mobile client to achieve multi screen interaction and cross screen dissemination.

Finally, innovate business models to achieve diversified income. Television media should explore new business models, such as pay per view, membership services, and content copyright sales, to reduce dependence on traditional advertising revenue. At the same time, cooperation with Internet enterprises should be strengthened to develop new profit models.

In practice, many TV media have begun to explore the integration with the Internet. For example, CCTV has launched the "CCTV Video" client, which enables the mobile dissemination of television programs; Hunan Satellite TV has realized the deep integration of traditional TV content and the Internet through the Mango TV platform; BBC has developed the iPlayer platform to provide personalized on-demand services for viewers. These successful cases provide valuable experience for the Internet convergence of TV media.

3. Conclusion

From the above discussion, we can see that structure determines function, and function is the reason for the existence of structure. The integration of media at the levels of tools, business, and consciousness should follow this principle. [13] Newspaper media has institutional advantages, high personnel quality, good historical accumulation, is suitable for disseminating theoretical content, and paper newspapers are easy to read. These are all advantages of paper media. The characteristic of broadcasting relying solely on sound transmission gives it a propagation advantage in specific contexts, while broadcasting mobile software further overcomes the shortcomings of linear propagation and transience, giving new life to broadcasting. Comfortable viewing and easy operation of television are also one of its media advantages. Although media convergence is the trend, traditional media is not sitting idly by in this process. Instead, they can leverage their own communication advantages to achieve phased persistence in media convergence.

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