

A study on the impact of traditional print media on the growth of Generation Z

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Abstract. Since the birth of newspapers, the print media has occupied the discourse power of mainstream media for a long period of time, affecting the establishment of the thinking mode and cognitive formation of Generation Z. In the process of the growth of Generation Z, a series of media technologies and patterns have undergone major changes, including the Internet, new media and so on. In this case, the impact of print media and its impact on Generation Z need to be explored. This essay will discuss the influence of newspapers and other traditional paper media on the growth of Generation Z through the literature review of newspapers and other traditional paper media under the background of the new media era and the analysis of specific cases between Generation Z and paper media, compare and analyze the advantages and disadvantages of newspapers and new media in the Internet era, and forecast the possible media pattern in the future. At the same time, the innovative changes and developments made by newspapers under the circumstance that new media occupy most of the media market will also be listed and analyzed.

1 Introduction

With the rapid development of digital communication technology, the rise of new media poses a great challenge to traditional paper media. From the macro level, the media field is undergoing a transformation from traditional to digital. The speed, mode and influence of information transmission have all undergone profound changes. Specifically at the micro level, Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2009), as a generation closely connected with the Internet information era, its media contact habits and information access methods during growth have become a topic worthy studying in depth [1]. Generation Z has not only witnessed the decline of traditional media, but also actively participated in the rise of new media. Thus, their media usage habits, information access methods and ways of thinking have been profoundly affected by this transformation. This study aims to comprehensively analyze the development status of traditional paper media such as newspapers in the new media era and explore their impact on the formation of Generation Z's thinking mode and cognition. In theory, this essay can provide a new perspective for understanding the role of media by deeply exploring the influence of traditional paper media such as newspapers on the growth of Generation Z. In practice, it gives useful reference for the survival and development of

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traditional paper media such as newspapers in the digital age. This study will adopt a combination of research methods, including literature review, text analysis, case analysis and comparative analysis. Through extensive reference to relevant literature, this paper sorts out the development context and research results of traditional paper media such as newspapers in the new media era, providing theoretical support for this study. A representative 'little kids journalist' project case is selected to analyze the connection between Generation Z and newspapers. Comparative analysis is also used to compare the advantages and disadvantages of newspapers and new media in terms of communication power, influence and audience acceptance, so as to provide basis for predicting the future development trend of newspapers. This paper, firstly, will discuss the traditional media contact habits of Generation Z, especially their exposure and cognition of newspapers. On this basis, the paper will further analyze the influence of newspapers on the growth of Generation Z, as well as the comparison of advantages and disadvantages between newspapers and new media. Finally, the current trend of media development will be included to look into the future of newspapers, and also some corresponding countermeasures will be put forward.

2 Generation Z's exposure to traditional media

Traditional print media refers to the media form using paper as the media carrier, such as newspapers, magazines, and it has been playing a very important role in news communication since its rise in the 19th century [2]. Even in today's rapid development of new media, traditional paper media still have their own place, and also creatively use new science and technology to develop "new era paper media", such as napkins with printed QR code, visual integration of different paper media and so on. As one of the most important components of paper media, newspaper is the paper media that a large number of readers have been exposed to for a long time, and the development trend of newspaper is generally in line with the route of traditional print media [3]. Therefore, the following text will take newspaper as a typical example of traditional print media to further analyze the newspaper media contact habits of Generation Z and the influence that brought by newspaper during the transformation. The prospect of its possible future development direction will also be made.

2.1 The influence of newspapers on communication in the early 21st century

Although the concept of new media was put forward as early as 1967 by Goldmark, director of the Technology Research Institute of the American Television Network (CBS), since the newspaper appeared in the public field of vision as a media medium in the 1830s, its position of information authority has not been threatened for a long time, and it has always been the first choice for most people to get news [2]. At that time, the consumption level was low, people's income was limited, and radio and television needed radio, car or TV as a medium, which was not affordable for the general public. It can be said that reading newspapers is people's habit of obtaining information formed in that circumstance, which has the highest availability. So, when they have choices later, the newspaper is also in a relatively priority position. Many times, a headline on the newspaper or a piece of breaking news can trigger word of mouth, leading to a wider discussion and dissemination. Some small pages with special functions, such as recruitment, notice of looking for a thing, matchmaking and other contents, also provide numerous topics for people's conversation in their leisure time. From above, the influence of newspaper in people's life can be seen.

2.2 Newspaper media exposure of Generation Z

Newspapers have not been absent from Generation Z's infancy period. At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, Z generation was deeply influenced by their families when they were born [4]. They established the cognition of reading newspapers at an early age and realized that newspapers are a useful tool for acquiring news. Their familiarity and curiosity about newspapers were also cultivated early. In China, even in third - and fourth-tier cities, newsstands selling daily newspapers of major newspapers can be found at every few intersections; There are also free newspaper borrowing services in places for the public to handle various life businesses, such as bank halls, communication operators' business halls, etc. People waiting in line would always hold a copy of the latest newspaper, reading carefully, and learn the latest information. These "newspaper appearance" in all fields and corners continue to appear in the study and growth of Generation Z, so that newspapers can have a clearer understanding in their minds and establish a close relationship with them.

2.3 Case analysis of the 'little kids journalists' activity

Founded in 2003, the 'little kids journalists' activity launched by Nanjing Morning Post covered more than 80% of primary and secondary schools in Nanjing [5]. The original purpose of the project was to enrich the content of the newspaper, provide students with writing training for young journalists and publish their compositions, to provide readers with more diverse content choices. With the like and support of the majority of readers and parents, the activity for young children went further and further, such as participating the charity bazaar, conducting interviews with government officers and sports stars, and in 2008, the little reporter of Nanjing Morning Post even participated in the report of the provincial two sessions, which was the first time the kids reporters joint in Nanjing two sessions, and created a 'first time' in the history of Nanjing news [6]. This 'kids' reporter' boom soon spread to other newspaper presses, 'Yangtse Evening News', 'Jinling Evening News' and other little reporter projects continued to rise after the launch of their own kids reporter newspaper. For Generation Z, who are still students, it is a great honor to participate in the writing of newspaper news, publish their own articles, express their own understanding and opinions, and really do their part in the actual matter, which is a deep sense of accomplishment generated in their immature mind. Since they were young, they have seen many people reading newspapers and talking about news together. Newspapers are important social existence from where they stand. Being able to join the newspaper work and have their reports adopted not only affirms them, but also establishes the important existence significance of newspapers in their minds. It is also helpful to promote the development of newspaper industry and reduce the impact of new media on traditional media later.

3 Analysis of advantages of newspapers in the new media era

3.1 The definition of new media

New media is a form of media that provides information and entertainment services to users through the Internet, wireless communication network and other terminals by using digital technology and network technology. It includes social platforms such as WeChat and Weibo, social e-commerce platforms such as The Red, and short video platform like TikTok, all of which reflect the interactive, instantaneous and diverse characteristics of new media [1].

3.2 The advantages of newspapers compared with new media

Although the newspaper is inferior to the new media in the above aspects, it is undeniable that the newspaper still has its irreplaceable advantages. First of all, the layout and print of the newspaper can ensure that the word length of the article is enough to complete the in-depth analysis. Long-term newspaper reading has cultivated the thinking ability of Generation Z, which is incomparable to the short and small fragmented information on the Internet. New media articles are mainly characterized by brevity, low reading difficulty and short time, and the main content can be clarified at a glance. The whole content may only be about 200 words, and the long official account articles are about 2000 words. Taking the octet paper and 5-point font newspaper as an example, the word count of a page is 20,000 to 40,000 words, which means the number of words that can be allocated to a single article is far more than the new media, which is also the reason of the high authority and persuasion of traditional newspaper media contents in the long history of development [7]. Under this condition, readers can get a reading experience in newspapers that cannot be obtained in new media about issues that they concern more about, such as health care, medical care, education and other fields that need in-depth interpretation. Secondly, in the Internet era, most readers rely on mobile phones to a high degree, and because the screen size limits the amount of reading, "title party", marketing accounts, etc. make up titles that do not match the article content to attract users' attention, constantly consuming readers' reading interest and disposable time, which may lead to users' low reading interest in the long run. At the same time, there are many 'keyboard men' in online comments. Their malicious slander and groundless rumors may cause serious consequences of Internet violence when people blindly follow the crowd [8]. These are difficult to appear in the newspaper's environment and its content supervision. In addition, the commercialization of Internet content is becoming more and more obvious, and the possible phenomena such as implant advertising and invisible cargoes make the credibility of online media doubtful. On the contrary, the trust and identity of print media in the hearts of Generation Z has a long-term reputation accumulation, and this strong brand foundation is difficult to be ruined in the short term.

3.3 The disadvantages of newspapers compared with new media

After the rise of Internet technology, new media has shown a trend of vigorous development, which has brought great challenges to traditional print media in terms of expression form, time sensitive and interactivity. First of all, the Internet provides a rich variety of presentation and communication forms for information dissemination, and its content can carry text, images and sounds at the same time. The layout is not as simple as the newspaper, and there are latest creative designs, which can bring continuous freshness to users. In the traditional newspaper, Chinese characters occupy most of the page, and pictures just act as a subtle embellishment. Small font makes reading more difficult, and the great length is easy to produce visual fatigue. Second, in traditional reports, journalists need to collect news information first, search for clues, take photos on site, write text, and finally typeset and print. It can be seen that traditional newspapers have a certain lag, and the printing cycle of newspapers is long. Once a major emergency occurs, it is difficult to carry out efficient action in the first time, and readers cannot timely understand the relevant information through newspapers. However, when an event suddenly happens, the Internet can quickly expand its reach by only a few simple photos or lines of text uploaded by witnesses. This is also the third advantage of the Internet; news is no longer solely disseminated by the official [9]. That is to say, the interaction between users and the media has significantly changed and improved. In the past, newspapers were only responsible for conveying information to readers, expressing authority and rarely asking readers for their thoughts and feedback. Even if the

reader has relevant suggestions or opinions, the transmission cycle time is long, and the response rate is always low [3]. In the network environment of new media, freer content release, comments and forwarding greatly improve the interaction and feedback timeliness. The more users participate in and get their real experience, the higher their stickiness.

4 The prospect of newspapers from Generation Z

4.1 A new newspapers trend in the life of Generation Z

Generation Z was born in the era of rapid development of new media technology, and that is why they have witnessed the decline of newspaper media. They are also a group of people who have left traditional newspapers and rushed to more fashionable new media. Recently, however, newspapers have been making a comeback among this group. Overseas, in 2023, TikTok star Kelsey Russell gained the love of young people only by reading newspaper news and she has won 100,000 followers and more than 5 million likes [10]. Even though she is not a big fan of newspapers, she thinks young people will like them, and she hopes to gain more young readers who love news. As it turned out, she not only used the newspaper to make herself famous, but also to bring more attention to that media. In China, making a wedding announcement on the newspaper has become a new fashion for more and more young couples. This solemn and low-key act of publishing their wedding message in the local newspaper, which will be recorded in history forever, quickly caught on among Generation Z. This is less expensive than a wedding, more private than sharing on the social media account, grander than a verbal commitment. Actually, this action was practiced by new people early in 1930. Today the thing that it can again poke young people and become popular, also reflects the long-term vitality and potential development space of newspapers. Newspapers are sincere, nostalgic, romantic and characteristic, just like the innocence, freshness and uniqueness of Generation Z. The instant that newspaper is printed can bring them the sense of eternal promise. Its authority, public trust in all aspects has long been deeply rooted in the hearts of Generation Z.

4.2 The prospect of newspapers

The development and replacement of things is an inevitable law, and now the wave of new media has swept, which cannot be changed by the newspaper industry. The popularization of terminal network devices such as computers, Internet and smart phones have accelerated the progress and development of the media industry, and modern media has gradually achieved informatization and digitalization. It cannot be denied that most people have been accustomed to obtaining the latest information and current trend topics through new media channels such as short video platforms, official accounts and hot topics list, and there is fierce competition among different media [9]. However, today's newspapers have begun to innovate and change, striving to incorporate new development ideas and technologies while remaining consistent. 'Absorb the essence and reject the dross' is a traditional criterion of China, so is the development idea of the newspaper to learn from the new media. In the form of publication, many enterprises and local newspapers have launched online mobile phone newspapers and computer newspapers to make the integration of newspapers and networks. Some companies have also developed their own customized mobile applications to connect with their target audience [11]. At the same time, they have also established official accounts on major new media platforms, which not only provide users with electronic PDF versions of newspapers, but also derived other related content. Users can subscribe to various digital magazines and newspapers, participate in news comments and interactions, and enrich user

experience in many other ways. In terms of content, newspapers are authoritative and reliable, and new media are interactive and widely accessible. Therefore, newspapers in the new media era can make use of the convenience of the Internet to invite more professionals to conduct in-depth analysis and interpret news facts, so that readers can not only understand the surface phenomenon of news, but also recognize the essence and deep meaning of events. In terms of information acquisition, many users are now very fond of the ‘take in everything in a glance’ layout and concise typesetting of new media, unlike traditional newspapers, which are dense and full of words at a glance [7]. Therefore, referring to the characteristics of new media, the publication of paper media products the size of pocketbooks is one of the ways to attract such readers. At the same time, newspapers can learn from the bad habits brought by new media, such as ‘clickbait’, and use novel, eye-catching but not made-up headlines to attract readers' attention. In addition, in the case of information redundancy, people's requirements for its authenticity, credibility and content quality are gradually increasing [12]. The authenticity of a lot of information on the Internet needs to be confirmed, so the audience needs more information with news value, which is the advantage of newspapers. Such measures to maintain credibility, expand influence and make up for weaknesses are innovative developments made by newspapers under the background of the rapid occupation of the media market by new media. Therefore, even though new media are booming and win a large part of the media market, all the credibility attraction and innovative measures carried out gradually by traditional print media such as newspapers and their reader base, can help them continue to exist, and the future pattern of convergence media is now gradually taking shape.

5 Conclusion

Starting from the traditional print media, this essay analyzes the multiple scenarios and reading habits of Generation Z in contact with newspaper media. Through the successful ‘little kids’ reporter’ project, it reflects the connection between Generation Z and newspapers, as well as the diversified development direction and potential space of newspapers. The valuable thinking ability brought by the newspaper to the generation Z and its innovation efforts have enabled the newspaper to retain a place in the new media wave and become popular again among young people, which has already shown the prototype of the future media pattern. However, since Generation Z is still at a younger stage of life today, this paper does not use data to quantify their exposure to newspapers in early childhood and their personal achievements in adulthood, and there is no clear quantification of the correlation between the two. The outlook for the future media landscape is also based on the current market situation and user usage habits. Therefore, there is no guarantee that it will be achieved. Based on this, follow-up studies can set out to quantify the intensity of Generation Z's contact behavior with newspapers and examine whether there are more specific effects and commonalities over a longer period of time.

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