



Extended Abstract

Online News Outlets Or Online News Outweighed?

**– A comparative analysis on Huffington Post and The Paper
(Pengpai Xinwen)**

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Introduction

The emergence of new communication technologies inevitably raises questions about the extent to which existing media work will change as a result, and this is particularly true in the case of journalism, both for the news production and the news consumption (Deuze & Marjoribanks, 2009; Alqudsi-ghabra, Al-Bannai, T., & Al-Bahrani, 2011; Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2010). Different studies have been documented in discussing about whether online news will substitute or displace print newspapers (Ahlers, 2006; Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000; Gentzkow, 2007; Newell, Pilotta, & Thomas, 2008), whether the internet provides a platform through which networked individuals can form a “Fifth Estate” (Dutton, 2009; Baum & Groeling, 2008), and whether the media digitization has affected journalistic norms and practices (Deuze, 2003, 2005; Lewis, Kaufhold, & Lasorsa, 2010). However, most of these studies focused on the analysis either about the online version of existed media (print newspapers or TV) or the role played by social-media platform (i.e. Twitter or Weibo) into the journalistic practices.

Huffington Post, the American online news aggregator, which was the first commercially run digital media enterprise won a Pulitzer Prize in 2012, expanded its business largely since 2011 and opened new branches in main European countries (i.e. U.K., France, Germany, Italy, Spain), Asia (Japan, South Korea), and Latin America (Brazil). Established as a commentary blog in 2005, Huffington Post has grown to become one of the most influential original-produced online news sources in a global context nowadays. The Paper (Pengpai Xinwen in Chinese), is a new Chinese online news platform established in July, 2014. Different from the origin of Huffington Post, The Paper is a “new media” project directed by the Shanghai United Media Group (state-owned media), however, it shares the same function as Huffington Post as an original-produced online news source targeted on different levels of digital media market (i.e. Web, APP, Wap, and other social media platforms like Weibo and Wechat). Not so many researches have been made yet to investigate case studies of this kind of original-produced “online newspaper”, and even less comparative analyses were conducted to observe the same challenges but different solutions those platforms encounter and manage today across nations—especially under the West-East comparative context. And this paper is thus designed to fill in this gap.

Methods

Under the theoretic framework of comparative media system studies (Hallin & Macini, 2004; Zhao, 2011) and comparative journalism studies (Rantanen, 2010; Hanitzsch et al, 2011), this paper takes the approach of media political economy to discuss the role played by the state, the market and the audience in Huffington Post and The Paper. Some critical analyses on media content are also equipped for detailed understanding on the news frames (generic news frames and issue-specific frames) used in Huffington Post and The Paper.

Results and Discussion

- 1) The partisan characteristic (Huffington case in Europe) V.S. the role of the state (The Paper in China). The development of Huffington Post in the European case was especially embedded with partisan characteristic from the beginning. Such as the French version of Huffington was in partnership with *Le Monde*, the German version of Huffington was in partnership with *Focus*, thus the “Left-wing” orientation of Huffington Post-France and the “Liberal-conservative” orientation of Huffington Post-Germany did impact the news coverage (especially in the French case). The Paper, as a successful experiment of “new media” platform from state-owned media group, has been testing the bottom line of the Communist Party by utilizing its flexibility of providing online-content and its openness from the support of local Shanghai government, however, it still meets limits by receiving pressures from the central government on certain politic news topics.
- 2) The market/users-driven content production (crowdfunding case in Huffington) V.S. the politics/users-driven content production (the liberal orientation on The Paper). In this part the author discussed the crowd-funding case in Huffington to follow the coverage about Michael Brown, to see whether this example could provide original online newspaper an alternative way

to follow public-interest with a focus on the “market”; and also discussed the anti-corruption case in Peng Pai to understand its dilemma between Chinese public interests and the Chinese authorities with a focus on the “politics”.

- 3) Next “New-York times” V.S. next “Nan Fang Zhou Mo”: The construction of news credibility and media accountability are crucial questions for original-produced online newspapers. Huffington Post provided a positive case for this constructive process as it received Pulitzer Prize in the year of 2012 for one of its senior military correspondent, while Peng Pai is still struggling of identifying itself as a successor or an opponent of “South Genre”, which was recognized widely for its liberal orientation that contributes to public democratic debate and the formation of civil society in China.

References and Notes

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