Exploring the Reasons for Changes in National Reading Behaviour from the Perspective of Media Environmentalism

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In this paper, through the perspective of Merowitz's media environmentalism, following the research path of media-scene-behaviour, and based on the results of the national reading survey released by the China Press and Publication Research Institute in the past ten years (2013-2022), we analyse the characteristics of national reading behaviours, explore the reasons for the changes in national reading behaviour in terms of technology, media, and scenarios. It also discusses the future trend of national reading behaviour and the promotion of national reading activities, and puts forward certain countermeasures from the government, schools and the society to make joint efforts to promote national reading.

Keywords: media convergence, media environmentalism, national reading behaviour

Introduction

Reading has always been one of the mainstream ways for people to receive knowledge and information. Different carriers and symbols in reading will produce different reading behaviours. After entering the digital era, the progress of information communication technology provides great convenience for people's reading, which makes the reading behaviour have a new development trend. The famous German scholar Merowitz combined McLuhan's media theory and Goffman's "situational theory" to show a different perspective of media environment, the meaning of which can be roughly summarised as the creation of new media affects the social environment and makes it change, which in turn affects the behaviours of specific members of the society in the scene. In this paper, through analysing the results of the national national reading survey released in the past ten years (2013-2022), we discuss the future trend of national reading behaviour from the perspective of media convergence, as well as the feasible countermeasures to be proposed for the promotion of national reading activities in the future from the perspective of the government, the school and the society.

Trend Analysis of National Reading Behaviour

Mobile Phones Becoming an Important Media for Reading

As can be seen through Table 1, in the past ten years, the contact time of China's adult nationals for the paper version of the traditional reading media has been relatively stable, in which the books' has been steadily

increasing, but the newspapers' has been on a downward trend, and periodicals', although there were some ups and downs in 2013-2014, have been on a downward trend as a whole. As for digital media, the contact hours of mobile phones continued to grow rapidly and were the highest overall, the Internet's and e-readers' increased more gently, and the indicator of Pad was included from 2014 onwards, and gradually declined after reaching a peak in 2016. In terms of overall hours, nationals are more willing to contact digital media for reading. In terms of the length of time spent on each media, the length of time spent on contact with newspapers, periodicals, the Internet, and e-readers has gradually levelled off. Books, as a traditional way of reading, have had a growing trend in the past three years, and mobile phones have been on the rise.

Between traditional media and digital media, the difference between paper and electronic media leads to different characteristics, the same layout and the finiteness of paper determine the carrying capacity of traditional media is much smaller than the digital media, when carrying the same content, the digital media therefore has a high degree of portability. In the digital media, mobile phones have the smallest volume, suitable for carrying around. 2015 is the year of 4G technology full development, mobile phone hardware technology has nearly matured, the penetration rate of smart phones has grown greatly, as can be seen from the survey report, mobile phone contact hours in this year, indicating that mobile phones are gradually becoming one of the most important medias for national reading.

Table 1
Duration of Exposure to Various Types of Media

Duration/ year	traditional media			digital media			
	books (in a library or bookstore)	newsprint	periodicals	mobile phones	the Internet	eReader	Pad (tablet)
2013	13.43	15.5	10.05	21.7	50.78	2.26	-
2014	18.76	18.8	13.42	33.82	54.87	3.79	10.69
2015	19.69	17.01	8.83	62.21	54.84	6.82	12.71
2016	20.2	13.15	6.61	74.4	57.22	5.51	13.88
2017	20.38	12.0	6.88	80.43	60.7	8.12	12.61
2018	19.81	9.58	5.56	84.87	65.12	10.7	11.1
2019	19.69	6.08	3.88	100.41	66.05	10.7	9.63
2020	20.04	5.71	3.25	100.75	67.82	11.44	9.73
2021	21.05	5.22	2.96	101.12	68.42	11.78	9.82
2022	23.13	5.05	3.15	105.23	66.58	10.65	8.79

(Source: Based on the National Reading Survey Report 2013-2022 by the Press and Publication Research Institute)

Reading Behaviour is Superficial and Entertaining

As shown in Table 2, in the activities engaged in by nationals using the Internet, the proportion of reading online books and newspapers has increased, but overall nationals are still mainly using the Internet for entertainment functions, such as watching videos, listening to music and other activities accounted for more than 10% higher than the proportion of reading books and newspapers, which indicates that nationals lack of in-depth reading, and that digital reading behaviours such as querying information and reading news are gradually becoming mainstream reading. The trend of watching videos, chatting and making friends continues to take up a larger proportion, indicating that reading behaviour is gradually becoming more shallow and entertaining. For the

reading of texts, it used to take a lot of time and effort to think about and interpret the reading text, more than to get the content of the information, more than to dismantle and analyse the content itself. In this process, the reading subject's processing speed of information varies. The results of the survey show that light reading, such as mobile phone reading, takes up more and more reading time, and in-depth reading needs to be strengthened. Nowadays, because of the progress and development of technology, reading has evolved from the text to the web pages and short videos, and the change of reading carriers reflects people's need for rapid access to information, and the reading time has been divided, which has led to a change in reading habits.

Table 2
Proportion/Per cent of Internet Users Engaged in Online Activities

	Online Chatting / Dating	Read the news	Watch the video	Online Shopping	Listen to songs online/download songs and films	Enquiry of various types of information	online game	instant messaging (IM)	Reading online books, newspapers and magazines	Send/receive Email
2013	70.3	74.2	46.8	-	52.4	45.0	37.0	-	17.6	-
2014	64.4	74.8	53.4	-	46.1	43.6	35.6	-	19.5	-
2015	-	74.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	19.4	-
2016	76.3	79.8	61.1	35.4	55.1	46.9	38.1	35.5	26.0	20.1
2017	72.0	69.7	51.5	36.6	42.9	39.3	33.6	32.7	21.7	-
2018	62.3	61.6	50.0	41.1	36.5	28.2	28.0	19.2	15.9	-
2019	60.2	59.0	56.9	45.8	39.2	30.3	26.7	20.1	20.5	-
2020	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2021	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2022	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

(Source: Based on the National Reading Survey Report 2013-2022 by the Press and Publication Research Institute)

National Reading Behaviour Tends to be Personalised and Shared

As can be seen through Table 3, paper books declined until 2019 due to the influence of digital media, but then began to rise, and as a whole, it is still the mainstream of China's national reading mode; at the same time, mobile phone reading reached a peak in 2019, and then tended to stabilise; e-readers continued to rise until 2020 when they began to decline; the national propensity to read online on the Internet had its ups and downs, but the overall trend was down; download and print reading continued to decline until this survey indicator was abolished; the newly added audiobooks and video audiobooks also rose steadily from 2020.

From the addition of audiobooks and video audiobooks, it can also be seen that China's national reading methods are becoming more and more diversified, which are rooted in the progress and development of the media. The popularity of the media makes the importance of authority reduced, the audience all media, the role of the reader has also changed, self-contemplative reading is not the final presentation of the reading behaviour, the network, digital technology means that readers read after the integration of their own personal ideas and public has become a common thing, audiobooks and video audiobooks in addition to conforming to the market, but also the output of the user's production of content. Relying on this way of expression, the main place for readers to exchange ideas has greatly increased, and this kind of reading behaviour for the purpose of sharing has also

shaped into a new kind of reading market. People are not limited to the exchange of book content, a variety of professional and non-professional thought can be shared with the public in the personal surplus, the exchange, production of content are the embodiment of reading personalised and product.

Table 3
Preferred Reading Styles of the Population/Per cent

Reading Style / Percentage / year	Take a paperback book and read it	Read on your mobile phone	Reading on an e-reader	Internet Online Reading	Download and print to read	Audiobooks	Video audiobooks
2013	66.0	15.6	2.4	15.0	1.0	-	-
2014	57.2	23.5	3.4	14.3	1.6	-	-
2015	57.5	27.0	4.1	10.2	1.2	-	-
2016	51.6	33.8	3.8	9.8	1.0	-	-
2017	45.1	35.1	6.2	12.2	1.4	-	-
2018	38.4	40.2	7.7	12.8	0.8	-	-
2019	36.7	43.5	7.8	10.6	0.9	-	-
2020	43.4	33.4	8.6	7.9	-	6.7	-
2021	45.6	30.5	8.4	6.6	-	7.4	1.5
2022	45.5	32.3	4.4	6.8	-	8.2	2.8

(Source: Based on the National Reading Survey Report 2013-2022 by the Press and Publication Research Institute)

Reasons for Changes in National Reading Behaviour

Technological Expansion Affects the Reading Media

The progress of network technology and the development of self-media promote the construction of new scenes of life and the shaping of new scenes of reading. Media convergence has blurred the boundaries between old and new media, and audiences use media to satisfy their own information needs in the final analysis. The emergence of new media follows the law of audience needs, and develops functions more adaptable to the audience on the basis of traditional media. In order to survive or develop, different media have gradually begun to seek common ground, retaining their own advantages while learning to use other advantages, and audiences will also complement each other with the integration of media until they share the same. After years of development, traditional media, such as newspapers, radio, television, etc., have an unchallengeable position in authority and professionalism, while emerging media, such as short videos, microblog, moments, etc., have obvious advantages in terms of novelty of content, time and space, and cost. For example, after the influence of written culture, people's daily speech or written language will be more logical, the expression can be more precise and efficient, and the use of words is more standardised and rich; at present, also due to the popularity of network culture, the hot words are frequent, which has given rise to a lot of fresh vocabulary, and is even recorded in professional dictionaries. In the face of the market and user screening, different media integration of the strengths of a number of functions, complementary advantages, and strive for the audience at the same time to expand the dissemination channels, the volume of sound and content to play the maximum.

Reading Media Influences Scenes of Reading

The expansion and fusion of the scene is a change of scene brought about by the fusion of media. According to McLuhan, a media is more suitable to be called a message than a tool, and a media is an extension of human

beings, and different medias are extensions of people's different senses. The creation and fusion of new media make the stages of people's performances overlap, the strict boundary between "front stage" and "back stage" is broken, and people "performing" in different divisions will change their consciousness in order to produce a kind of "performance". People who 'perform' in different zones also change their consciousness in order to produce a behaviour that is more appropriate to the new scene. This may be a transformation, a processing of old behaviours, or new behaviours that appear completely out of nowhere.

The reading scene is derived from the notion of a broad scene, i.e. a specific environment in which the act of reading can take place. According to Meyrowitz, emerging forms of media are popularised to the masses with the development of technology, and the social scene changes accordingly, with mergers and splits of scenes, or the direct emergence of a new scene based on the new media. Media convergence is not a chaotic whole; besides the competitive relationship between traditional and emerging media, there is also a gradual partial convergence or boundary expansion due to the gradual expansion of the field. This fusion and expansion will continuously bring changes to the existing reading scene until the scene is completely reshaped, which in turn affects the reading behaviour.

Changes in the Reading Scene Affect Reading Behaviours

As technology has evolved and transformed the way in which writing and reading is done, individual reading, which has always been dominant, has remained the most common method used by modern readers. The individual act of reading through a single form of paper book, or e-book, has led to the gradual rise of communal reading in the early days of history because of the convergence and symbiosis between different media. The Internet provides a public sphere in which readers not only read and obtain information, but also become producers and transmitters of information. This public space is not an organisation in the traditional sense, but its characteristics of freedom, sharing and openness enable people to give full play to their subjectivity, forming a new sense of virtual space community and aggregating into a new type of sharing zone. Relying on the Internet technology and high-speed development of media, the interaction and communication between people are no longer restricted by time and space, which in turn blurs the boundaries between public and private in space. For the reading process, ideas generated during reading can be shared with others publicly or not by their own choice, reading space is no longer a private place, and even the formation and emergence of new industries. When the scene of life becomes the scene of reading, the social nature of reading is reflected in the fact that its content will always be integrated into the scene of life, and the abundance and convenience of the carrier makes the act of reading ubiquitous, and is not limited to formal, long-form content, but is likely to be advertisements in lifts and patches on cinema screens, and readers can communicate and share with others either in reality or online after reading these contents.

Promotion Strategies for Reading

Government Leadership in Reading Promotion

In promoting reading activities for all, the Government plays a crucial role, and its support is a strong guarantee for the development of reading activities. In terms of infrastructure, for example, national governments at all levels should establish public reading centres, especially in rural areas, and actively promote the creation of certain cultural and book resources so that readers can engage in reading activities. Increase the investment in

book purchasing funds, enrich the collection for libraries at all levels, and actively develop a variety of emerging technologies that are conducive to reading, so as to provide readers with more diversified reading choices. As for the organisation of activities, the government can set up relevant organisations to ensure the smooth running of reading activities. In order to fully promote reading for all, a lot of manpower and material resources are needed to coordinate, but often social spontaneous organisations do not have enough authority or capacity to undertake a wide range of activities, so a national organisational structure is needed to carry out unified coordination and arrange various matters, so as to promote the development of reading for all activities in the long term.

School Education Contributes to Reading Development

The survey report of the National Reading Investigation Report targets nationals aged 18-70, but children and adolescents largely determine the reading behaviour of adult nationals in the future, and the school is one of the most important scenarios for raising reading habits and fostering reading awareness. Therefore, on the school side, first of all, we should give full play to the advantages of school libraries, hold weekly or monthly reading clubs, knowledge contests and other activities to mobilise students' enthusiasm for reading with certain incentives; listen to students' suggestions in a timely manner, supplement their study materials, and cooperate with local municipal or provincial libraries to carry out lectures and provide reading cards, etc., so as to promote two-way co-operation, and diversion of each other, and at the same time, to enrich the students' reading. The students' reading life is also enriched. Secondly, we can set up special reading courses, arrange professional teachers to provide reading guidance, guide students to designate reading plans, cultivate students' interest in reading, set certain grading standards and incorporate course scores into students' grades, and encourage parents to participate in the course together, so as to uniformly improve the students' ability to deepen their reading skills, broaden their reading surface, and play a certain role in improving the quality of reading for students' parents.

Social Efforts to Promote Reading Activities

National to develop good reading habits, cultivate reading awareness, individuals should exercise the ability to read deeply, improve attention and concentration, in today's media convergence in the context of a variety of electronic products dazzling, which in turn a certain test of personal reading literacy. At the same time, social enterprises are called upon to assume certain social responsibilities. Cooperation with the relevant departments or libraries to open reading, education, public welfare organisations, for the company's employees to open a library of library resources, held a certain reading group building activities; in the scope of the enterprise's ability to call for volunteers to serve the surrounding community residents, and work together to build a book-scented community. It is also hoped that readers who are rich in reading and willing to share their knowledge can give full play to their abilities and actively participate in public welfare reading activities, such as public welfare reading exchanges, book sharing classes, etc. Such reading activities for the purpose of sharing and exchanges allow both parties involved to participate in the reading of the whole population and promote the occurrence of reading behaviours.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the development of media technology has brought about an impact on people in every aspect, and media convergence has led to the expansion of reading media, reshaped the reading scene, and further

influenced the communication direction, habits, dissemination methods and purposes of national reading behaviour. The change of national reading behaviour is a product of adapting to the environment of media convergence and the great changes in society. Under the environment of media convergence, both government officials and readers themselves should actively seek the beneficial effects of technological advances on reading behaviour, so as to achieve a win-win situation for all parties, increase the harmonious atmosphere of national reading, and jointly create an excellent book-scented society.

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