“How to Bear It”—the Climax of Network Literature, Rebelled Traditional Book Market, and the Argument about the Trend of the Network Literature

Jian WU¹, Jia-Jie PENG², Yi-Wei HUANG² and Yi LIU²,*

¹College of Media and International Culture, Zhejiang University, PRC
²College of Humanities and Social Development, Northwest A&F University, Yangling, Shaanxi, PRC

*Corresponding author

Keywords: Internet literature, Qidian, market price, Work length, Work quantity, Cultural shock, The advantage of Internet reading.

Abstract. In the 21st century, China is in the peak of mobile reading, and the popular of network literature has the huge influence on the teenagers, including language habits, thought patterns and so on, which forms considerable impact on the traditional Chinese literary book market. Taking the biggest concentration of network literature--QiDian Chinese net for example, comparing the market of network literature and traditional literature, the article analyzes the shock and insurgency on the publishing of the traditional network caused by the fashionable network literature, through the index of the number, price, length of works, purchase intention and so on. Furthermore, we come to the conclusion that the network reading mode is a better choice no matter for the authors or readers. Does it mean that without reform the market sharing of traditional book industry will be further squeezed? Will the Chinese university students no longer read paper books at all? We believed that people have been accepting and adapting the network literature regarded as a newly sprouted thing. However, little deconstruction has been done for it. So, the author thinks the worrying aspect of the network literature has to be studied based on the precious studies of its noumenon and prospect. This is the innovation and significance of the article.

Introduction

The Creativeness and Advancement of Internet Literature

With the development of Internet, the society becomes more digitized, informationized and networked and great changes have taken place in many aspects in social life, like people’s behaviors, the way to think, people’s indentifications, the pattern of community and even the structure of society. Internet literature, as one of many productions in the Internet age, diffuses on the platform of Internet with the help of hyperlink and multimedia depending on the form of novel or something like novel. Internet literature is published on the Internet individually without being edited. The openness of Internet literature involves many kinds of culture catering for readers with different favors. This new form of reading stimulates people’s potential to read and changes people’s reading habits, especially for young readers.

Compared with the traditional literature, Internet literature has no strict rule in style and content. It follows the “writer-Internet-reader” mode instead of the “writer-editor-press-reader” mode. Naturally, writing groups and writing type different from the traditional way also arise, thus, the nationwide writing mode fuzzes up the standard of the classic literature.

The Economic Benefit and Expected Performance of Internet Literature

In 2012, the gross income of Chinese Internet literature arrived only at 2.77 billion yuan, and then grew dramatically to 4.63 billion yuan in 2013, with a sharp increase of 67.1%. Subsequently, it rose to 5.6 billion with an increase of 21.0%. As reading becomes increasingly popular among people, business tycoons manage to explore the business pattern to enjoy more profit. The gross
The User Scale and Expected Value

In 2012, Internet literature attracted only 233 million people and user scale grew to 274 million in 2013 with an increase of 17.6%. The user scale remained growing at a much slower rate of 8.8%, with a net increase of 24 million. As the great appeal of reading in two sessions, Internet literature is expected to have a huge progress in 2015 and is going to attract 350 million people. The sharp increase is decided by not only Internet literature but also the development of mobile reading devices and wifi. (Fig. 2)

The purpose of this study is twofold: (1) How can network culture impact on the Chinese traditional book market? (2) What is the specific reason for the formation of the shock?

As such, the research questions guiding our research are as follows:

- What is the market orientation of the traditional Chinese book market in the contemporary networked world?
- Why the network literature is more attractive?
- Why would we say that the network literature shocks the traditional book market?

Literature Review

Recently, there are some oversea researches mainly focusing on the characteristics of Internet reading and the commercialization of Internet reading, like the freedom, degeneration and prosperity that Internet reading has experienced. However, there is almost no real outstanding research on Chinese network literature.

Comparatively, there are fewer researches on this topic, like the research on the content and characteristics of Internet reading done by Wan Feng (2010) in Shanghai Electronic Power College. There also come some studies on the Internet cultural problems. For example, Zhao Xiqun and Zhai Zhongjie (2011) in University of Science and Technology of Hunan pointed out the development of Internet culture, a double-edged sword, brings great and obvious influence to human society. And there is study on the prospect of Internet culture. As Liu Pan in Guangxi (2010) Normal University noted in his research on the industrialization pattern of Internet culture, in the period when economic and cultural development interact with each other, Chinese Internet culture has a promising prospect. To make this industry economic and sustainable, a sound, healthy theory and business is needed. These studies have not analyzed deeply for the shock for the traditional book market stemming from the network literature, the influence of the shock, and its benefits and drawbacks.
Methodology

Data Resource

The click rate, website traffic and usage pattern shown by iResearch, Alexa, Google Ad Planner, Google Trends Websites are used to investigate the usage of some famous reading websites.

From the collected data, it is obvious that Internet literature covers readers from different ages, genders and education background and these factors decide their choices when they read. This research is done on the basis of Qidian which is the market leader of reading website. (Fig. 3)

![Figure 3. The ranking of five major novel websites.](image)

![Figure 4. Chinese ranking of novel network traffic in 2015.](image)

Analysis Method

According to Vertical Analysis of Literature Websites provided by iResearch, the top 5 websites are given here after working out the total number of people by month. Fig. 4

On the basis of Alexa rank, IP (Internet Protocol) visits per day and PV (Page View) visits per day are analyzed and the result is compared with the report of iUserTracker. Alexa, as an authoritative assessment, is the most commonly adopted tool to test website traffic, giving data like overall rank, visits rank, PV visits and so on. The IP visits per day and PV visits per day could show the dependency between reader and the website.

According to the data from Google Ad Planner and Google Trends for Websites, the age, gender and education background of the readers are summarized. Google Ad Planner is a free media planning tool to know the visits of websites; Google Trends for Websites is used to analyze the traffic trend by following key words.

Results

In contemporary China, the impact of the network literature is enormous. With the gradual growth of the youth, especially the generation after 90’s and 00’s, this influence is further expanding. What makes the author worried is that the influence is irreversible and includes the language habits and thinking pattern. However, the alarming situation has not caught the attention of Chinese government. The rapid growth of Qidian does show the booming development of the network literature.

Qidian (Chinese Magic Fantasy Union) is the biggest platform for Internet reading and writing and the leading website of original literature. Qidian was founded on May, 2003 and then devoted to finding and cultivating original writers. On October 2003, fee-based reading mode was set up as a kind of Internet publish. On July 1, 2004, Qidian got the 100 place in the Alexa rank and became the first original literature website getting into global top 100 website. Eight of top 10 novels are from Qidian according to the Baidu novel in 2006-2007. Many works from Qidian are clicked for more than ten million times and the website traffic ranks top 30 in China. Nevertheless, this is just a
beginning because the growing trend can be seen obviously. In the first half year of 2015, the top 10 works of Qidian were clicked for more 200 thousand times each week.

Qidian is going to make a innovation in the business mode, such as making progress in advertisement and WAP (Wireless Application Protocol), KJAVA (Java 2 Micro Edition, a software for embedded devices), to make sustainale increase in profits. Besides, Qidian also covers entity press, film adoption, cartoon adoption and so on to makedevelopment in derivative products. What’s more, Qidian are also trying to expand overseas market, expand the group of writers and readers and tap the potential of business mode to make it the biggest Chinese original literature website. All these actions could impose stress on the type and content of traditional Chinese literature, and the publishing of literature.

Discussion and Conclusion

The Quantity and Quality of Works

From the number of works, Qidian has overwhelming advantage. In 2014, Qidian was recognized as “the best original brand” on the basis of work quantity, publicity, users’ using experience, work abundance and public praise toward writers. Taking 809000 works of Qidian in 2014 for example, 3127 of these works have more than one million words, 2782 works are labelled as A, 345 are free including renewal. Among these works, I Wanna Close the Vault of Heaven which is classified as legend story got 51090 votes.

When asked reason about the popularization of Internet literature, the convenience can not be ignored. People could register and publish an article in less than one minute, which is very attractive to people who love writing and who are tried of endless submitting a piece of work to the publisher.

Comparatively, the price share kept a growing trend from 2012 to 2014. (Fig. 5)

![Figure 5. The share of total market price of the literature books.](image)

![Figure 6. The trend of literature book retail sales index.](image)

At the same time, according to the Bestseller Books List, three of top 10 books came from foreign writers. (Fig.7)

![Figure 7. The week hits of the top 6 writers in Qidian.](image)

![Figure 8. The average price of top 10 best-sellers.](image)
The Problem of Pricing

According to the average price of top 10 books (from Amazon list), in 2012, 2013, 2014 books were priced 31.26, 35.97, 37.54 respectively and the price was rising slowly. (Fig. 8)

Recent years has witnessed a growing trend of book price. The reason can be found from two aspects: the rise in price of the raw materials and manpower. The publisher should be considerate of readers because the high price would counteract people’s enthusiasm toward reading.

When readers read on Qidian, 1 RMB=100 coins, and a senior member can read every one thousand words by only 2 coins, that means he can read every 50 thousand words for only 1 RMB. The much cheaper price drives a lot of people read online. Taking the average price of paper books in 2014 for example, 37.54yuan could enable a normal user read 750.8 thousand word, could enable a junior member read 1.2513 million words, could enable a senior member read 1.8770 million words. (Fig. 9)

The Interaction between Readers and Writers

In the traditional publishing industry, writers are practically sacred in China and they are almost isolated from readers. The main form of communication rely on writing letters and signing meetings, thus, it is hard for writers to get feedback from readers.

Internet literature like Qidian shorten the distance between readers and writers because a communication platform is provided after each chapter, in this way, writers could get suggestions and questions immediately and even make advertisements, spread webgame and give publicity to the new books. Taking 2782 works updated every month in 2014 for example, all of them recommend their own work, 95.8% of them made advertisement, 97.3% of them interacted with readers every week and 80.6% recomposed the outline, added or deleted characters in the story. (Fig. 10)

It is necessary for writers to have regular communication with readers. The positive evaluation encourages writers a lot and the negative assessment is very helpful for the later writing. For readers, the interaction with their favorite writers could stimulate their passion toward Internet literature. For website, the friendly communication makes it more approachable and attractive. What’s more, the work and advertisement make a kind of positive cycle.

The Welfare Benefits of Writers

In traditional publishment, writer can sign “work quantity contract” or “copyright royalty contract”. Writers could get up to 100 thousand yuan according to the work quantity contract, up to 10% according to copyright royalty contract. For freshman, they could usually get 30 thousand yuan according to the work quantity contract and get 3% according to copyright royalty contract.

In Qidian, the rules are different. When a book has more than 30 thousand words, it is checked by the editor automatically and there are four procedures: signing a contract, following it closely, following it and giving up. The editor may pay close attention to the work if it is outstanding and if four or five editors think well of it. Works of more than 100 thousand words can be labelled for A and if it is collected for more than 8000 times, it can hit store shelves. Readers can subscribe it after hitting store shelves. Subscribed for less than 500 times but keeping a update of 5000 words every day could help the reader to get 500 yuan. If the reader has low-security, he can get 1200 yuan everyday but no salary for full attendance or month ticket. Good writer, whose work is subscribed

247
for more than 500 times but less than 2000 times, could get 2000-3000 yuan every month. Super writer, whose work is subscribed for more than 2000 times, could get about 5000 words including month ticket and bonus. Some platinum writers could get same benefits with super writer, but the income of platinum writers are varied. Some famous writer, such as Chendong, Three masters of Tang, Wangyu, Yueguan, I eat tomatoes, could earn more than one million yuan every year.

Besides, Qidian makes a security plan for low-security writers, they can get 800 yuan if they could write more than 100 thousand words every month. Pletinum could get extremely high income and only more than ten writers are awarded “pletinum writer”. From 2007, the writer who ranked first in month could get 10 thousand yuan. Wangyu once get more than 10 million yuan, which is surprisingly high in China. It is obvious that Internet literature is very attractive for both readers and writers.

Summary

Internet Literature Has Obvious Advantage in Price

For traditional publisher, the cost of publishing grows sharply with the increase of words: price coefficient= price of books/the size of paper(m^2)×number of paper×words number(ten thousand). Lower is the price coefficient, cheaper is the book. According to the research, paper books (2.17yuan/ten thousand words) are 4.33 times more expensive than Qidian (0.5yuan/ten thousand words). In 2015, most of paper books have less than 300 thousand words. The more words it has, the more stress the publisher has and the more expensive the books are. From above, Internet literature has absolute advantage in price compared with paper books.

In 2012, works of Qdian are classified as follows: legend 152400/1400 hit store shelves; fantasy 53900/1000 hit store shelves; city 95200/1700; doujin 20900/100; girls 150400/4100; literature 58300/3100. In Qidian, there are 200 works that are updated in three days with 2 million words (200 works labelled as A), and there are 16 works that has not hit store shelves (including signing a contract), and there are about 300 works (about 300 are labelled A) hit store shelves which have more than 100 million words but less than 200 million words and which are updated in three days, 80 of them are free. There are also 300 works (updated in three days) having 0.5-1 million words hit store shelves. And 400 are labelled A, 300 of these are free. There are also 100 works (updated in three days) having less than 300 thousand words hit store shelves. And 600 are labelled A, 7900 of these are free. In other words, works with less words face more serious competition, it is more difficult for them to sign a contract and hit store shelves and vice versa. Writers can get 2 coins for every thousand words, so the writer can get more income and the relationship can be more close if there are more words in one work. The following is a bar graph of Qidian in 2012. (Fig. 11)

![Figure 11](image1.png)

**Figure 11.** The number of works for different word counter interval in 2012.

![Figure 12](image2.png)

**Figure 12.** In college do you still buy many literature books?

The Openness and Freedom of Internet Literature

Internet literature is open and free and the two characters interact with each other. As a kind of
commercial, popular, cover-all culture, most of the language is democratic instead of sermonic, critical language, which makes readers feel close and shows fairness and equality.

Internet literature is very free, and it is fast updated, widespread and covers huge audience. The convenience and zero cost encourage more writing and enrich the content of literature. At the same time, readers have more choices when they read online. The rich, friendly and original content show the freedom of online literature.

The Best Choice for Writers

These websites provide a easy way for writers to write, publish and get salary and avoid wasting time and money. The security plan of Qidian protect a basic salary for writers. And the writing experience relieve the stress of writer and enrich their life.

The Influence on Traditional Publishing

Do university students still read paper books? Surprisingly, the answer is no. As reference, in 2014 the author use Questionnaire survey methods did research in Chinese university which is in project 985 and project 211 (a total of 116), the survey of contemporary Chinese students (who once enjoyed reading and buying literature books), the research including a total of 25500 questionnaires, 20000 electrical questionnaires, 5500 valid paper questionnaires, 5483 valid questionnaires, Overall valid questionnaires reached 99.72%. The results of the survey in fig.12 and fig13 show that many students keep the habit of reading, but they read online instead of reading paper books. In college do you still love reading literature book? (94.8% yes 4.3% no 0.9% others) In college do you still buy many literature books? (95.6% no 1.7% yes 1.9% yes but not so many 0.8% others).

The phenomenon that the young generation has no longer read the “paper” literature book has to arouse the alertness of the society. (Fig.12)

Acknowledgment

This research was financially supported by ministry of education humanities and social science research youth fund: “1919-1949: the different of ‘impression’ between Chinese and Japanese culture”, The ShaanXi Social Science Foundation of China: “The education and cultural identity of the foreign students along the Silk Road countries - Study on foreign students majoring in agriculture” (NO. 2014J23)

References

[5] XiaoYang, China's digital publishing industry development strategy research - based on the perspective of industrial structure, regional, stage, Nanjing University (2013).


[14] Maji, Under the market mechanism of network literature aesthetic horizon - three variables of literature is to the Chinese contemporary literature, Creation and Comments (2015).


[16] Liupan, Network literature industrialization pattern research - in Shengda company, for example, Guangxi Normal University. (2010).


[21] Li jing, Original network literature publishing business strategy analysis--qidian, for example, Henan University (2012).

[22] Gaoqianhui, Based on the value chain network literature website profit pattern research – qidain Chinese website, for example, Northeast University of Finance and Economics (2011).

[23] Yanqiong, the publishing business model research of Qidain Chinese website, Hunan University (2011).


[25] xiaoyang, China's digital publishing industry development strategy research, based on the perspective of industrial structure, regional and stage, Nanjing University, (2013).


[27] Chen wenqian, Policy research of digital publishing industry in China, Wuhan University of Technology(2013)


[29] Yuan guiping, Network publication features and pricing strategy analysis in economics, Hebei Art Vocational College (2015)
[30] Lian Tonghui, Quan Qinjian, Pricing strategy research of digital publications, Nanjing college of information management; Anhui University of Engineering Management in the College of Engineering; (2013).


[34] Zhao Xiqun & Zhai Zhongjie, The double edged sword. The University Newspaper of Capital Normal University. 2011(02)


[36] Zhang Tianshu. A study of the influence from online literature on common literature.

