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Research on the Knowledge Exchange Efficiency of Academic Journals in the Field of Journalism and Publishing Based on the Three-Stage DEA Model

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Abstract: This study systematically evaluates the operational efficiency of academic journals in the field of journalism and publishing in China based on the three-stage DEA model, and finds that the efficiency of journals shows significant differentiation characteristics. The research shows that four journals, including Acta Editologica, continuously maintain DEA effectiveness, demonstrating excellent management efficiency. Twelve journals, such as Editors' Friend, have improved their comprehensive efficiency after excluding environmental factors, indicating that their management potential is restricted by external conditions. Four journals, including Editorial Research, have decreased their comprehensive efficiency after excluding environmental factors, indicating that external conditions can promote their management potential. Further analysis reveals that the number of geographical distributions, the citation half-life, and the years of publication are the key environmental factors affecting efficiency. Based on this, the study proposes differentiated improvement strategies: highly efficient journals should deepen digital transformation and establish an intelligent manuscript review system; environmentally sensitive journals need to optimize regional resource allocation and establish a collaborative editing center; and low-efficiency journals should achieve structural reforms through process reengineering and content innovation.

Keywords: Journalism and Publishing; Academic Journals; Knowledge Exchange Efficiency; Three-stage DEA Model
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1.Introduction and Literature Review

As a vital medium for disseminating scholarly information, journals facilitate knowledge exchange and sharing through cross-referencing, reflecting the flow and evolution of knowledge [1]. Exploring the developmental patterns of academic journals holds significant practical value for promoting their rational utilization and advancing disciplinary development. [2] In recent years, regarding the strategic planning and top-level design of academic journals, the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Science and Technology jointly issued the "Opinions on Promoting the Prosperity and Development of Academic Journals." This document further clarifies the path for journal prosperity and development, offering new perspectives for academic journal advancement. As a vital component of information and ideological exchange, the news and publishing industry forms the foundation for enhancing our nation's cultural soft power. [3] As a vital platform for enhancing the discourse power of the news and publishing industry, academic

journals in this field shoulder the critical responsibilities of facilitating academic exchange and guiding scholarly trends. They play an irreplaceable role in the prosperity and development of the news and publishing sector. Evaluating the knowledge efficiency of these academic journals from an input-output perspective offers significant insights for assessing their position and function within the knowledge dissemination process.

The efficient dissemination of academic journals helps break down knowledge barriers and promotes cross-disciplinary integration. Current quantitative studies comparing knowledge exchange efficiency across different journal types from an input-output perspective include: [4] Cheng Huiping et al. employed the DEA-CCR model to evaluate citation efficiency among 18 journals under fixed returns. Findings indicated that library science journals exhibited the highest citation efficiency, while information science journals ranked lowest, with the gap between journals narrowing. [5] Li Lin et al. assessed the input-output performance of 17 Chinese core science and technology journals using non-cooperative game theory and DEA/hedge domain games. The findings revealed that some high-impact journals yielded less-than-satisfactory evaluation results due to their high publication volume. Changes in weighting biases could lead to three outcomes: increased, unchanged, or decreased evaluation values. Meanwhile, journal self-citation frequency exhibited three patterns: excessive, moderate, and insufficient. [6] Wang Hui et al. employed the SBM model and nonparametric kernel density estimation to investigate knowledge exchange efficiency in Chinese science and technology journals. Findings indicate that while library and information science journals exhibit high overall knowledge exchange efficiency, they show a tendency toward polarization. [7] Wang Yiwen analyzed evolutionary trends by introducing kernel density estimation and Markov chains to the global super-efficiency SBM model for measuring knowledge exchange efficiency, thereby capturing efficiency from a static perspective. Using dynamic QCA methods, they investigated the changes in configuration effects influenced by factors over time and individual effects. The findings revealed significant disparities in knowledge exchange efficiency among Chinese journals in the field of information resource management, exhibiting typical imbalances. Knowledge exchange efficiency levels demonstrated a "Matthew effect," with factors influencing knowledge efficiency showing pronounced time effects and individual effects. [8] Jia Xunliang et al. employed a super-efficiency DEA-Malmquist model to analyze citation efficiency across 30 sports academic journals. Findings indicate that sports academic journals exhibit overall high knowledge exchange efficiency (0.975), with annual trends following a "V"-shaped pattern, reaching lowest efficiency values in 2015–2016. [9] Tan Chunhui et al. investigated the knowledge exchange efficiency of Chinese humanities and social sciences journals, concluding that the overall level of these journals is relatively low with significant disparities. Interdisciplinary differences constitute the primary source of variation. While efficiency levels are gradually increasing, absolute gaps continue to widen, indicating polarization. [10] Li Xiaocong et al. employed DEA-SBM and SuperSBM models to assess the knowledge exchange efficiency of 11 core journals operated by publishing enterprises, proposing improvement measures. The study indicates that these journals possess acceptable knowledge exchange and dissemination capabilities, yet there remains 11.4% room for improvement, with Publishing Panorama demonstrating the highest potential. Conversely, "ineffective" journals commonly exhibit issues such as redundant literature input, low impact factors, and low total citation frequencies.

Some scholars have also measured the knowledge efficiency of journals and analyzed the factors influencing their efficiency. For instance, [11] Zhang Lei focused on examining the impact of five variables—journal scale, dissemination time, distribution channels, regional diffusion capacity, and journal internationalization—on knowledge exchange efficiency. [12] Wang Shuqiao et al. drawing on Zhang Lei's research experience, selected five factors: internationalization level, publication duration, regional dissemination capability, regional economic development level, and journal academic paper quality. [13] Li Ping et al. selected five factors: internationalization level, publication duration, regional dissemination capability, regional economic development level, and journal academic paper quality. [13] Li et al. emphasized that internationalization level is a crucial factor influencing agricultural economics journals, with "funding-to-paper ratio" and "publication duration" having positive effects, while other factors had limited impact, and institutional breadth did not enhance efficiency. [14] McWilliams examined the effects of editorial board size, subscription fees, selection ratios, and special issue papers on academic exchange outcomes. While all these scholars employed DEA methods to measure journal knowledge exchange efficiency, they utilized different approaches for factor analysis. Most adopted the Tobit model for efficiency factor analysis. [15] Wan Li employed

both Super-SBM and Tobit models, revealing that citation half-life, number of institutional affiliations, and publication frequency exerted significant positive effects on efficiency, while publication duration showed no significant positive impact. However, in [16] Qiu Junping et al., while studying the knowledge exchange efficiency of comprehensive humanities and social sciences journals, found that journal academic quality, publication frequency, and journal age are all important factors, whereas journal aging rate and online dissemination status had no significant impact. Evidently, different journal types face distinct influencing factors, and the same factor exerts vastly different effects across types. This provides a crucial reference for subsequent research on factors affecting knowledge exchange efficiency in news and publishing journals.

In summary, while existing research on journal knowledge exchange efficiency is relatively extensive, it lacks a temporal perspective and fails to accurately capture the phased characteristics of such efficiency. To enrich current scholarship, this paper builds upon prior studies by examining the influence of environmental factors across time spans, thereby conducting a more in-depth investigation into the knowledge efficiency of academic journals in journalism and publishing.

2.Model Construction, Indicator Selection, and Data Sources

2.1 Model Construction

2.1.1 First-Stage BCC Model

The first stage employs a traditional BCC model, featuring a non-Archimedean infinitesimal DEA model as shown in Equation (1).

$$\begin{cases} \min[\theta - \varepsilon(\hat{e}^T s^- + e^T s^+)] \\ \sum_{g=1}^{n} X_g \lambda_g + s^- = \theta X_{g0} \\ \sum_{g=1}^{n} Y_g \lambda_g - s^+ = Y_{g0} \\ \sum_{g=1}^{n} \lambda_g = 1 \\ \lambda_g \geq 0, g = 1,2,\cdots,n; s^+ \geq 0, s^- \geq 0 \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

In the equation: 〖X_g=（X_1g, X_2g,… X_mg）〗 ^T represents the input variables of the decision-making unit; 〖Y_g=（Y_1g, Y_2g,… Y_sg)〗 ^T are the output variables of the decision unit; X_g0 and Y_g0 are the input and output variables of the g_0th decision unit; s^+ and s^- are the output and input slack variables; n denotes the number of decision units; λ_g represents the decision variables; 〖e = (1, ⋯, 1)〗 ^T ∈ E_m; 〖ê = (1, ⋯, 1)〗 ^T ∈ E_s; ε is a non-Archimedean infinitesimal; θ is the comprehensive efficiency value of the decision unit, used to evaluate effectiveness by comparison with 1.

2.1.2 Second-Stage SFA Model

Establish a theoretical model for slack variables and environmental explanatory variables:

Establish a theoretical model for slack variables and environmental explanatory variables:

$$\begin{cases} s_{ig} = f^i(z_g, \beta^i) + \nu_{ig} + u_{ig} \\ i = 1,2,\cdots,n; g = 1,2,\cdots,m \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

In the equation, Z_g = (Z_1g, Z_2g, …, Z_Pg) represents P environmental variables, and β^i denotes the vector of parameters to be estimated for the environmental variables. f^i (z_g,β^i)=z_j β^i represents the influence of environmental variables on the slack variable s_ig. ν_ig+u_ig constitutes the mixed error term, where ν_ig is the random error term assumed to follow a normal distribution, i.e., ν_ig ～ N(0, 〖σ^2〗 _ui), u_ig represents managerial inefficiency, assumed to follow a truncated normal distribution, i.e., u_ig ~ N^+(u^i, σ²_ui), and ν_ig and u_ig are assumed to be independent and uncorrelated. Specifically, let γ = σ²_ui/(σ²_ui + σ²_vi) for comparison with 1. Then, by conditionally estimating Ê[u_(ig) | ν_(ig) + u_(ig)] of managerial inefficiency, the estimate of the random error is obtained:

$$\begin{cases} E[\nu_{ig}|\nu_{ig} + u_{ig}] = s_{ig} - z_g\hat{\beta}^i - \hat{E}[u_{ig}|\nu_{ig} + u_{ig}] \\ i = 1,2,\cdots,n; g = 1,2,\cdots,m \end{cases}$$

Finally, this paper adjusts the investment levels for other journals based on the most efficient journal investment levels identified in the news and publishing sector:

$$\begin{cases} x_{ig}^{*} = x_{ig} + \left[\mathrm{Max}_{g}\left\{z_{g}\hat{\beta}^{n}\right\} - z_{g}\hat{\beta}^{n}\right] + \left[\mathrm{Max}_{g}\left\{\hat{v}_{ig}\right\} - \hat{v}_{ig}\right] \\ i = 1,2,\cdots,n; g = 1,2,\cdots,m \end{cases} \quad (4)$$

In the equation: \(x_{ig}^{*}\) and \(x_{ig}\) represent the adjusted and initial input values, respectively, while \(\hat{\beta}^m\) denotes the estimated value of the environmental variable parameter. \([Max_{g} {z_{g} \hat{\beta}^m} - z_{g} \hat{\beta}^m]\) represents the constraint that all journals share the same environment, while \([Max_{g} {\hat{v}_{ig}} - \hat{v}_{ig}]\) represents that each journal exists in the same natural state.

2.1.3 Third-Stage BCC Model

Using the adjusted input data obtained in the second stage, combined with the original output data, both are substituted into the BCC model for solution.

2.2 Indicator Selection and Data Sources

All research data in this paper are sourced from the "China Science and Technology Journal Citation Reports" covering 2013–2020. As a complex system involving multivariate inputs and outputs, news and publishing journals require in-depth analysis and evaluation of their input-output relationships within knowledge exchange processes. Studying these relationships essentially explores the interdependencies among journals in knowledge exchange activities. Following relevant literature practices, this study uses indicators from the China Science and Technology Journal Citation Report to represent the development level of the news and publishing industry.

For input indicators, this paper selected source document volume, average citation count, and proportion of funded papers as input metrics for the news and publishing industry. For output indicators, this study selected expanded total citation frequency, expanded impact factor, expanded number of citing journals, and expanded disciplinary impact indicators as output factors for news and publishing journals. Regarding environmental variables, this study considered the geographical distribution of news and publishing journals, article novelty, and journal publication duration, selecting regional publication count, citation half-life, and publication duration as environmental variable factors. Relevant indicator tables are shown in Table1

Table 1: Indicator Selection Table Table 1 Indicator Selection Table

Indicator Category	Indicator Name	Definition	Unit
Input Indicators	Source Literature Volume	Total number of articles published in source journals during the statistical year, serving as the basis for citation data collection	Articles
	Average Citations per Article	Average number of references cited per article in source journals	Citations/ Article
	Funded Article Ratio	Proportion of articles funded by various grants among all articles in source journals	%
Output Metrics	Expanded Total Citations	Total number of citations received by all articles published in the journal since its inception during the statistical year	Times/ Journal
	Expanded Impact Factor	The frequency with which articles published in a journal are cited by other academic literature within a specific period	%
	Expanded Number of Citing Journals	Number of journals that cite the evaluated journal	Articles
	Expanded Disciplinary Impact Metric	Refers to the proportion of journals within the journal's discipline that cite it relative to the total number of journals in that discipline	%
Environment Variables	Regional Distribution Count	Refers to the number of regions covered by articles published in the source journal	Regions
	Citation Half-Life	Refers to the time period within which the latter half of all references cited by the journal were published	%
	Years in Publication	Refers to the number of years the journal has been continuously published since its founding	Years

3.Empirical Analysis

3.1 Phase One Results Analysis

Using specialized software to measure the knowledge exchange efficiency of academic journals in the field of journalism and publishing, the following conclusions were drawn based on the data analysis. The mean comprehensive efficiency of each academic journal in the journalism and publishing field during the observation period shows that the journals Acta Editologica, Modern Communication, Journalism & Communication, and News and Writing all achieved a mean comprehensive efficiency of 1. Meanwhile, the journals Editorial Journal, Contemporary Communication, TV Research, Journal of International Communication, Journalism University, Chinese Editors Journal China Radio & TV Academic Journal, and Chinese Journal of Scientific and Technical Periodicals all achieved comprehensive efficiency values above 0.9. The remaining journals all had comprehensive efficiency values below 0.9. The reason the average values approached 1 was due to occasional invalid efficiency values in the statistical years.

3.2 Two-Stage Results Analysis

The difference between the optimal efficiency input and actual input measured by DEAP 2.1 was used as the slack variable. With the slack variable as the dependent variable, environmental calculations were performed on the data using Frontier 4.1.

Due to the large volume of results, this study selected 2013, 2016, and 2019 as representative years to reflect the SFA results for the second stage across the 2012–2019 time span. The relevant results are shown in Table 3. The LR values for all input slack quantities passed the 5% significance test, indicating that the three selected environmental variables significantly influence the input variable slack quantities.

Table 2: Two-Stage Results Presentation Table

Variable Name Coefficient	**Number of Source Publications**			**Average Citations**			**Funded Papers Ratio**		
Year	2013	2016	2019	2013	2016	2019	2013	2016	2019
Coefficient	-0.075	0.046	-0.052	-0.018	0.054	-0.032	-0.126	-0.089	-0.162
Regional Distribution	0.010	-0.011	0.016	0.009	-0.009	0.015	0.081	0.008	0.367
Citation Half-Life	-0.023	-0.005	-0.014	-0.022	-0.022	0.019	-0.071	-0.072	0.235
Years in Publication	0.049	-0.022	0.016	0.011	-0.022	-0.012	0.034	0.077	-0.363
δ	0.013	0.012	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.007	0.015	0.023
γ	1.000	1.000	0.950	0.950	0.950	0.950	0.951	0.987	0.987
LR Test Value	17.456***	18.398***	51.365***	7.852**	61.109***	8.671**	12.000**	13.786***	10.042**

Note: * indicates $p < 0.1$, ** indicates $p < 0.05$, *** indicates $p < 0.01$

After separating the data and analyzing overall changes, it was found that among the 20 selected DMUs, all inputs showed an increase from 2012 to 2019 after operational adjustments. The adjusted increases in source literature volume and average citation count were particularly noticeable, with change values ranging from 0 to 0.6, mostly between 0.1 and 0.4. Only a small portion showed increases below 0.1 or above 0.5. The fund-to-paper ratio exhibited minimal variation, with changes ranging between 0 and 0.1.

As shown in Table 2, during the 2012-2019 period, one-third of the coefficients for environmental variables at the regional distribution level were negative, while two-thirds were positive. The positive and negative values for source document volume, average citation count, and funded paper ratio showed no consistent annual pattern. This indicates that regional distribution numbers exert both beneficial and detrimental effects on these metrics, with detrimental impacts predominating. These effects also exhibit coupling with other environmental factors.

Regarding citation half-life-level environmental variables, during 2012-2019: - Source publication volume: 2/9 coefficients

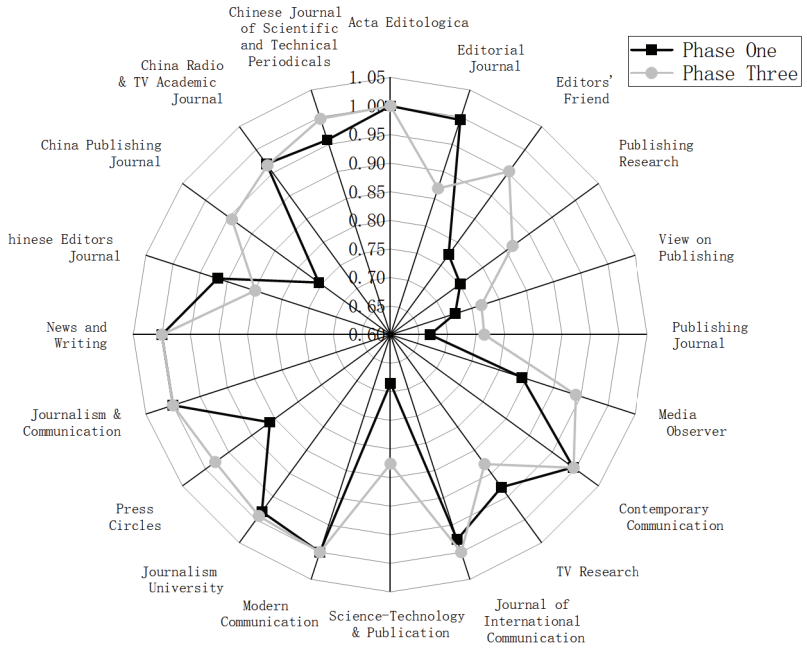
were positive, 7/9 were negative; - Average citation count: 2/9 coefficients were positive, 7/9 were negative; - Funded paper ratio: 3/9 coefficients were positive, 6/9 were negative. Overall, 25.93% of changes were positive and 74.07% were negative, indicating that citation half-life primarily exerts a positive influence on source document volume, average citation count, and funded paper ratio. This suggests that classic theories and methods receive sustained citation over time, with journal articles undergoing extensive validation and recognition.

Regarding the journal age dimension, during 2012-2019, the coefficients for environmental variables showed positive effects in 4/9 cases and negative effects in 5/9 cases for source document volume; positive effects in 5/9 cases and negative effects in 4/9 cases for average citation count; and positive effects in 5/9 cases and negative effects in 4/9 cases for funded paper ratio. This pattern indicates alternating positive and negative impacts over time. Further analysis reveals that negative values predominantly occurred between 2016 and 2019, indicating that insufficient publication history adversely affects journals. Over time, the "time dividend" accumulated through long-term development becomes a positive influence.

3.3 Comparative Analysis of Three-Stage Results

After controlling for random and external environmental factors, this study compares the results from the first stage with those from the third stage. Regarding comprehensive technical efficiency, the differences between the first-stage DEA comprehensive technical efficiency values and the third-stage values are illustrated in Figure 1. Among the three-stage comprehensive efficiency values for each journalism and publishing academic journal, the journals Acta Editologica, Modern Communication, Journalism & Communication, and News and Writing consistently achieved a comprehensive efficiency value of 1, indicating full DEA efficiency. The comprehensive efficiency values for the remaining journals ranged between 0.8 and 1. Compared to the first-stage comprehensive efficiency values, the comprehensive efficiency values for Editorial Journal, TV Research, Chinese Editors Journal and China Radio & TV Academic Journal decreased by 12.6%, while TV Research, Chinese Editors Journal, and China Radio & TV Academic Journal saw minimal declines of less than 7%. The comprehensive efficiency values of Modern Communication, Journalism & Communication, and News and Writing remained unchanged, while the remaining journals all increased, with growth ranging from 0.1% to 20%.

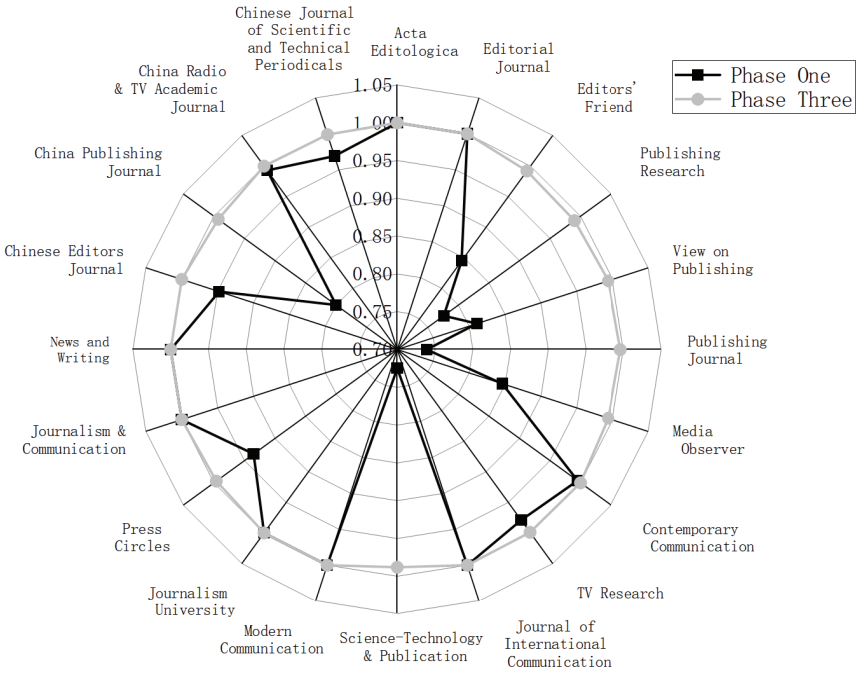
Figure 1 Comparison of Overall Efficiency Values Between Phase 1 and Phase 3



In terms of pure technical efficiency, after the second-stage adjustment, the differences between the first and third stages are shown in Figure 2. The number of journals with pure technical efficiency of 1 increased from 7 to 8. In the first stage, the average pure technical efficiency values of the following journals were 1: Acta Editologica, Editorial Journal, Journal of International Communication, Modern Communication, Journalism & Communication, News and Writing. In the third stage, Contemporary Communication was newly added with an average pure technical efficiency value of 1. The average

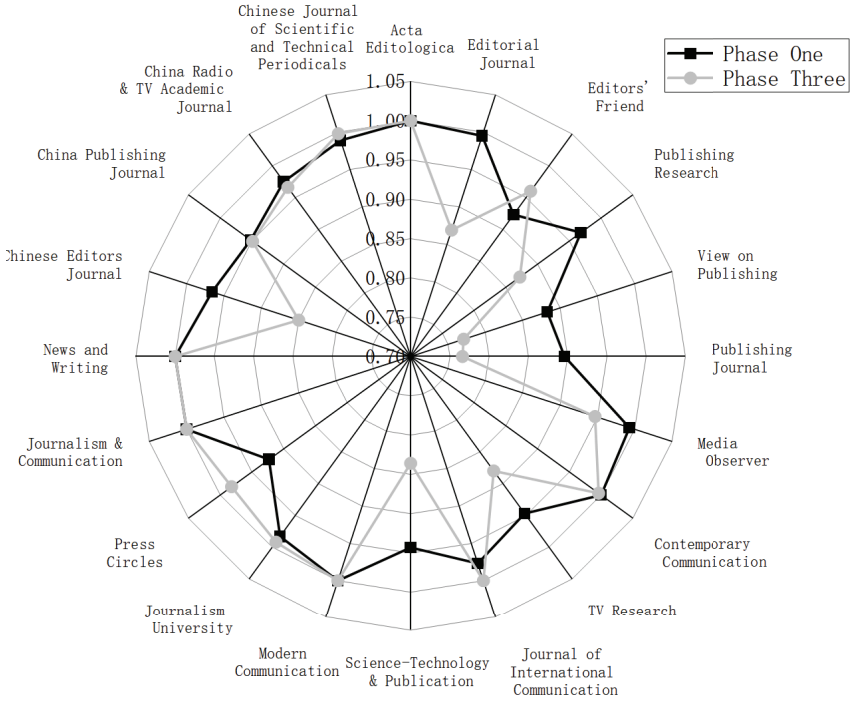
pure technical efficiency values of the remaining journals all fall between 0.99 and 1. Among journals with pure technical efficiency values other than 1, the value of 0.995 is the closest to 1. All pure technical efficiency values have increased, with growth rates ranging from 1% to 30%.

Figure 2 Comparison of Pure Technical Efficiency Values Between Phase I and Phase III



At the scale efficiency level, the differences in efficiency values between the first and third stages are shown in Figure 3. Unlike the changes in overall efficiency and pure technical efficiency, which mostly increased, scale efficiency values fluctuated both upward and downward. Increases ranged from 0.1% to 6%, while decreases spanned from 0.1% to 20%. Some values shifted from efficient to inefficient status. For instance, in the third-stage results, Contemporary Communication's scale efficiency changed from efficient to inefficient.

Figure 3 Comparison of Scale Efficiency Values Between Phase I and Phase III



Phase I and Phase III comprehensive efficiency, pure technical efficiency, and scale efficiency all exhibit changes. After controlling for environmental factors, pure technical efficiency shows an overall improvement. Regional distribution, citation half-life, and publication duration influence journal efficiency, indicating that environmental factors affect the efficiency evaluation of core journals in journalism and publishing, primarily exerting a negative impact.

4.Research Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Research Conclusions

Through stage-one and stage-three empirical analysis, journals were classified based on the magnitude of changes in their efficiency values as follows: During the study period, journals maintaining consistent DEA validity and sustained optimal input-output structures were classified as high-efficiency journals. Journals exhibiting efficiency fluctuations due to environmental changes were categorized as environmentally sensitive journals. Beyond these high-efficiency journals, the remaining 16 journals demonstrated significant room for improvement even after controlling for environmental factors, with knowledge exchange efficiency remaining persistently low. These were classified as low-efficiency journals.

4.1.1 Environmental Factors Impact Journal Efficiency

The coefficient for regional dispersion (77.78%) is positive, indicating that greater geographical dispersion among news and publishing journals leads to increased input wastage and higher management costs. Appropriately reducing actual DMU inputs can partially mitigate environmental dividends. The citation half-life coefficient predominantly exhibits negative values, indicating that this factor inhibits the efficiency of news and publishing journals. The coefficient for publication duration shows non-linear, alternating positive and negative changes, reflecting significant differences in the lifecycles of various news and publishing journals.

4.1.2 Significant Performance Differentiation in Journal Comprehensive Efficiency

After three-stage adjustments, the four high-efficiency journals—Acta Editologica, Modern Communication, Journalism & Communication, and News and Writing—maintained DEA efficiency throughout the study period. This indicates their input-output structures consistently remained optimal, unaffected by environmental factors. The remaining 16 low-efficiency journals remained inefficient throughout the study period, indicating substantial room for improvement even after controlling for environmental factors. This pronounced divergence reflects significant disparities in operational management and resource allocation among different journals.

4.1.3 Diverse Efficiency Improvement Pathways for Different Journal Types

Comparing Phase I and Phase III, the efficiency values of environmentally sensitive journals—Editorial Journal, TV Research, Chinese Editors Journal and China Radio & TV Academic Journal—declined, indicating their reliance on environmental factors. Further analysis suggests that optimizing scale development is a viable strategy for these journals to enhance efficiency. In contrast, journals like Editors' Friend， Publishing Research, View on Publishing, and Publishing Journal saw increased efficiency scores, demonstrating that optimizing environmental factors significantly enhances the overall efficiency of these journals.

4.2 Policy Recommendations

4.2.1 Promote Benchmark Journal Management Practices and Establish an Efficient Journal Alliance

Using four consistently high-efficiency journals like Acta Editologica as benchmarks, conduct in-depth analyses of their strengths in topic planning, digital peer review, and source maintenance. Establish an alliance of high-efficiency journals, distilling their management models into standardized templates for dissemination to other publications. Implement regular exchanges to jointly discuss and adjust topic directions based on academic trends and industry developments, avoiding homogenized competition while promoting efficient knowledge exchange and sharing among journals to enhance overall knowledge dissemination efficiency.

4.2.2 Overcoming Environmental Constraints and Innovating Management Approaches

For environmentally sensitive journals, establish regional hubs at central locations to optimize resource allocation. Vigorously promote innovative management methods like "online cloud editing," utilize big data to generate "data radar charts" for

decision support, and implement digital management dashboards for real-time monitoring of process efficiency. These measures break external constraints on journal knowledge exchange, achieve optimal efficiency, and accelerate knowledge dissemination and exchange.

4.2.3 A dvancing Multi-Faceted Reforms for Persistently Inefficient Journals

Journals with chronic inefficiency must redefine their academic mission, identify specific causes of sustained low productivity, and implement concrete solutions. Content-wise, establish a problem-oriented production mechanism focused on cutting-edge issues to generate high-quality academic outputs and attract superior knowledge exchange. In management development, prioritize cultivating editorial teams' academic judgment and topic planning capabilities while maintaining close ties with academia and industry to proactively solicit high-quality submissions. In response to external changes, conduct in-depth analyses of market demands and institutional strengths, actively participate in refining academic evaluation systems, closely monitor policy and regulatory shifts, and promptly adjust journal operational strategies.

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No

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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