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Directions and Suggestions for Talent Cultivation in the All-Media Era: A Postprint Comparing Talent Preference Orientations of Official Media and Internet Enterprises

Authors: Zheng Aoying

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Abstract

In the omnimedia era, as the number of journalism students continues to grow, securing employment in the media market is becoming increasingly difficult. How should universities break away from traditional training paradigms and adopt innovative approaches to cultivate talent suited for the omnimedia communication environment? This study collects and comparatively analyzes recent job postings from official media organizations (People's Daily and China Media Group) and internet enterprises (Sina and Tencent), summarizes the characteristics of media professionals most sought after in the contemporary talent market, and proposes cultivation recommendations for universities to facilitate the training of journalism talent in the new era.

Full Text

Preamble

Direction and Recommendations for Talent Cultivation in the Omnimedia Era: Comparing Talent Preferences Between Official Media and Internet Enterprises

School of Media and Design, Beijing Technology and Business University, Beijing 102401

Abstract: In the omnimedia era, the number of journalism students continues to grow, making employment in the media market increasingly difficult. How should universities break away from traditional training models and adopt new approaches to cultivate talent for the omnimedia communication environment? This paper collects recent job postings from official media (People's Daily and

China Central Radio and Television) and internet enterprises (Sina and Tencent), and through comparative analysis, summarizes the characteristics of media professionals most sought after in today's talent market. Based on these findings, the paper proposes recommendations for universities to help cultivate a new generation of journalists.

Keywords: omnimedia era; media talent; internet; media talent education; composite talent

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1.1 Definition

The omnimedia center represents the development trend of today's media industry. The book *Tongzi Wenyi* published by People's Publishing House proposes a definition of "omnimedia": "Omnimedia refers to a media form that establishes a comprehensive system encompassing existence and non-existence, with numbers and phenomena flowing and changing between heaven, earth, and humanity." This definition is actually quite abstract. Although academia has not yet provided an official concept of omnimedia, people constantly live in the "omnimedia era" and can perhaps offer their own explanations.

Omnimedia refers to the transmission of content through traditional channels such as newspapers, radio, and television, as well as emerging internet platforms, presenting information in various forms including text, sound, images, and video. Ultimately, users can access integrated information through multiple terminals including radios, televisions, computers, and mobile phones, achieving a new media survival mode where news can be grasped anytime and anywhere.

From the perspective of information disseminators, omnimedia communication is comprehensive. It integrates communication technology, content, forms and methods, and marketing approaches to form an integrated system of different media carriers, content forms, and technical platforms. Omnimedia communication not only enables information reception through various terminal types but also fully engages human senses, allowing people to perceive information multi-dimensionally through vision, hearing, touch, and smell. Therefore, comprehensiveness is also the core significance of omnimedia communication.

Omnimedia communication also features integration. Traditional news communication is determined by news production processes and follows a linear, relatively cumbersome dissemination pattern: gathering information at the front

line, writing and editing, reviewing, typesetting, and publishing, with a long production cycle. The emergence of omnimedia has shifted the communication model to one determined by audience needs. For example, the role of the “backpack journalist” enables an individual to independently complete news gathering, editing, and distribution, releasing content promptly and greatly enhancing news timeliness to meet audience demands.

From the perspective of information receivers, omnimedia is targeted. “Audience segmentation” is one of the goals of media communication. The advent of algorithms has powerfully impacted the field of news communication, making audiences increasingly “lazy” in their information reception habits. Media must distribute personalized messages to audiences with different preferences to maximize user stickiness. With the development of omnimedia communication, the audience market has been continuously refined. News delivery is not only timely but also targeted. This can be seen from the homepage toolbars of various news clients. Taking the People’s Daily client as an example, its homepage toolbar has 28 different channels. These channels are not only categorized according to the macro content of news, such as politics, society, culture, and education, but also according to media forms, such as the “Video” section for short videos, the “Lens” section primarily for photo reports, and the “Documents” section for reprinting central documents released by Xinhua News Agency. The purpose of building omnimedia communication is to meet the needs of audiences of different age groups and professional levels through diversified forms.

2. Differences and Similarities in Media Talent Demand Under New Communication Forms

The era of omnimedia communication has quietly arrived. Major media outlets have first reformed their own development, breaking through the traditional barriers of print media and vigorously developing integrated newspaper-web and television-web platforms, mobile communication, and new media communication centers. Consequently, demand for media talent has also changed under the new situation. Mastering only a single skill can no longer shoulder the responsibilities of journalists in the omnimedia communication era.

After extensive searching, the available job postings from various news media in the past three years remain quite limited, with only Sina and Tencent’s 2019-2020 recruitment notices accessible.

2.1 Official Media: Using People’s Daily and Central Radio and Television as Examples

People’s Daily holds extremely high authority in the news media industry and represents a peak that all who harbor ideals and love journalism aspire to reach. China Central Radio and Television is the most authoritative television station with a wealth of internal talent. This analysis lists recruitment notices from

People' s Daily for 2017-2019 and from Central Radio and Television for 2017, 2018, and 2020.

First, mainstream media such as People' s Daily and Central Radio and Television both require relevant professional talent to have a bachelor' s degree or above. Regarding English proficiency, passing the CET-4 and CET-6 exams is required as certification of language ability. Among the 36 positions recruited by People' s Daily, 19 positions only accept candidates with master' s degrees or above. The main responsibilities of these positions focus on foreign assignments, foreign language editing, management, medical editing, and computer technology, primarily centered on media and internet-related knowledge. The reporting scope of mainstream media is quite extensive, with high requirements for content professionalism, form innovation, and communication timeliness. The high frequency of reporting demands that mainstream media practitioners not only possess sufficient specialized knowledge but also reach top-tier professional competence. Therefore, they place greater emphasis on recruiting specialized talents in relevant fields. Central Radio and Television does not have additional educational requirements.

Second, both People' s Daily and Central Radio and Television need talent from various majors, accepting both liberal arts and science backgrounds. Among the 100 talents to be recruited by People' s Daily, the editorial business departments and comprehensive management departments plan to hire 13 candidates from non-literature majors. These disciplines primarily include economics and management, law, and computer science. The recruitment scope of Central Radio and Television in 2017 and 2018 was similar to that of People' s Daily. In its 2020 recruitment, 38 content operation personnel, 21 technical positions, 9 project management personnel, 4 functional positions, 2 product operation personnel, and 1 marketing personnel were needed. Unlike People' s Daily, Central Radio and Television requires a large number of technical talents who understand new media communication laws. A large number of content operators need to master the communication patterns, user profiles, platform content, and content presentation forms of every new media communication platform in the market. Even when delivering news on the same topic, it must be presented in different forms. Additionally, Central Radio and Television also needs talents proficient in various computer languages and familiar with network security knowledge, who have made indelible contributions to platform maintenance and effective information dissemination. Especially in the current era dominated by digital communication, while content itself is important, the enhancement of content through technology enables precise delivery to audiences and maximizes the value of news information.

Finally, People' s Daily and Central Radio and Television place great emphasis on the political stance of recruited talent. For three consecutive years, People' s Daily has required applicants to have a firm political stance, always maintain high consistency with the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, firmly establish the "Four Consciousnesses," possess lofty life and career

ideals, and love the Party' s journalism 事业. Central Radio and Television emphasizes that applicants must be politically qualified, physically healthy, highly motivated, and love television news 事业. Having Party member status is a very stable “bonus item” in the job application process. This is also a direct reason why contemporary university students, especially those who want to work in the news media industry and enter top mainstream media, strive to improve their political literacy and status. Thus, a firm political stance and correct political awareness are important criteria for official media in talent selection.

Sina and Tencent differ in nature from the public institutions like People' s Daily and Central Radio and Television mentioned above; they are private enterprises belonging to China' s four major internet portals. First, Sina and Tencent need talent that is extremely sensitive to the internet and urgently require new media-type talent. Both companies started with the internet and basically rely on it for information distribution channels. Tencent explicitly states in its recruitment notices that applicants should love the internet and be heavy users of internet products. Sina proposes that candidates should have online media work experience and increases recruitment quotas for Weibo operations. Therefore, if one wants to apply for content operation positions in internet enterprises, a youthful perspective and mindset along with strong sensitivity to internet information are essential requirements.

Second, Sina and Tencent emphasize the “T-shaped” talent cultivation model, which means deep learning in one specialty and broad understanding of multiple specialties. Sina and Tencent' s media departments are finely divided, covering entertainment, finance, science, education, and more. For example, Sina recruited financial editors in both 2019 and 2020, and added science news editors and education editors in 2020. When recruiting for content editing positions, Sina clearly states that content editors (related to public funds) only accept candidates with bachelor' s degrees or above in mathematics, economics, or related fields. This shows that media content practitioners need not only good writing skills and literacy, news sensitivity, and strong editing fundamentals, but also knowledge in other fields.

Finally, Sina and Tencent favor applicants with potential to operate “entertainment-oriented” content. Unlike official media, content production under internet enterprises leans toward entertainment news. “Short, flat, and fast” content is most welcomed by users in the market. Tencent has consistently retained short video, live streaming, and animation positions in 2019 and 2020, with specific requirements being: “loves the internet, heavy user of youthful and entertaining internet products, strong sense of topics, likes entertainment, high sensitivity to hot topics, big imagination, and creative.” Sina has specifically created positions for fashion editors, entertainment vertical content cooperation managers, and game vertical content cooperation managers, focusing on specialized entertainment communication.

2.3 Summary and Analysis

Although mainstream official media and internet enterprises have different requirements for content practitioners regarding education, political status and literacy, and majors, they share one common need: “composite talent.” “Composite talent” refers to cultivating multiple perspectives while focusing on developing one’s journalism capabilities. This is the “T-shaped” talent—someone who specializes deeply in one field while also possessing extensive knowledge reserves and understanding of multi-domain content. Journalists in the omni-media era must have broad knowledge and comprehensive abilities. Whether in finance, education, entertainment, or science popularization, content producers must understand the latest information; whether in interviewing, photography, writing, or video editing, they must possess basic operational capabilities. Only then can they maintain strong competitiveness in the increasingly fierce—one might even say brutal—media industry.

3. Recommendations for Universities in Cultivating New Era Omnimedia Talent

According to 2013 statistics, China had 1,080 undergraduate journalism and communication programs distributed across 637 institutions; 93 schools offered journalism and communication master’s programs, and 17 institutions had first-level doctoral programs, with approximately 200,000 enrolled students. By 2015, the number of universities offering journalism and communication majors increased to 681, with program distribution points growing to 1,244—an increase of 164 in just two years—and undergraduate enrollment rising to 230,000.

As journalism and communication became a popular industry, Tsinghua University’s announcement in May 2020 to cancel its undergraduate journalism program caused a sensation. Does this mean the “journalism has no theory” argument has been accepted by the market? Do students from other majors who master professional knowledge have a better grasp of news accuracy? Such questions flooded people’s minds. The “crisis” in journalism studies precisely reflects the question of what kind of journalism talent we need in the omnimedia era. Cultivating journalism talent must start with undergraduate education. The following recommendations can serve as references for universities when revising their training programs.

3.1 Omnimedia Thinking: Innovative Ideas

Under the impact of omnimedia, the thinking models of “broadcasting + new media” and “print media + new media” are no longer effective. Universities should focus on cultivating students’ three-dimensional thinking—omnimedia thinking. First, university students should be made aware of the trend of media convergence, and schools should provide conditions for students to learn various capabilities, such as data journalism, visualization technology, and technical tools for gathering, writing, and video editing and rendering in the omnimedia

context. They should integrate text, video, music, and technology to create omnimedia news. Many universities already have laboratories for journalism majors, such as mini studios and omnimedia labs, which should focus on cultivating students' abilities in gathering, writing, editing, and commenting, while also emphasizing photography, editing, and hosting skills. Additionally, universities should provide students with more practical tools and opportunities, signing cooperation agreements with relevant enterprises to provide free layout design tools and editing software for students.

Second, universities should cultivate students' dialectical and innovative thinking. We are now in the "post-truth" era. As future media practitioners, seeing is believing, discerning right from wrong, and not easily jumping to one-sided conclusions are basic qualities everyone needs. While improving grades is important, as theory is an effective tool for guiding practice, practice is the sole criterion for testing truth. Journalism is a highly practical industry, and students cannot rest on their laurels. They must be brave enough to leave the "comfortable chair" in the library, break free from historical constraints, study more news cases from the new era, and learn more about editing techniques and news production technologies in the omnimedia environment. They can also practice hands-on by operating technical tools such as programming languages, visualization tools, and Dreamweaver to create news pages and experience the innovation of omnimedia development.

3.2 University Media: Practice First

For freshmen and sophomores, the focus is generally on learning theoretical knowledge first, with internships in various units beginning in junior year. While theoretical knowledge is important because it teaches students to learn from history, I believe that as a highly practical discipline, journalism should engage in practical work as early as possible. Practice is the sole criterion for testing truth. Only through hands-on operation and practice can students discover their shortcomings in journalism work and make timely corrections.

For freshmen and sophomores, university media is an excellent choice. Although it cannot match the broad audience reach of mass media, university media can achieve "comprehensiveness" by establishing student news agencies that retain traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and television while adding new media platforms like short video platforms, WeChat, and Weibo. This gives students more choices and opportunities to develop their abilities. Compared to entering mass media directly, university media serves as a stable "transition." Since university media is run by the school and its audience consists of teachers and peers of the same age, student journalists better understand audience needs. They can not only get started easily but also draw material from events around them, allowing them to stay close to their audience, gain recognition, and increase their confidence. Through two years of training in freshman and sophomore years, when students formally enter mass media internships in junior year, they can reduce setbacks and achieve twice the result with half the effort.

3.3 Double Majors and Interdisciplinary Studies: Expanding Horizons

Omnimedia means being composite, and journalists must be proficient in “eighteen martial arts.” Knowledge of journalism alone can no longer satisfy audience market demands, so universities should provide students with opportunities to learn interdisciplinary knowledge and obtain double majors to make them competitive in the talent market.

Universities can either teach journalism students their characteristic disciplines or open wide the doors of knowledge, offering options in economics, arts, minor languages, computer science, physics, chemistry, and biology. While pursuing two majors will increase pressure on students to some extent, universities should still emphasize to journalism students the importance of composite talent, encouraging them to broaden their horizons and learn one more skill to add value to their career paths.

4. Conclusion

Integration, comprehensiveness, and three-dimensional development have become the development trend of the journalism industry, and journalism talent should follow the wave of omnimedia development without relaxing their skills training. In such a new era, more opportunities bring more challenges and fiercer competition. Students who want to enter the media industry can choose to become members of mainstream media, spread their youthful vitality in internet enterprises, or create their own self-media accounts or platforms. However, the prerequisite is to mold themselves into diversified composite talent, which is the direction that both universities and students themselves must strive for.

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Author Introduction: Zheng Aoying (2001-), female, from Beijing, undergraduate student, research direction: journalism and communication.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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