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Reflections on Enhancing the Appeal of Thematic Publicity in the New Media Environment: Post-print

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Abstract

In the new media environment, there is an increasing pursuit of diversified and personalized communication models. In thematic publicity and reporting, traditional media should seize the emerging trends in media development, create converged media news products on the basis of adhering to correct public opinion orientation and adapting to the communication patterns of new media, and enhance their influence and appeal through upholding fundamentals while innovating. Through storytelling narratives, emotional expression, and three-dimensional communication, they should continuously explore new pathways of expression to achieve effective publicity outcomes.

Full Text

Reflections on Enhancing the Appeal of Thematic Propaganda in the New Media Environment

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Abstract: In the new media environment, audiences increasingly seek diversified and personalized communication models. For thematic propaganda reporting, traditional media should seize emerging trends in media development, create converged media news products while upholding correct guidance of public opinion and adapting to the communication laws of new media, and enhance both influence and appeal through innovation while maintaining integrity. By employing narrative presentation, emotional expression, and multi-dimensional dissemination, media organizations can continuously explore new avenues of expression to achieve effective propaganda outcomes.

Keywords: thematic propaganda; new media; narrativization; emotionalization; multi-dimensional dissemination

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Thematic propaganda represents a crucial means for news media to effectively guide public opinion, unite people's hearts, boost morale, and promote national spirit. With the rapid development of modern information technology and widespread adoption of mobile devices, the channels through which people access news and information have fundamentally changed. Traditional media must grasp these new trends, create converged media news products while adhering to correct guidance of public opinion and adapting to new media communication patterns, and continuously explore innovative expression methods to enhance influence and appeal. This approach yields effective propaganda outcomes while maintaining integrity through innovation.

Taking the Communist Party of China Centenary thematic propaganda as an example, media organizations launched numerous novel and diverse converged media programs across online and offline platforms, interconnecting large and small screens to tell the Party's story from multiple perspectives. Ningde People's Radio Station, where the author works, produced a linear radio mini-series titled *Never Forgetting Our Original Aspiration*. Beyond audio programming, the station leveraged short videos, TikTok (Douyin), and visually appealing graphic posts to amplify dissemination impact and narrative appeal. The series focused on red stories from old revolutionary base villages in eastern Fujian, interviewing veteran Party members, elderly locals, and descendants of revolutionary forebears. These narrators brought to life flesh-and-blood characters and authentic, emotionally resonant red stories within a factual framework, while also sharing their perspectives on rural development and transformation. Each mini-episode stood alone at five minutes long, featuring scenes and characters that bridged history and present reality through storytelling. The narrators employed plain language and simple emotions, creating powerful appeal. The program abandoned the formal delivery of professional anchors; instead, all reporters' narratives and guest interviews occurred on location where stories unfolded, making reporters' observations and reflections authentic and credible. This narrative approach to thematic propaganda eliminated direct didacticism, rendering coverage more vivid and visually oriented while offering fresher perspectives.

1. Narrativization of Thematic Propaganda

The consensus among journalists holds that thematic propaganda should adopt small entry points and narrative techniques. Narrativization transforms abstract concepts into concrete forms, aligning with media's intuitive and visual communication characteristics and facilitating audience comprehension and retention. Thematic reporting should maintain broad vision while focusing on specific details, employing civilian perspectives and narrative expression that combine thematic storytelling with individual plot descriptions. By selecting typical cases that embody and illuminate thematic content, coverage can reflect macro-level situations.

Compelling stories emerge from grassroots communities and ordinary people's daily lives. Narrativizing thematic propaganda requires journalists to adhere to the "three closeness" principle—staying close to reality, life, and the masses—by venturing into frontline locations where news events occur to catch "live fish" and unearth valuable news leads. This approach yields richer content, more vivid language, and more dynamic stories. Reporting should focus on matters and objects closest to people's lives, using ordinary citizens' perspectives to reflect changes around them. By concentrating on communities, neighborhoods, villages, and localities, journalists can cover "ordinary people's small matters" that concern residents, telling stories comprehensively and multi-dimensionally through touching people and events, thereby making the main melody more moving, resonant, and appealing.

Recent thematic propaganda has featured distinct characteristics of historic significance, macroscopic scope, topical relevance, and achievement orientation—such as the 40th anniversary of reform and opening up, the decisive battle against poverty, building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, and the CPC Centenary. These campaigns typically span long timeframes and encompass multifaceted content. Without advance planning and content innovation, they risk becoming compilations of old news, data 堆砌, or historical material lists that alienate audiences. To enhance attraction and appeal, media must "localize" seemingly "lofty" reports and "activate" textbook-style content by finding effective carriers that transform major themes into familiar life details. Through authentic stories about individual households, roads, villages, or life dimensions, coverage can reflect profound social changes and showcase the full picture of life in the new era.

2. Emotional Expression in Thematic Propaganda

President Xi Jinping has emphasized that only by being on the road can one grasp the spirit of the times, only by being at the grassroots can one understand the people, and only by being at the scene can one be moved. When journalists conduct solid interviews at the grassroots level and immerse themselves among the masses to understand ordinary people's living conditions and empathize with their joys, sorrows, and struggles, they can produce news works that are substan-

tial, compelling, and emotionally resonant—works that earn popular recognition and acclaim.

Effective news stories move audiences and generate widespread impact precisely because of their strong style, distinctive characters, touching narratives, authentic scenes, and vivid details. Emotional expression in thematic propaganda should discard clichés and formulaic language, instead employing accessible, emotionally powerful language to convey information and present facts, thereby enhancing readability. In reporting on “Role Model of the Times” Sun Limei, who tragically died at age 44 on August 6, 2021, while fighting Typhoon Lupit in Xiapu County, Ningde, the author was deeply impressed by the media’s thorough excavation of character materials and the infectious power of emotional expression. This sustained thematic coverage of a typical figure used Sun Limei’s 17 years at the grassroots as a timeline, interviewing her family, colleagues, and local residents to produce series reports including “Secretary Amei in My Eyes,” “Amei-Style Cadres,” and “Amei’s Stories.” The coverage employed short videos, posters, H5 pages, and feature stories to present a comprehensive portrait that revealed character spirit through small details. One short video, *Amei’s Story Brings Everyone to Tears*, struck an emotional chord directly, featuring footage of residents’ reluctance to speak of Secretary Amei, her work photos among the people, and her child saying, “Mom is my pride!” This one-minute video compiled materials from the reporter’s sustained village interviews, incorporating authentic scenes, vivid details, plain language, and touching visuals with layered emotional expression, achieving excellent propaganda results. Throughout the coverage, the media neither artificially elevated the character nor excessively rendered tragedy, instead restoring an authentic, credible, and admirable image of an outstanding village official.

The author contends that compelling works in thematic propaganda primarily focus on ordinary people’s emotional experiences and changes, discovering human 闪光点 in the mundane and delivering human interest that provides positive, uplifting strength, thereby generating resonance. In annual campaigns like “Spring Festival at the Grassroots,” the decisive battle against poverty, and epidemic prevention and control, we consistently see masterpieces rooted in life, writing about the people, touching hearts, and moving audiences profoundly.

3. Multi-dimensional Dissemination of Thematic Propaganda

In the new media environment, audiences increasingly pursue diversified and personalized communication models, completely breaking the traditional one-way “we speak, you listen” pattern. People participate more autonomously in media interactions through multiple channels, posing higher demands on traditional media’s thematic propaganda reporting. Multi-dimensional dissemination media include traditional outlets like radio, television, and newspapers, as well as “two micros and one end” (Weibo, WeChat, and news clients) and video platforms. All media should leverage new media as an important front for thematic propaganda, planning, deploying, and advancing traditional and

new media coverage together. By fully utilizing converged media development achievements—including drones, panoramic cameras, 4G backpacks, mobile live streaming, virtual reality, 3D animation, H5, and Vlog—media organizations can create distinctive, substantial, and influential converged reporting works. Through interactive activities suited to new media platforms, they can attract young audiences to participate actively.

Thematic propaganda reporting should examine communication effectiveness from both reach and acceptance levels, considering the current media landscape and audience psychology and preferences. Do audiences accept the information delivered to them? Do they appreciate the format? Without high acceptance, even the most advanced hardware and extensive reach cannot effectively fulfill their function. Media must achieve multi-dimensional interactive communication through personalized customization and visual presentation, leveraging short videos' convenience, speed, and accessibility to enhance thematic propaganda' s appeal. By 下沉 content and producing new media products in forms that resonate with popular preferences, thematic propaganda can become more grounded and foster deeper public engagement.

In recent years, People' s Daily and CCTV News Client have launched thematic propaganda series as converged media products, using clear posters, H5 pages, and warm short videos to “ground” serious political content and bridge the distance between media and audiences, achieving optimal propaganda results. Many media have designed personalized mini-programs such as “I Love My Country” and “National Day · My Ethnic Style.” During the 2018 Labor Day holiday, People' s Daily Client launched a particularly popular mini-program where users could slide their screens to answer questions about “fading traditional trades,” learning about traditional culture while earning exclusive “Labor Expert” certificates—its 趣味性 and interactivity were self-evident. On September 17, 2021, news of the Shenzhou-12 manned spacecraft' s triumphant return dominated hot search and discussion lists, with comprehensive topic readings exceeding 3.5 billion and discussions surpassing 540,000, as hundreds of millions of netizens welcomed the astronauts home together.

As digital technology advances and media convergence deepens, traditional and new media have jointly created a new pattern for thematic reporting. New media technologies' visual, intuitive, and rapid presentation methods enhance the timeliness of thematic propaganda, while multi-dimensional communication models endow it with fresh vitality. Only through the three-dimensional linkage, interaction, and 融合 dissemination of multiple communication forms can thematic reporting achieve rapid, extensive, and effective propagation, forming a cohesive force in public opinion communication.

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

Source: ChinaXiv –Machine translation. Verify with original.