

All-Media Era: How Traditional Media Journalists Should Respond to Challenges and Post-Print Transformation

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Date: 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

Faced with the contemporary omnimedia era, how should journalists from traditional mainstream media such as newspapers, radio, and television respond? As a frontline news reporter and editor in traditional media with 23 years of professional experience, the author offers profound reflections on breakthrough and transformation through practical experience in transitioning to an all-media journalist. This article expounds upon effective pathways for the transformation of traditional media journalists from the following perspectives based on firsthand practical experience: confronted with shifts in the media landscape, proactively pursue integrated development; faced with changes in the public opinion ecosystem, properly grasp timing, degree, and effect; in response to evolving audience demands, adhere to the principle that content is king; amidst a complex environment for fulfilling professional responsibilities, strengthen social accountability; and in the face of anxiety over technological innovation, choose to embrace transformation.

Full Text

Introduction

With the vigorous development of the internet, all-media has become an unstoppable trend. Internet social platforms and self-media platforms have risen rapidly, giving birth to a dizzying array of new media formats: internet radio, internet television, mobile TV, digital newspapers, digital magazines, digital broadcasting, mobile text messages, mobile television, and touch-screen media. These employ multiple integrated media forms and expressive means to meet diverse audience needs, delivering information through various platforms, carriers, and channels in a comprehensive, multi-layered, compound, and three-dimensional manner for both production and consumption.

As a traditional media journalist with extensive experience working across newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, I have personally experienced anxiety, hesitation, and even a sense of powerlessness when confronting this entirely new media landscape and industry ecosystem. How can one respond and successfully transform? In recent years, I have made concentrated efforts on multiple new media platforms—including Toutiao, Tencent News, Douyin, and Xigua Video—attempting to transition from a traditional media journalist to a versatile all-media professional. Currently, as a verified “big V” creator on major news platforms like Toutiao, I have achieved original content certification in graphics, video, and Q&A formats. Drawing from these practical experiences, I share below my insights on how traditional media journalists can meet the challenges of the all-media era and achieve successful transformation.

1. Core Characteristics of All-Media: Full-Process, Holographic, Full-Personnel, and Full-Effectiveness

All-media, from the perspective of contemporary media characteristics, encompasses both evolving traditional media and internet-based new media. With the rapid advancement of internet and mobile technologies, modern media communication employs diverse expressive means—text, images, sound, light, and electricity—to display content in a comprehensive and three-dimensional manner. It integrates various communication methods including text, audio-visual materials, networks, and telecommunications to meet different audience needs through multi-directional, multi-layered, and convergent information production, dissemination, consumption, and application.

The “all” in all-media includes not only various communication tools such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, networks, telecommunications, and satellite communications, but also covers all human senses for receiving information—visual, auditory, and tactile. Through algorithms and big data, it selects the most suitable media forms and channels for different audience needs, maximizing comprehensive coverage and optimal dissemination effects. This has given rise to four key dimensions: full-process media, holographic media, full-personnel media, and full-effectiveness media.

Full-process media refers to the near-synchronous recording and transmission of news and information throughout entire events, achieving constant, real-time presence in communication. Holographic media denotes data-driven, standardized recording and multi-angle, multi-dimensional representation, virtually enabling comprehensive spatial presentation of information or any object with synchronized multi-perspective dissemination—making news and information omnipresent. Full-personnel media means that with the widespread adoption of portable smart devices, the barriers to news and information dissemination have significantly lowered; everyone is a media outlet, each person has a microphone, making information dissemination nearly ubiquitous. Full-effectiveness media indicates that media can precisely deliver broader experiences and services to audiences, unleashing more powerful effectiveness through the cross-integration

of text, images, sound, and video, the fusion of mobility and audience segmentation, and the superimposition of services including information, social networking, government affairs, and commerce.

From a media professional's perspective, all-media manifests as grafting, transformation, and convergence between different media types in form, while in content it manifests as all-media gathering and editing, all-media dissemination, and all-media operation. All-media gathering and editing involves reorganizing the gathering and editing process appropriately according to media characteristics and audience needs, employing multiple information delivery methods to satisfy diverse audiences. All-media dissemination means using different media channels for multi-media, multi-platform content distribution to reach the broadest possible audience. All-media operation refers to leveraging advanced technologies such as big data and algorithms to define and profile audiences after establishing media architecture and user accumulation, expanding into commercial applications to maximize economic benefits while balancing social benefits.

2. Challenges Confronting Traditional Media Journalists

The all-media era has brought multiple complex and severe challenges to traditional media journalists.

2.1 Massive Transformation of the Media Landscape

Today, the intelligent technology revolution represented by big data and artificial intelligence is in the ascendant. Social media has voraciously absorbed users and audiences, while algorithmic recommendation precisely satisfies various audience preferences and personalities. This has led to large-scale migration of traditional media audiences and fundamental changes in media consumption habits. Traditional mainstream media's advantages in communication channels, regional comprehensive coverage, and attention capture are weakening. Traditional media journalists' presence in the public discourse arena and their ability to attract attention have been affected, leaving many feeling confused and frustrated.

2.2 Profound Changes in the Public Opinion Ecology

In the all-media era, where everyone is a media outlet and each person has a microphone, the formation mechanism of public opinion has undergone profound changes, with the ecology becoming increasingly diversified and pluralistic. In the primary stage of socialism, the overlapping periods of reform 攻坚, social transformation, and prominent contradictions create conditions where rumors and misinformation can stimulate uncontrolled public sentiment, hot events repeatedly reverse causing public confusion, and legal systems face cognitive misunderstandings in certain areas. These high-risk public sentiment incidents occur frequently. How can we establish guidance amidst diversity and

find consensus among numerous voices? Facing the turbulent public opinion of the all-media era, journalists and media practitioners face increasing risks and mounting difficulties.

2.3 Upgraded Audience Demands for News and Information Products

In an all-media era of information overload, diverse voices, and abundant choices, the public demands more personalized news and information products with greater emphasis on experience and service. Amidst vast quantities of news and information, works of average quality have limited dissemination power and influence, quickly disappearing into the ocean of content. Poor-quality works not only fail to serve the purpose of “centering on the overall work and serving the larger picture,” but also produce negative effects, damaging the credibility of news and public opinion while generating negative influence. Only high-quality masterpieces that truly meet public expectations, evoke emotional resonance, and deliver positive energy—works that are “thoughtful, warm, and high-quality”—can reach audiences’ hearts and generate powerful communication, guidance, influence, and credibility.

For traditional media journalists, facing upgraded audience demands involves both helplessness regarding traditional news production systems and mechanisms, and unfamiliarity and maladaptation with all-media news production, dissemination, and operation.

2.4 Increasingly Complex Environment for Fulfilling Responsibilities

The rapid development and rise of self-media represent a primary hallmark of the all-media era. However, in their growth process, self-media frequently cater to audience emotions and tastes while ignoring objective facts, brandishing the banner of “entertainment above all” to ridicule everything. The amplification of fragmented information through entertainment has caused news to lose its objectivity and authenticity. News information becomes malleable “rubber clay” in the hands of various content creators, resulting in multiple different or even contradictory versions of a single news fact. The truth of news repeatedly reverses, leaving audiences confused and significantly diminishing the credibility of media and media professionals. Additionally, traditional media occasionally undermine their own credibility through norm violations: publishing false or inaccurate news and information that loses audience trust; positive propaganda becoming “sophisticated blackening” due to exaggerated and unrealistic writing styles; journalists violating professional ethics and causing media public image collapse—all of which tarnish media credibility.

2.5 Anxiety Driven by Technological Innovation

As media carriers and channel technologies evolve rapidly, technical terms have become frequently mentioned buzzwords in the industry: VR (Virtual Reality), AR (Augmented Reality), MR (Mixed Reality), 5G, algorithms, data mining,

user profiling, and more. The endless stream of new technical terminology has plunged traditional media journalists into anxiety. New media products and novel production, dissemination, and channel technologies have intensified panic about being abandoned. Particularly with new media technologies enabling concepts like immersive journalism and gaming journalism, traditional media journalists feel even more bewildered.

3. Meeting Challenges to Become Versatile All-Media Journalists

Against the all-media backdrop, bravely meeting challenges and transforming into all-media journalists represents the inevitable choice for traditional media journalists to avoid being eliminated by the tide of times. Facing challenges including media landscape transformation and public opinion ecology changes, how can traditional media journalists overcome difficulties and fulfill their duties and missions as Party journalists in the new era?

3.1 Facing Media Landscape Transformation: Active Integration and Development

In the all-media era, audiences have migrated en masse to social media and internet self-media platforms. Wherever the audience is, there lies the battlefield for news and public opinion. To bring the Party's line, principles, and policies into ordinary households and make mainstream values dominate social discourse, traditional media must, on one hand, actively seize the opportunities of internet development, strengthen converged media hardware and talent development, integrate communication channels, and re-enter the public eye with a new matrix to become the preferred or primary choice for audiences seeking news and information. On the other hand, traditional media journalists must actively integrate and develop, advancing into social media and internet self-media platforms. Through cycles of practice, understanding, more practice, and deeper understanding—gaining experience through trial and error—they can gradually master the rules and mechanics of each platform, striving to become “big V” creators who both disseminate the Party and government's voice and mainstream socialist values while connecting with public and netizen demands.

Drawing from personal experience, I previously used QQ Space and WeChat Moments. When Weibo and WeChat Official Accounts became popular, I sensed that the center of public discourse might shift. After 2014, as China's four major self-media platforms—Toutiao Account, Penguin Account, Baijia Account, and Dayu Account—launched, their mobile apps including Toutiao, Tencent News, Baidu News, UC Browser News, Douyin, and Xigua Video attracted hundreds of millions of users annually. As a traditional media journalist, I genuinely felt the marginalization of traditional mainstream media. In 2017, I began engaging with new media, researching practical operations including content review, distribution, recommendation mechanisms, and creator operations on internet

platforms. Through dedicated effort, I became a verified author, graphics original creator, video original creator, and Q&A original creator on Toutiao, China's largest new media platform. Simultaneously, my video columns were invited by Xigua Video and WeChat teams to establish presence on multiple video apps, initially forming a personal brand and all-media dissemination advantage. These transformation methods and approaches can serve as references for colleagues.

3.2 Facing Public Opinion Ecology Changes: Managing Timing, Scale, and Effectiveness

In the all-media era where everyone is a media outlet and each person has a microphone, how can we “hold high the banner” amidst diversity and “guide the direction” among numerous voices? This requires managing timing, scale, and effectiveness. Timing refers to opportunity and rhythm; scale refers to strength and appropriateness; effectiveness refers to results and actual impact. The purpose of managing these three elements is to enhance the guiding power of news and public opinion amid ecological changes.

In the all-media era's “clamorous” public opinion arena, Party journalists must maintain a sense of responsibility to “center on overall work and serve the larger picture,” addressing audience concerns about difficult and hot-button issues. They must grasp the timing of news gathering and release, making what should be hot become hot and what should be cold remain cold, saying what needs to be said appropriately. By utilizing new media platform matrices, they can create weather vanes for public opinion guidance and compasses for mainstream values in the all-media era.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, I joined the Communist Party member commando team of Hengyang Television Station. Through new media platforms including “Toutiao” and “Hengyang Toutiao,” I published over 40 graphics and video pieces from the front lines of isolation wards and anti-epidemic efforts, risking my life to conduct interviews. These pieces covered the latest anti-epidemic policies, hospital updates, epidemic reports, medical supply information, and heroic deeds. They were measured, focused, and directional, released through internet new media in the first instance. Content published on “Toutiao” and “Hengyang Toutiao” achieved weekly local audience reach exceeding 400,000 viewers, receiving overwhelming positive feedback.

While transforming from traditional to new media journalist requires significant effort and presents initial difficulties, practice makes perfect. By refusing to rest on laurels, actively changing mindsets, and updating concepts to adapt to new media rhythms and methods, journalists can achieve mastery. Compared with traditional media release processes, new media interviewing, editing, reviewing, and publishing offer stronger timeliness and greater convenience. However, precisely because of this, Party journalists' responsibilities and missions must be kept firmly in mind. A key characteristic of traditional media journalists transforming into new media journalists is the ability to uphold “unwavering guid-

ance” and “journalistic professionalism,” rather than the loose freedom of most self-media creators. Practice demonstrates that facing public opinion ecology changes and managing timing, scale, and effectiveness can enhance the guiding power of news and public opinion.

3.3 Facing Audience Demand Upgrades: Content is King

In the all-media era where self-media platforms have become stages for universal voice and interaction, mobile devices produce and rapidly disseminate massive amounts of graphics, audio, and video information daily. Audiences face an overwhelming abundance of choices! As professional producers of news and information, how can journalists make their works stand out, gain public recognition, and truly generate influence amidst the internet’ s overwhelming updates and diverse voices?

In the competition for influence in news and public opinion dissemination, a journalist’ s identity, media size, or rank are not determining factors—content is paramount. What makes news works favored by audiences is fundamentally the events they describe, the reasoning they occupy, the emotions they contain, and the beauty they embody. Only excellent works with rich spirit, substantial content, and abundant emotion can resonate with audiences emotionally, achieving the purpose of “uniting and inspiring the people.” In the history of the People’ s Republic of China’ s journalism, works such as Wei Wei’ s “Who Are the Most Beloved People” reporting on heroic deeds of Chinese People’ s Volunteers in the Korean War, and reports on exemplary cadres like Jiao Yulu and Kong Fansen, demonstrated the inspiring spiritual power and unique personal charisma of their subjects, moving audiences to voluntarily accept guidance.

To produce high-quality, audience-chasing news and information dissemination works with strong user stickiness in the all-media era, journalists must enhance their four capabilities: footwork, vision, mental acuity, and writing power. Footwork represents the fundamental skill of conducting social investigations both online and offline, delving into people’ s lives and understanding internet culture. Offline, journalists must go to grassroots levels and front lines, as “good news comes from running on foot” ; online, they must enter the internet battlefield, understanding public opinion and strengthening invisible footwork in the digital age. Vision represents the ability to discover news topics and stories both offline and online, reflecting journalists’ political sharpness and news sensitivity. Mental acuity encompasses the ability to guide algorithmic recommendations with mainstream values online and the capacity to manage timing, scale, and effectiveness in news planning offline. Writing power is the journalist’ s ability to write or present content—all-media era journalists must be versatile across multiple media formats, capable of writing for print, radio, and television scripts, crafting online articles, and possessing competent photography, videography, and production skills.

3.4 Facing Complex Duty Environments: Strengthening Social Responsibility

News media constitute the mouthpiece of the Party and the people. As stated, “Doing Party news and public opinion work well concerns the flag and the path, concerns the implementation of the Party’s theories, lines, principles, and policies, concerns the smooth advancement of the Party and state’s various undertakings, concerns the cohesion and centripetal force of the entire Party and people of all ethnic groups, and concerns the future and destiny of the Party and the state.” However, in the all-media era, the uneven quality and fragmented massive information dissemination of self-media has undermined public recognition of news and public opinion credibility.

To forge credibility in news and public opinion amidst complex duty environments, all-media journalists must grasp the key of “strengthening social responsibility.” They must unwaveringly uphold Party spirit principles, adhere to the Marxist view of journalism, and maintain correct public opinion guidance. They must find their coordinates and positioning in “centering on overall work and serving the larger picture,” never absent when the Party and people need them. Regardless of new media changes, the principle of journalistic authenticity must remain unchanged; the practice of “going to grassroots, transforming work styles, and improving writing styles” must persist. Offline, journalists must step across people’s thresholds and into their hearts; online, they must clearly observe public opinion and serve as windows and bridges to earn the trust of the Party and people. They must abide by journalistic professional ethics, resolutely resist false news, paid news, and paid silence, becoming loyal, clean, and responsible journalists of integrity.

3.5 Facing Technology-Driven Anxiety: Choosing to Embrace Transformation

Historically viewed, the history of news communication is also a history of media technology innovation. New technologies have changed not only the technical means of news dissemination but also the structure of media: from paper and printing giving rise to newspapers, to telegraph and telephone enabling radio, to photography and videography creating television—all follow this pattern. Today, propelled by rapid developments in remote transmission and mobile communication technologies, the mainstream media has historically begun shifting from traditional newspapers and television to the internet.

Changes in media structure have triggered a series of reactions across political, economic, and cultural dimensions. Politically, mainstream media migration has shifted communication power, challenging ideological work and public opinion regulation. Economically, traditional media face severe user loss and business decline while new media rise rapidly. Culturally, new media has personalized news production, transformed the public into users, shifted centralized dissemination to algorithm-based precision pushing, and significantly changed news

formats and audience preferences.

Embracing new technologies and turning toward the internet has become the inevitable choice for traditional media, and traditional media journalists should take the lead in this transformation. By learning and practicing new media and new business formats, they can forge themselves into excellent versatile all-media journalists, fulfilling the glorious responsibilities of “holding high the banner, gathering the people’ s hearts, nurturing new generations, invigorating culture, and showcasing China’ s image.”

[1] Xi Jinping’ s important speech at the Party’ s news and public opinion work symposium [EB/OL]. Xinhua Net, http://www.ce.cn/xwzx/gnsz/szyw/201602/21/t20160221_{8968832}.shtm 2016-02-19.

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

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