

The Transformation of Broadcasting News Editors in the Converged Media Era (Postprint)

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Abstract

Following years of development, media convergence has entered the second phase of “deep integration” . Under the new circumstances, broadcast news editors shoulder the critical responsibility of facilitating the deep integration of radio and television media; essentially, the transformation of broadcast media is tantamount to the transformation of its editors. This paper analyzes the novel characteristics demonstrated by broadcast news editing work in the converged media era and the professional requirements imposed upon broadcast news editors, proposes transformation strategies for broadcast news editors in the converged media context, and seeks to contribute to the integrated development of the broadcast industry.

Full Text

Preamble

Title: Transformation of Radio and Television News Editors in the Era of Media Convergence

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Abstract: After years of development, media convergence has entered the “second half” of deep integration. Under the new circumstances, radio and television news editors shoulder the important task of promoting the deep integration of radio and television media, and the transformation of radio and television media is essentially the transformation of editors. This paper analyzes the new characteristics of radio and television news editing work in the era of media convergence and the professional requirements for radio and television news editors, and proposes transformation strategies for radio and television news editors in the era of media convergence, hoping to contribute to the integrated development of the radio and television industry.

Keywords: media convergence; radio and television news editors; transformation; news thinking; communication strategies

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Introduction

In June 2020, the 14th meeting of the Central Committee for Comprehensively Deepening Reform reviewed and adopted the “Guiding Opinions on Accelerating the In-depth Development of Media Convergence,” which put forward the important task of promoting the in-depth development of media convergence. This also signifies that China’s media convergence has moved from the “first half” of building convergence platforms and creating innovative convergence products to the “second half” of promoting in-depth development of media convergence and comprehensively constructing a media convergence system. Under these new circumstances, radio and television news editors shoulder the important task of promoting the deep integration of radio and television media and serve as the “sharp weapon” for radio and television media to increase their competitiveness. Therefore, how to meet the requirements of the media convergence era and achieve transformation and development deserves careful consideration by every professional editor.

1.3 Diversified Development of News Editing Work

In the past, due to limitations of communication technology, radio and television news planning and editing methods were relatively monotonous. In the era of media convergence, mobile internet technology has promoted the diversified development of communication platforms, while the empowerment of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, VR, and AR has further diversified radio and television news planning and editing methods, making the realization forms of news more pluralistic. This undoubtedly opens up new horizons for the transformation of radio and television news editors.

1. New Characteristics of Radio and Television News Editing Work in the Era of Media Convergence

In the era of media convergence, the public opinion ecology, media landscape, and communication methods have all undergone profound changes. Emerging media have become the main arena for gathering audiences, with more than 800 million netizens laying the foundation for this main arena. The network

main arena brings not only new communication platforms but also new ways of thinking, expression, and acceptance. As mainstream media, traditional radio and television media must inevitably embrace new media, enter the network main arena, and quickly achieve transformation if they want to maintain continuous influence. Moreover, the transformation of radio and television media is essentially the transformation of editors.

1.1 Enhanced Timeliness of News Editing Work

In the era of media convergence, continuous technological development and deepening media integration have exposed audiences to overwhelming amounts of information. The increase in available channels naturally leads to comparisons among different information sources. Especially with the arrival of 5G, audiences have placed higher demands on the editing methods and timeliness of radio and television news. As information spreads faster and through more channels, the work efficiency of traditional editors can no longer meet the practical needs of audiences. If radio and television editors cannot seize the initiative in reporting, news will instantly become old news, and audiences will be lost. Therefore, radio and television editors must improve their editing, planning capabilities, and timeliness.

1.2 Platformization Development of News Editing Work

Platforms can provide one-stop satisfaction of audience needs, thereby possessing strong stickiness. In the “second half” of deep media integration, platforms have become an important driving force for the integrated development of mainstream media. Traditional mainstream media have achieved diversified expansion of their media products and services through platform-based development. In the era of media convergence, news editors engage in comprehensive, multi-medium communication. They not only need to provide efficient and high-quality news content through authoritative information platforms to monetize and retain users and build modern communication power, but also need to serve as a bridge connecting the government and the people through personalized comprehensive life service platforms to enhance audience experience. For example, the construction of “Smart Radio and Television” mobile client terminals at all levels of radio and television media aims to provide diversified services for audiences and represents a bold attempt to transform into comprehensive platforms. [1]

2.1 Requirements for Public Opinion Guidance

Mainstream news media serve as the eyes, ears, and mouthpiece of the Party and the people, bearing important political missions and responsibilities. For many years, radio and television media have developed a systematic and strict review process from content planning and material selection to editing, production, and dissemination. With the rise of new media, new content production methods have bypassed traditional gatekeeping models, and the increasingly low

publishing threshold of self-media has further deconstructed the value core of news editors' topic selection, planning, and review gatekeeping. The situation of "universal editors" has made information content more diversified, gradually weakening the pre-publication review gatekeeping procedure and resulting in a flood of fake news and redundant information online. Audiences, unable to distinguish truth from falsehood, are easily influenced by negative public opinion. Therefore, in the media convergence environment, as the "gatekeepers" of news, radio and television editors have the responsibility to enhance their public opinion guidance capabilities, provide objective and truthful news products to audiences from a professional perspective and with firm political determination, help audiences strengthen their ability to distinguish right from wrong, guide them to establish correct values, correctly understand problems in China's economic and social development process, and make the core socialist values deeply rooted in people's hearts.

3.2 Transformation of News Perspective

The planning, editing, and production of high-quality news content forms the foundation of the transformation and development of radio and television news editors. Therefore, in their work, editors must give full play to their professional advantages, transform their news perspective, and make news content profound and influential in the context of social media. First, political topics should be "softened." The importance of current affairs news is self-evident, whether in terms of reporting content or objects. However, due to its serious subject matter and rigid form, it often creates a sense of distance for audiences. In the era of media convergence, editors must change their thinking, innovate reporting perspectives, and alter reporting styles to make current affairs news reporting more "down-to-earth." For example, the short video program "Anchor's Take on the News" launched by China Media Group softens hard political topics by focusing on hot issues, innovating commentary forms, and using humorous language, achieving the effect of maximizing the dissemination of mainstream voices. Similarly, during the 2019 Two Sessions, the CCTV News WeChat public account launched "Understanding the Two Sessions in One Chart," using long-form infographics to transform text and data into design elements, cleverly enhancing users' reading experience. Second, hot events should be narrated from a civilian perspective. Radio and television news editors should keep up with social hot events, explain them to audiences from a civilian perspective, seize the initiative in agenda-setting, inject professionalism and authority into the public opinion field, respond to audience concerns, and expand audience reach. [4] Third, the essence of events should be interpreted in depth. Although new media news excels in richness and speed, fragmentation and superficiality are weaknesses that are difficult to overcome. The professional advantages of radio and television news editors are unmatched by new media. By deeply excavating the essence of events, extending background materials, and revealing the meaning behind events, they can improve news quality and enhance communication effects.

2.3 Requirements for Communication and Interaction

Interactivity is the most prominent feature of new media. Any information source and information receiver can engage in multi-directional communication. Interactivity transforms the one-way linear transmission of news information into two-way interactive communication, deepening audience attraction. In the era of traditional media, interaction between media and audiences was minimal, and audiences could hardly influence media development and prosperity. However, in the era of media convergence, media competition is primarily competition for audiences, and zero interaction means that media lose their attractiveness to audiences and will inevitably be at a disadvantage in fierce inter-media competition. Therefore, radio and television news editors must transform in a timely manner according to the requirements of the times and the needs of audiences, actively build new media channels for communication with audiences, provide good news services for audiences, enhance the interactivity, experience, and shareability of radio and television news content, and cultivate audience loyalty to the media.

3. Transformation Strategies for Radio and Television News Editors in the Era of Media Convergence

Media convergence is a major undertaking. To accomplish this requires the conscious transformation and unremitting efforts of all traditional media practitioners, and radio and television news editors are no exception. They must actively innovate in aspects such as news thinking, news perspective, communication strategies, news presentation, and quality improvement to enhance editing quality.

3.1 Transformation of News Thinking

For media, ways of thinking determine modes of production. In the past, radio and television media, in news production and dissemination, proceeded more from the positioning and judgment of editors rather than from market demand. This traditional thinking can no longer meet audience needs in the era of media convergence. Because in this era, technology has endowed audiences with more discourse power and the right to choose media. In the vast ocean of information, only news that meets audience needs and provides good experiences can attract audiences and create possibilities for them to choose, use, and share virally. Therefore, in the media convergence environment, radio and television news editors must transform their news thinking, establish user thinking, integration thinking, service thinking, and data thinking for media convergence, center on the needs of the broad audience, use technologies such as big data and cloud computing to create audience profiles, analyze audience news consumption tendencies, and firmly grasp the orientation of public opinion. [3] They should produce news products that audiences love to see and hear from an equal perspective, push content precisely, and do well in “news + government affairs”

and “news + services.”

3.3 Transformation of Communication Strategies

Currently, the popularity of many news products is due to their use of diversified communication channels, expanded communication scope, and positive communication effects. Radio and television news editors should also make full use of existing new media platforms. First, they should attract traffic through the integrated communication of “traditional media + new media.” They should pay attention to the cluster and multi-level characteristics of converged media news, build radio and television media convergence brands, and conduct multi-channel, matrix-style communication. [5] Second, they should attract traffic through diversified communication symbols. Radio and television news editors should fully utilize new media technology to innovate news product forms, thereby driving new media value. Third, they should attract traffic through real-time interaction on platforms. Radio and television news editors should establish a long-term mechanism for interactive communication with audiences, guide audiences to participate in the entire process of news production, creation, and distribution, and encourage audiences to freely express their ideas and suggestions through social media platforms such as WeChat groups, QQ groups, and Weibo, narrowing the distance between media and audiences. Fourth, they should use big data technology to analyze audiences’ news consumption habits and preferences, conduct refined audience segmentation based on data results, and then carry out precise push notifications to improve news reach and dissemination.

3.4 Transformation of News Presentation

In the era of traditional radio and television, news editors had to pay attention to storytelling when producing news. Due to characteristics such as linear transmission and fleeting nature, content from traditional radio and television media did not easily have a profound impact on audiences. Only by fully excavating the value and story of news could audiences’ resonance be evoked, adding human interest, authenticity, and depth to otherwise abstract and dry news, thereby gaining audience attention and recognition. In the era of media convergence, with the rapid development of internet technology, the comprehensive rollout of 5G commercial use, and the speed and fee reductions by the three major operators, the foundation and support have been provided for the videoization of everything, promoting the comprehensive explosion of short videos. Today, short videos have become the main way for audiences to obtain news information. According to the “46th Statistical Report on China’s Internet Development” released by CNNIC, as of June 2020, the scale of short video users in China has reached 818 million, accounting for 87.0% of all internet users. The visual expression of short videos enriches news presentation elements and techniques, maintaining the original audio-visual experience of radio and television news while enhancing the story, situational nature, and sense of presence, helping radio and television news achieve the transformation from storytelling

to visual presentation. [6] Therefore, radio and television news editors should adhere to the transformation of news presentation and do well in short video news reporting.

First, express big themes through small entry points. Short videos produced by traditional mainstream media often have serious themes and rigid, stiff presentation forms, failing to arouse audience interest and making it difficult to generate “traffic.” Therefore, radio and television news editors should change stereotypical thinking, reflect big themes through small entry points, explain profound ideas in simple terms, change audiences’ fixed impressions of positive-energy news, and improve news attractiveness and influence. [7] For example, since the outbreak of COVID-19, China Media Group and provincial and municipal radio and television media have all chosen short videos as their main weapon, successively producing anti-epidemic-themed short videos such as “Wuhan: My Anti-Epidemic Diary” and “Special Notes,” which have received more than one million views, playing an important role in guiding public opinion, reassuring people, and transmitting positive energy.

Second, “condense” content and quickly get to the theme. In the era of media convergence, audiences prefer fragmented reading. If a short video news piece cannot capture the audience’ s attention within 5-8 seconds and create a climax within 15 seconds, audiences will move on to the next short video. Therefore, when editing short videos, radio and television news editors must condense content and make it highly concise. For example, CCTV’ s “Anchor’ s Take on the News” presents a fragmented model in content production and discourse representation overall. Each short video lasts about one minute, some only 30 seconds, differing from previous panoramic scanning-style information dissemination by using novel language and style to get straight to the point, transmit mainstream voices, narrow the distance with audiences, and expand communication power.

Third, make full use of new technology to enhance audience experience. In the 5G era, big data, VR, and AR virtual reality technologies have been strengthened, creating many new ways to play with short videos that bring entirely new experiences to audiences. For instance, “Yangshipin” launched by China Media Group is the first national-level 5G intelligent new media platform focusing on short videos. On January 27, 2020, “Yangshipin” used 5G technology to livestream the construction of Wuhan’ s Huoshenshan and Leishenshan hospitals, attracting more than 200 million viewers. In summary, planning news content around new artificial intelligence technologies has become an important capability for radio and television news editors.

3.5 Enhancement of Comprehensive Quality

In the era of media convergence, whether radio and television news editors can smoothly achieve transformation is inseparable from their own comprehensive quality. To improve their quality, they must continuously learn and diligently

practice. [8] First, they should study political theory knowledge. Radio and television news editors should adhere to the Marxist view of journalism, maintain a firm political stance, earnestly study the Party and state' s major policies and guidelines, learn commonly used laws and regulations, and serve as a bridge between the Party and the people, transmitting the voice of the Party and government on one hand and timely interpreting policy theories related to people' s vital interests on the other. Second, they should learn all-media editing technology. Only with solid professional foundations can they produce products that audiences love and meet audience needs. Therefore, radio and television news editors should be familiar with the entire process of new media collection, production, and distribution, and cultivate comprehensive communication capabilities. Third, they should learn cultural knowledge. Radio and television news reporting covers a wide range of content, which determines that only by broadening their knowledge base and enriching their knowledge reserves can editors handle complex and changing media work with ease. Fourth, they should participate in various professional trainings. Training can not only increase knowledge and keep abreast of industry developments but also enhance practical capabilities and consolidate professional skills.

In the era of media convergence, the transformation of radio and television news editors is an inevitable trend in the development of the entire traditional media industry and an inevitable choice for editors themselves to adjust and optimize their professional knowledge structure and realize personal value. Therefore, news editors must maintain broad vision and unique insight, clearly understand the development situation of the media industry and the job requirements for talent in editing positions, keep pace with the times, actively learn technologies and means for integrated development, continuously promote the deep integration of old and new media, and contribute their strength to the sustainable development of radio and television media.

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

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