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## Development of News Communication Subjects in the New Media Era (Postprint)

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### Abstract

Since the onset of the 21st century, significant transformations have permeated every aspect of daily life. The emergence of new media has expanded the audience base, while the subjects of news communication have likewise undergone notable changes. This paper primarily examines the evolutionary process of the relationship between news communication subjects and receiving subjects, as well as the principal impacts of the transformation of news communication subjects in the new era.

### Full Text

#### Research on the Development of News Communication Subjects in the New Media Era

**Abstract:** Since the beginning of the 21st century, every aspect of our daily lives has undergone significant transformation. The emergence of new media has expanded audience size and altered the subjects of news communication. This paper examines the evolutionary process of the relationship between news communication subjects and receiving subjects, along with the primary impacts of subject transformation in the new era.

**Keywords:** new media era; news communication; development of communication subjects

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## 1. The Evolution of the Relationship Between News Communication Subjects and Receiving Subjects

In the news communication process, different roles exist at various stages, each serving distinct functions. The most common distinction is between news communicators and news receivers—two indispensable roles in the communication process. The news communication subject refers to all workers in news media, primarily comprising news disseminators, while the receiving subject refers to the audience that receives information from communication subjects. With the arrival of the new media era, novel information dissemination methods have proliferated, and the rapid development of internet technology has created a new landscape for news communication. New media has lowered the barrier to entry for media participation, enabling virtually anyone with network access and electronic devices to become a media worker. Compared with traditional media, new media provides everyone with opportunities to become emerging communicators. This transformation has altered news dissemination patterns, allowing news receivers to become communicators as well, shifting from unidirectional to bidirectional communication and enabling dual identities as both receivers and disseminators. Consequently, in the new media era, the distinction between receivers and communicators has become blurred, with both roles coexisting.

The transition from a traditionally clear-cut separation to the current state of interchangeable roles has undergone a lengthy evolution. During this period, communication and receiving subjects have exhibited various relational patterns that vividly reflect the overall landscape of human news communication activities. In the long term, the phenomenon of undifferentiated communication and receiving subjects in news activities will likely persist as a long-term trend, unaffected by the arrival of new eras.

### 1.1 The Vague Relationship of Undifferentiated Communication and Receiving Subjects

Since its inception, human news communication activity has undergone extensive development. In the early period before the emergence of professional journalists, no clear boundaries existed between communicators and receivers, nor were there distinct concepts of these roles. The differentiation of news communication subjects from receiving subjects originated in the early days of Western journalism, when people distinguished between the two parties in news transmission—what we now call news communicators and news receivers. This conceptualization strictly divided individuals involved in news into two identities with distinct responsibilities in news communication activities, without mutual conversion between them. However, after the new media era began, the phenomenon of undifferentiated communication and receiving subjects emerged, where communicators can be receivers and receivers can be communicators.

The initial emergence of this undifferentiated state occurred because people at that time lacked definitions for the roles of “communicator” and “receiver.” In

information transmission processes, these roles were interchangeable. People did not distinguish between news information and other communication activities, and news communication existed in a spontaneous, unconscious state. In the new media era, the two roles have once again become interchangeable, though for different reasons than in the earliest period—now primarily due to contemporary internet technology development.

## **1.2 The Corresponding Relationship of Separated Communication and Receiving Subjects**

Following the emergence of Western civilization, tremendous changes occurred across all aspects of society—political, economic, and technological—and the news field was no exception. The development of news media from nonexistence to its current scale is inseparable from the emergence of Western civilization. The most significant transformation in news communication has been the birth of mass communication methods, which distinguished news communication activities from daily information exchange and established them as a specialized profession. The birth of journalism as a profession fundamentally altered the previously undifferentiated state of communication and receiving subjects. Since the emergence of newspapers, communicators and receivers have become distinctly separated. In the early 17th century, the appearance of printed newspapers marked the birth of the news industry. From its inception, the news industry clearly separated communicators from receivers, demonstrating that printed newspapers represented the beginning of this corresponding relationship. Subsequently, the continuous development of the news industry heralded the arrival and growth of the mass communication era, forming a complete corresponding relationship between communication and receiving subjects. The intervention of mass media created clear role divisions between communicators and receivers, though the potential for role interchange existed but remained unarticulated until the new media era made it apparent.

## **1.3 The Harmonious Integrated Relationship Between Communication and Receiving Subjects**

During the mass media stage, journalists with a strong sense of social responsibility established the separated corresponding relationship between communication and receiving subjects. In this period, communication subjects dominated the relationship—a dynamic that persisted even into the new media era. After the new media era arrived, an increasing number of people became news media workers, and news communication activities were no longer limited to the three traditional media. Emerging media entered news communication in growing numbers, transforming people's traditional impressions of news communication activities and accelerating both the speed and breadth of news dissemination. As new media penetration deepened, people became increasingly dissatisfied with unidirectional communication models. Upon receiving news information, they gained freedom to express viewpoints, leading more audience members to voice

opinions about news content. Simultaneously, news communicators sought feedback. Under this trend, news communication transformed from unidirectional to bidirectional, fundamentally altering traditional news communication patterns. In the new media era, news communication and reception have achieved an integrated relationship—anyone with internet access can become a media participant.

## 2. The Impact of Changes in News Communication Subjects in the New Media Era

### 2.1 Redefining the Concept of News

Before the new media era, the definition of news was highly complex, and news was strictly distinguished from information. Information covered a much broader scope than news, with only a small portion of information qualifying as news—specifically, timely, valuable content suitable for dissemination. However, with internet popularization, people’s information reception channels have expanded, and dissemination pathways have diversified. Internet access has provided opportunities for public participation in news communication processes. Against this backdrop, the concept of news has changed, and traditional definitions can no longer adapt to the current environment. On the internet, some audiences publish messages on social software or other platforms that include the six elements of an event, while news must conform to basic structures beyond these six elements. Therefore, from a traditional perspective, many information exchanges users post on social platforms cannot be considered news. This demonstrates that traditional news definitions can no longer meet the needs of information development in the new media era, necessitating reformulation of news definitions.

With the construction of social networks and the popularity of platforms like QQ, WeChat, and Weibo, interpersonal communication has become increasingly widespread on the internet. Through bidirectional interactive exchanges with others, individuals obtain diverse perspectives to inform their own choices. On the internet, people no longer focus solely on social information and public events but also on content related to their personal lives. These fragmented pieces of information cannot constitute news content nor meet the conditions for mass communication, yet within certain fixed groups, such information may also be called news. The objectivity of news has been weakened. In traditional journalism, communicators required training to assume journalistic responsibilities. However, internet development and the new media era have lowered the threshold for news practitioners, resulting in uneven quality among them. While socially responsible journalists pursue objectivity, fairness, and impartiality, many self-media communicators now report news with strong personal emotions. Some even prioritize timeliness over rigorous content verification, leading to questioned news authenticity.

## 2.2 Impact on Journalists

Journalists constitute one of the most important roles in news communication activities, serving as primary participants and drivers. Their main functions involve gathering information, organizing it, and publishing it to ensure news authenticity. After the new media era arrived, journalists are no longer just news communicators but can also become news receivers. Audiences can not only read news but also participate in news events, driving their development. As citizens themselves, journalists can also participate in news events, leading the public to understand event backgrounds, causes, and subsequent impacts. Journalists must now enhance their professional capabilities. In the traditional news era, their primary work involved writing articles and gathering news information, making writing ability an essential skill. However, contemporary journalists require more specialized skills. Internet popularization has changed news communication methods, enabling audiences to become communication subjects who can discover more information. With the new media era's arrival, media quantity has increased while quality has declined, making professional journalists gatekeepers for new media. Currently, increasing numbers of internet users participate in news activities, playing a significant role in promoting new media development. News possesses strong inclusiveness, and the internet encompasses vast amounts of information, necessitating professional staff to serve as gatekeepers. The transformation of communication subjects in the new media era has significantly impacted traditional news communication systems, requiring active strategic adjustments to best embrace the new media era.

## 2.3 Supervisory Role Over Mainstream Media

In the traditional news era, conventional media held a near-monopoly position. In the new media era, the transformation of news communication subjects has enabled ordinary people to participate in news communication processes, allowing them to serve as media supervisors. This can effectively curb misconduct, balance media power, and enhance news authenticity.

## 3.1 Improving Audience Personal Media Literacy

Audience participation in news communication processes constitutes a form of media literacy cultivation. Surveying China's new media development status, the number of participants in various news activities is increasing dramatically, giving birth to the concept that everyone can participate in news communication. This concept is gradually influencing public media literacy. On internet platforms, everyone can express their views on particular events, transforming public event participants into the general public. Any reported news event must undergo public scrutiny, enhancing social participation. However, throughout this new media development process, we cannot guarantee that everyone can participate in this transformation, though the public's role remains indispensable. To promote this transformation, the government must provide guidance and strengthen network environment management.

### 3.2 Strengthening Online Environment Management

The 19th Party Congress report states: “Strengthen internet content construction, build a comprehensive network governance system, and create a clean and clear cyberspace.” The internet is essentially an information dissemination platform. Its immediacy, interactivity, virtuality, borderlessness, and anonymity mean traditional media regulation models cannot be directly replicated in the internet domain. Due to the internet’s rapid development, audience utilization of networks has greatly increased, yet disseminated information varies widely in quality. Therefore, we must emphasize the creation of online discourse spaces that combat false and vulgar information, providing the public with a good and orderly communication environment.

The transformation of the new media era extends beyond the media field, subtly changing many other domains as well, making this transformation challenging and encountering numerous obstacles. In the process of news communication subject transformation, we cannot ensure universal participation, yet the public’s role remains crucial. To advance this transformation, the government must fulfill its guiding function and strengthen online environment management.

In the new media era, the processes of news production, discovery, and dissemination have undergone earth-shaking changes, breaking the news delivery framework constructed by traditional media. This has created more channels for communicators and receivers to express their views on news events and enabled them to serve as disseminators for secondary diffusion of news events, forming new media communication patterns. News possesses powerful inclusiveness, and the internet encompasses vast information, requiring professional staff to serve as gatekeepers. The transformation of communication subjects in the new media era has significantly impacted traditional news communication systems, necessitating active strategic adjustments to best embrace the new media era.

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