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Mobile Live-Streaming News: Current Status and Trends (Postprint)

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

Abstract

In recent years, mobile real-time news has experienced rapid development, with media organizations placing increasing emphasis on mobile live news formats. Through a comparative analysis of real-time mobile news and real-time television news, this article identifies that mobile real-time news offers additional benefits in terms of enhanced recency, online presence, and audience engagement. However, several challenges persist, including the lack of post-production, suboptimal recognition experience, and inadequate host responsiveness.

Full Text

Abstract

In recent years, mobile live news has experienced rapid development, with media organizations increasingly emphasizing this reporting format. By comparing mobile live news with traditional television live news, this paper identifies additional advantages of mobile live news, including enhanced timeliness, immersive presence, and audience engagement. However, significant challenges remain, such as inadequate post-production, suboptimal viewer experience, and limited host responsiveness.

Keywords: mobile live streaming; news; news live streaming

According to the 38th report from the China Internet Network Information Center, as of June 2018, 92.5% of Chinese internet users accessed the internet via mobile phones—a proportion approximately one-third higher than those using computers. This mobile network environment has created substantial opportunities for the rapid development of mobile live streaming. The integration of “mobile live streaming +” with journalism has driven transformation within the news industry. In the mobile internet era, news producers utilize live streaming

applications to create and simultaneously broadcast multimedia audio-visual content in real-time, providing users with comprehensive, immersive news experiences that enable them to watch live news coverage anytime and anywhere on their mobile devices. This new form of journalism can be termed mobile news live streaming.

1.1 Mobile Live News

Mobile live news represents a novel format that currently lacks a standardized definition. In essence, it involves the transmission of live news content through mobile client applications to smartphones, utilizing mobile networks for real-time recording and broadcasting. This format emerges from the convergence of news communication and mobile live streaming technologies, offering audiences a new information consumption experience. Mobile live news transcends temporal and spatial constraints, allowing people to access information anytime and anywhere, thereby enhancing news visibility and accessibility.

1.2.1 Media Independent Live Streaming Planning

This model involves media organizations—whether traditional outlets or new media entities—independently planning and producing mobile live news reports. The term “independent” carries two meanings: first, the live broadcast is a singular event rather than part of a series or regular programming; second, the broadcast operates independently without being linked to other platforms. These news events typically focus on major incidents as sustainable reporting topics. For example, in February 2016, NetEase News launched a 360-hour live stream covering the Spring Festival travel rush.

1.2.2 Media-Platform Collaborative Live Streaming

In this model, media organizations partner with live streaming platforms, typically social media or dedicated streaming services. Such collaborations may involve single reports or long-term, stable partnerships. By leveraging these platforms, media outlets can create content while benefiting from the platform’s streaming traffic and technical support. For instance, in July 2016, *Hubei Daily* and its Jingchu Network collaborated with the Douyu live streaming platform to report on flood rescue efforts along the Hubei riverbanks. During the 2017 Chinese New Year, Spring Festival News and Tencent jointly launched a “Spring Festival” live broadcast, utilizing two live streaming vehicles and six signals to create continuous five-day, three-night coverage.

1.2.3 Fixed Live Streaming on Media Client Applications

This approach involves media client applications establishing dedicated news pages or columns for standardized live news broadcasting. For example, on February 29, 2016, the Xinhua News Agency client released version 3.0, introducing a “live” feature. The platform pioneered installing VR camera equipment

on drones, creating a new experiential reporting product that immerses audiences in the news scene.

1.2.4 Media Exchange Platform Broadcasting

Media exchange platforms are national mobile streaming platforms developed by influential media organizations, such as People's Daily's "People's Live," Xinhua News Agency's "Live China," and CCTV News's mobile network. These domestic mobile streaming platforms aim to share "live" broadcast content with local media outlets, providing them with new distribution channels and facilitating the transformation and integration of the broadcasting industry into the live streaming ecosystem.

2.1 Mobile Technology Innovation

The proliferation of smartphones and advancements in camera pixel technology have laid the foundation for live video development, while continuously improving mobile network speeds have created an optimal environment for mobile broadcasting. First, as mobile internet technology becomes more widespread, mobile device usage continues to increase, with smartphone replacement cycles accelerating. Second, the popularity of visual media such as photos and videos has driven companies to innovate and optimize mobile camera technology. Overall, China's internet technology sector is developing robustly, with widespread standardization and recognition across the industry. These developments have simultaneously transformed consumption patterns, enabled device intelligence, and diversified usage scenarios, collectively ushering in the mobile internet era.

2.2 Massive Mobile User Base

Today, mobile phones represent the most important internet access device for the Chinese population. By December 2018, China had 829 million internet users, including 817 million mobile internet users, with mobile phone usage reaching 98.6% of total internet users. Among these mobile users, 99.9% accessed news via their devices, with mobile news readership reaching 653 million. This heavy reliance on mobile networks and the established habit of reading news on smartphones have created a substantial user base for mobile live news.

2.3 Comprehensive Development of Online Live Streaming

Amid intense market competition, entertainment applications maintain relatively high user penetration rates. Among these, online live streaming applications have achieved 47.9% total utilization. Since the end of 2017, the industry has entered a transitional adjustment period after experiencing a 60.8 percentage point decline. The year 2016 was dubbed the "first year of live streaming," witnessing the emergence of numerous platforms that captured public attention. Two years later, the live streaming application market reached its peak, and in

response to regulatory requirements, major platforms are undergoing redesign and adjustment to evolve into healthy, comprehensive social live streaming platforms.

2.4 Traditional Media Transformation and Integration

For years, traditional media has sought transformation and integration to address challenges posed by the new internet and media environment. Live news broadcasting originally served as a reporting method for traditional television media. Live streaming has become the frontline for traditional media's new life. The integration of traditional media content represents the optimal approach for transforming team interests, adopting new media technologies, and meeting user interests—needs that mobile live news can uniquely satisfy. Before traditional media intervention, social media and online platforms had already experimented with mobile messaging in real-time. With the growth of traditional media resources, the mobile news live streaming model has become more professional and promising.

3.1 Enhanced Timeliness

Mobile live news demonstrates greater time sensitivity than traditional live news. Traditional live television programming involves complex systems requiring substantial time, personnel, and material resources from news gathering to production. In contrast, mobile live news requires minimal equipment, enabling individuals to capture and broadcast entire videos using only a person and a smartphone. In emergency situations, one can simply arrive at the scene with a phone. Consequently, mobile live news demands fewer resources, is easier to operate, and allows virtually anyone to become a journalist. For instance, the “Beijing Time” app operates on a model similar to ride-sharing services like Uber, where individuals near the scene open the live streaming application to become on-site reporters. This model effectively overcomes traditional media's limitations in immediately deploying personnel to breaking news scenes. When everyone can serve as a field reporter, journalists are everywhere, enabling timely information dissemination immediately after events occur.

3.2 Enhanced Sense of Presence

Without post-production editing, mobile live news offers greater authenticity, providing audiences with more genuine on-site experiences. While traditional television broadcasts rely on post-production to shape presentations, mobile live news disrupts this established model by delivering unedited, unmodified content typically from a personal perspective within the event itself. For example, during CCTV's joint broadcast of a major military parade with the American community, internet users recorded numerous live videos. From the viewer's perspective, these live streams proved more popular, with daily viewership approaching 100 million. People captured diverse perspectives of the parade—

interesting, grand, and majestic—providing audiences with an authentic sense of reality.

3.3 Higher Audience Engagement

In today's rapidly evolving technological society, audience demands are constantly changing, requiring broadcasters to innovate continuously to retain viewers. The integration of new technologies enhances fresh content production and improves viewing experiences through mobile devices. Mobile live news features real-time interaction and high audience participation. Viewers can post bullet comments and send messages while watching live news. Tencent's news live streaming platform introduced a "gift house" feature, attracting over 1.5 million viewers and more than 1 million interactions on its first day. During the Spring Festival evening broadcast, CCTV News Channel facilitated nationwide viewer participation, allowing audiences to exchange New Year greetings and hopes. Many viewers could not resist opening their phones to watch the Spring Festival evening program while simultaneously interacting with content, thereby enhancing their sense of participation.

3.4 Richer Content

Mobile news offers more utility than traditional television live news. Mobile live news is not limited to conventional television news content but encompasses a broader range of topics. For instance, CCTV News client delivers "Daily Game Reports" to airport security personnel, providing detailed documentation beyond just Spring Festival coverage. Similarly, Tencent News focused on a story about a 90-year-old couple celebrating Spring Festival, attracting over 7 million viewers. While traditional television news concentrates on major events and hot topics, mobile live news emphasizes not only attention-grabbing stories but also behind-the-scenes perspectives. Furthermore, mobile live news provides diverse content spanning lifestyle, humanities, and entertainment. CCTV News clients enable viewers to experience local customs through live news programs, such as broadcasting a live panda's 37th birthday celebration, tours of Olympic museums, and Spring Festival motorcycle safety reviews. These varied offerings attract attention and provide different types of support for audiences.

4.1 Lack of Post-Production Reduces Cognitive Experience

Television programs are produced by high-quality professional news teams, ensuring consistent, logically clear, and seamless broadcasts that provide viewers with excellent viewing experiences. However, mobile live news videos are single-take productions, making it difficult to capture scenes from multiple angles and perspectives. For example, traditional television news live broadcasts utilize close-ups, aerial shots, and other techniques to enhance viewer enjoyment. Although mobile live news offers timeliness, issues such as rough production quality, redundant information, and degraded viewing experiences persist.

4.2 Semi-Traditional, Semi-Mobile Reporting Model

Currently, the integration between China's traditional media and social networks remains relatively low, with insufficient user engagement and advertising placement. While mobile live news disrupts traditional television's established model by delivering unedited content from personal perspectives, most live video messaging remains in a one-way communication stage. Even with bullet comments and some interactive features, excessive real-time interaction facilitates social connections rather than information dissemination. Moreover, live broadcasts typically rely on studios and anchors on traditional broadcasting stages to provide robust mobile live messaging capabilities. In this context, the recent live video news requires minimal studio and presenter involvement, with cameras often focused on a single person, limiting viewers to a unidirectional understanding of content. This semi-traditional, semi-mobile reporting model directly impacts information dissemination effectiveness.

4.3 Content Homogenization

Numerous live video platforms exist, yet their content remains highly similar. This homogenization inevitably affects audience information acceptance and influences viewers' life decisions and determination. Most users desire fresh, curious content rather than repetitive or boring material. While live streaming content typically dominates in gaming, entertainment, and online programming—sometimes even daily life documentation—live news differs fundamentally, depending on news information transmission including disasters such as fires, earthquakes, and floods, as well as social news and traffic information. News requires timeliness, and live news demands specialization, forming the foundation of live news platforms. However, many contemporary news media suffer from high content review rates and significant content uniformity issues. Faced with this phenomenon, audiences perceive live news as impulsive, resulting in low platform loyalty and easy viewer attrition.

5.1 Training Journalists for Mobile Live Reporting

Having worked in radio and television stations for 19 years, responsible for planning, editing, and program production, I have studied traditional news programs extensively. Live streaming fundamentally attracts public participation from the grassroots level. Therefore, journalists must distinguish real-time news transmission from traditional live news broadcasting when reporting live news. They should combine everyday oral expression with professional presentation to deliver information in an accessible manner. News media can train various mobile field reporters, transforming cold broadcasts into engaging content with depth and perspective, converting past experience and knowledge reserves into live broadcast charisma. Journalists must identify viewer-relevant headlines based on event characteristics and attributes to create personalized titles. CCTV's live art test activities utilized youth-oriented titles like "CCTV Takes

You Directly into the Hearts of Young Idols” to appeal to younger internet users. Most mobile live streamers need to support entire broadcast room filming, with anchors hosting performances, controlling processes, and focusing on real-time text messages from audiences, requiring urgent feedback and quick thinking.

5.2 Expanding Content Sources and Achieving Cooperative Sharing

Traditional media resources are limited while audience preferences are unlimited. Therefore, news media must expand multi-channel content sources for mobile live broadcasting. First, as mobile live news expands content sources, it needs to open content categories in multiple ways and explore new topics and themes. As Liang Wendao once noted: “Why use the live streaming model? Because everyone is focused.” For instance, Tencent News planned to establish a “One-Person Station” to follow a Japanese girl’s school commute delays. The final stop of the live broadcast became a “one-stop” feature, making the report more inspiring. Mobile live news can select from diverse content categories including social news, international news, interesting stories, cultural heritage, and various other mobile live news formats. Second, mobile live news cannot be created solely by news media; it requires collaboration with various parties to achieve real-time resource sharing and capture more information on mobile news platforms.

5.3 Multi-Faceted Utilization of News Media Capital Advantages

By fully leveraging these advantages, media organizations possess unique strengths that provide robust mobile live messaging capabilities. In the current landscape, the proliferation of vulgar content and scarcity of high-quality live content represent major obstacles to mobile broadcasting technology development. Presently, news media deliver high-quality content through mobile live broadcasting, establishing credibility and authority. This can be used to monitor public opinion and guide different live platforms to create healthier content, which proves highly beneficial for mobile live broadcasting. Furthermore, news media should demonstrate better performance since live formats vary by content type, leading live content to promote quality development. As news influence grows, mobile live broadcasting improves alongside enhanced content quality and popular appeal.

5.4 Integrating New Technologies to Innovatively Develop Live News

Live broadcasting has grown rapidly, with content continuously expanding. Major platforms are also exploring new methods for creating engaging live content. In today’s rapidly changing technological society, audience requirements evolve accordingly, requiring live streaming to innovate continuously to retain viewers.

Integrating new technologies will improve mobile live production quality and enhance audience viewing experiences. CCTV' s live broadcast of the Dabie Mountain-Hefei high-speed railway utilized numerous new technologies during its two-and-a-half-hour coverage, employing computer animation technology to create six live broadcast stations with drones and video effects. This represents not only the combination of technology and live broadcasting but also a trendsetting approach to mobile live news.

Additionally, emerging technologies expand the possibilities for transmitting live news. For example, integrating VR technology into live content provides audiences with rich immersive experiences, allowing them not only to watch news with their eyes but also to feel the news. During the 2017 Spring Festival Gala, which incorporated VR technology, audiences could watch via CCTV client with remarkable effectiveness.

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

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