

Challenges and Countermeasures for TV Anchors in the Intelligent Media Era: Postprint

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

Abstract

On June 6, 2019, 5G was officially commercialized. Leveraging 5G technology, digital infrastructure has entered an entirely new phase, revitalizing and empowering media convergence, further deepening intelligent media, and potentially launching the smart media era in full. In 2016, live streaming disrupted the dominant paradigm of television anchors, rendering the designation “anchor” no longer exclusive; short videos facilitated the emergence of “phenomenal” works, fundamentally reshaping perceptions of the anchor role. In 2018, AI anchors began to be deployed successively, once again challenging television anchors and deconstructing the image of television anchors. In the smart media era, television anchors may undergo reconstruction. To successfully break through in this “circle of ten thousand mountains”, they must confront challenges directly, respond proactively, sharpen themselves through the “four strengths”, shape news through the “four dimensions”, gatekeep content, strengthen dissemination, propagate the positive energy of new-era values, and vigorously promote China’s image.

Full Text

Challenges and Countermeasures for TV Anchors in the Age of Intelligent Media

Abstract: On June 6, 2019, 5G was officially commercialized, marking a new phase in digital construction based on 5G technology, injecting vitality into media convergence, and further deepening intelligent media. The age of intelligent media may fully commence. In 2016, live streaming broke the dominance of TV anchors, making “anchor” no longer exclusive; short videos helped produce “phenomenal” works, reshaping perceptions of “anchors.” In 2018, AI anchors began to appear, further impacting TV anchors and deconstructing their image. In the age of intelligent media, TV anchors may need to be reconstructed. To successfully break through this “surrounding circle of ten thousand mountains,”

they must confront challenges head-on, respond actively, hone themselves with the “Four Strengths,” shape news with the “Four Dimensions,” gatekeep content, strengthen dissemination, promote positive energy of new era values, and vigorously project China’s image.

Keywords: Intelligent Media Era; TV Anchor; AI Anchor; Challenges; Countermeasures

In the age of intelligent media, what kind of talent is needed, what are the requirements, and what results are expected? China Media Group has provided an answer—there is a need for versatile talents who can control the overall situation, engage in live interaction, apply technical skills, and possess personal charisma. The requirements include understanding the business, fulfilling responsibilities, and undertaking missions, with greater emphasis on audience experience and proactive response to the demands of the era. The focus is on deepening the “Four Strengths” educational practice—comprehensively forging anchors’ footwork, eyesight, brainpower, and writing ability—hoping to inject vitality into mainstream culture and disseminate valuable notes of the era. In the age of intelligent media, how can TV anchors effectively solve this problem and successfully transform? The requirements are to keep pace with the times, confront challenges such as the impact of online anchors, the siege of phenomenal short videos, and the pressure from AI anchors, adjust quickly, respond flexibly, highlight artistic individuality, shape personal charisma, and produce news with the “Four Dimensions”—attitude, warmth, depth, and strength—thereby radiating influence in all directions and vigorously spreading China’s voice.

1.1 Live Streaming Breaks the Dominant Pattern

According to the *China Live Streaming Industry Prosperity Index and Short Video Report* (hereinafter referred to as the *Report*) released in July 2019 by the Policy and Economic Research Institute of the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology in collaboration with Wangsu Technology, China’s live streaming industry continued its steady upward trajectory in the second half of 2018. By the fourth quarter, the prosperity index had reached 441, representing a year-over-year increase of 19.5%; notably, the live streaming bandwidth index climbed to 391, hitting a new high with a quarter-over-quarter growth of 26.1%. Live streaming has fundamentally dismantled the dominance of TV anchors, establishing a new ecosystem of “everyone can be an anchor” and transitioning from passive, one-way information reception to dynamic, two-way real-time interaction. Discussion topics can be initiated at any moment, with more diverse and entertaining interaction methods such as bullet comments, virtual gifts, quiz contests, and connection battles, making audience thoughts and needs more direct and communication faster and more effective. Everyone can find a sense of presence online, either as an anchor or by participating in live streaming.

The *Report* also indicates that by December, total short video bandwidth had increased by more than 250% year-over-year, with the short video industry showing clear explosive growth trends. In today's society, time is increasingly fragmented, and mobile short video apps such as Kuaishou and Douyin have focused on user pain points, rising to prominence accordingly. With 15- or 30-second demonstrations, concise and pithy content, and a "vertical screen + information flow" format, they provide an immersive viewing experience, pushing interest-related content and easily capturing large numbers of users, creating phenomenal short video applications. TikTok, Douyin's overseas version, has already penetrated 150 countries, involving 75 languages, and ranks at the top of app store charts in more than 40 countries and regions. By December 2018, user scale had reached 648 million, with nearly 80% penetration among internet users, also creating a large number of online anchors. For instance, Papi Jiang's original videos mostly exceed "100,000+," and users increasingly favor short videos and bloggers while paying less attention to TV anchors. TV anchors are under siege from all directions, with the intensity of impact further increasing.

In 2018, the first AI anchor officially debuted. In January 2019, AI version of Sa Beining, "Xiaosa," appeared at the Spring Festival Gala. Xinhua News Agency launched the "world's first AI synthetic female anchor," "Xin Xiaomeng." During the Two Sessions, China Media Group's reporter assistant "Xiaobai" also attracted attention. The successive launch and widespread application of AI anchors have sparked heated discussion in TV anchor circles, raising a wave of debate over whether TV anchors will face unemployment. Technical equipment such as 360-degree panoramic cameras and VR cameras effectively combine with emerging technologies like AR, AI, and VR. With the support of 5G technology, AI anchors can satisfy visual senses, improve news information production and broadcasting efficiency, and create immersive audio-visual experiences. Although still imperfect in tone, pausing, or emotional expression, when reporting breaking news, their advantage of "five seconds per news item" becomes prominent compared to traditional broadcasting, and they can reduce error rates and avoid broadcast accidents, thus exerting considerable pressure on TV anchors.

2.1 Exclusive Viewpoints with Fresh Attitude

In the intelligent media era, news spreads faster and is shared more extensively online. While news itself is no longer exclusive, viewpoints can be. Fresh attitude with exclusive viewpoints is essential. "Timeliness" is no longer the "preservative" for news; "viewpoint" is the "detonator" for news dissemination. Presenting sharp viewpoints promptly is far more important than being the first to report information. A crucial step is to front-load the rational, evidence-based, and powerful commentary of editors and commentators, which requires TV anchors to possess excellent commentary abilities to make timely and forceful comments on complex and changing real-world situations, detonating audiences with unique insights. WeChat public accounts with original articles—the more radical the viewpoint and the more intense the attitude, the more likely

they are to become hot topics. However, some self-media outlets, in pursuit of “high traffic and high forwarding,” resort to “shocking statements at all costs,” even fabricating falsehoods to gain trust and using reversals to dispel sympathy. With information becoming increasingly complex and confusing, audiences are more willing to trust traditional official media. Therefore, TV anchors must use news discipline as a ruler and legal morality as a criterion, create exclusive viewpoints from a professional perspective, and interpret news events truthfully and comprehensively, thereby guiding audiences with fresh news attitudes, ensuring audiences’ right to know, enabling them to make objective and rational judgments, and publish valuable opinions.

2.2 Emotional Resonance Delivers Warmth

In the clearer “5G+8K” intelligent media era, discerning audiences are more sensitive to details such as tone and facial expression changes. Therefore, TV anchors should make authentic reactions to “good” or “bad” news based on objective facts, appropriately integrating personal emotions to resonate emotionally with audiences and create psychological resonance, thereby delivering emotional warmth that touches hearts. When the result of China’s 2008 Olympic bid was about to be announced, TV anchors and staff in the studio clenched their fists, eyes fixed on the screen, with longing almost overflowing from their eyes. The moment “Beijing” was announced, audiences in studios and in front of television sets across the country cheered and raised their arms in excitement, their inner excitement beyond words, with the entire nation boiling in jubilation. Similarly, when Chang’e-3 transmitted its first lunar photo in 2013, CCTV anchors’ fluctuating tones and emotional excitement reflected inner pride. TV anchors must broadcast news with passion and emotion, as only by resonating emotionally with audiences can they be more vivid, authentic, and infectious, reaching deep into audiences’ hearts and delivering that warmth that warms people’s hearts.

2.3 Ideological Shaping Embodies Depth

In the intelligent media era, the core of news dissemination lies in quality content, and the key to content is ideology. Ideological shaping represents love for and persistence in the profession, as well as control and resolution of situations, demonstrating TV anchors’ professional quality, moral pursuit, and personal charisma. It also embodies the depth of news, conveying people’s deep earnest desire for justice and fairness in today’s era. In May 2019, CGTN anchor Liu Xin engaged in a public dialogue with FOX anchor Trish Regan on China-U.S. trade issues, being interrupted three times during her 30-second opening and answering questions throughout. Later, when Bai Yansong asked in a live connection why she spent the entire time answering questions instead of asking them, Liu Xin explained that she could have asked questions but chose not to, because many American people harbor prejudice, dissatisfaction, and even misunderstanding toward China. If she had argued strongly, competed for dominance, or been aggressive, it would have made China’s image even more

negative, which would be detrimental to communication and consultation between both sides. Liu Xin has clearly become a prominent TV anchor of the new era, and her control of the overall situation and skillful resolution are evident, with her unique personal charisma deeply impressing audiences.

2.4 Style Cultivation Strengthens Impact

Having a unique style means having strong recognizability. Crowd aggregation is one of the main characteristics of the intelligent media era, allowing “a hundred people on the same stage” but not “a thousand faces with the same look.” At this time, a distinctive style is particularly important. TV anchors should hold themselves to the new standards of media professionals in the intelligent media era, focusing on cultivating their own unique hosting style, clarifying existing cognition, deeply analyzing programs, exploring audience needs, and seeking advice with an empty-cup mentality, achieving proficiency in program positioning and highlighting personal news broadcasting style. By standing out and refining programs to be high-quality, dissemination becomes more impactful and can continuously broaden its reach. Take the currently hottest topic of “garbage classification” : netizens have summarized that “whether it’s dry or wet, let the pig try it—what the pig can eat is kitchen waste, what kills the pig is hazardous waste, what the pig won’t eat is other waste, and recyclable waste can be sold to buy pigs.” CCTV anchor Zhu Guangquan delivered a “punchline-style” lament during broadcast: “The pig would definitely say, I’ve sacrificed too much for humanity.” Therefore, TV anchors must cultivate their own unique style to become a distinct banner. Only then will audiences have particularly deep memories, and the strength and breadth of dissemination be enhanced.

To avoid elimination, one must become irreplaceable. Under the “Four Strengths” educational practice, TV anchors should hold themselves to the high standards of new-era media professionals, be good at thinking and discerning, good at grasping audiences, and shape the news “Four Dimensions” —exclusive viewpoints with fresh attitude, emotional resonance delivering warmth, ideological shaping embodying depth, and style cultivation strengthening impact —thereby vigorously promoting China’s image and spreading China’s voice, participating in, witnessing, and recording this intelligent media era and this great era of rejuvenation.

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

Source: ChinaXiv – Machine translation. Verify with original.