
AI translation · View original & related papers at
chinaxiv.org/items/chinaxiv-202310.01471

How Industry Media Should Respond to 5G Audience Segmentation Trends in the Post-Print Era

Authors: Zhang Xiang

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

Abstract

In the 5G era, network technologies characterized by high data rates, low latency, and massive capacity will further reshape the media ecosystem. With technological advancements, China's Internet users continue to expand into third- and fourth-tier cities and rural areas, leading to further segmentation and upgrading of audience demands. This paper attempts to explore, through the practice of China Coal News, how industry-specific media can respond to the audience segmentation trend in the 5G era, and proposes strategic recommendations through SWOT analysis.

Full Text

How Industry Media Should Respond to 5G Audience Segmentation Trends

Abstract: The 5G era, characterized by high-speed, low-latency, and ultra-large-capacity network technologies, will further reshape the media ecosystem. As technological progress continues, China's internet users are increasingly extending to third- and fourth-tier cities and rural areas, with audience needs becoming further differentiated and upgraded. This paper examines how industry media should respond to audience segmentation trends in the 5G era, drawing on the practices of *China Coal News* and proposing strategic recommendations through SWOT analysis.

Keywords: 5G era; industry media; development trends; SWOT; strategic recommendations

Classification Code: G222

Document Code: A

Article ID: 1671-0134(2019)07-032-02
DOI: 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2019.07.005

5G technology, with its high-speed, low-latency, and ultra-large-capacity features, will fundamentally reconstruct the relationship between humans and media, reshaping the entire media ecology. As technology advances and entry barriers lower, the trend of China's internet users expanding to counties and rural areas becomes increasingly evident. Faced with technological empowerment, user differentiation, and upgraded information consumption in the 5G era, how should industry media leverage their strengths and circumvent their weaknesses to achieve high-quality development? This paper explores this question by examining China's transformation 现状, using *China Coal News* as a case study to discuss how industry media can respond to 5G-era audience segmentation trends and propose strategic recommendations through SWOT analysis.

Introduction: 2018 Media Trends and the 5G Context

In 2018, the popularization of 4G technology and the implementation of policies reducing data costs ushered in the mobile intelligence era, during which China's media industry exhibited two major trends. First, media convergence accelerated, characterized by the platformization of media and the mediatization of platforms. Second, media sank alongside internet expansion, as content domains and user markets extended to counties, townships, and rural areas.

The first trend manifested in two ways. On one hand, mainstream professional media, represented by *People's Daily*, vigorously built media platforms. *People's Daily's* "People's Media Matrix" encompassed more than ten product carriers including newspapers, websites, Weibo, WeChat, and apps, forming a full-media ecosystem. Simultaneously, professional media outlets such as *The Beijing News* established presences on Sina, Toutiao, and other internet platforms, enabling multi-channel distribution and targeted content delivery to segmented users. On the other hand, internet platforms like Toutiao, WeChat, and Douyin, leveraging powerful technological capabilities and massive user bases for content production, increasingly acquired media attributes by incorporating professional, government, and self-media content producers.

The second trend involved the obvious sinking of internet users, with counties becoming crucial public opinion arenas for Chinese media. Research from Tencent's think tank indicated that netizens in third-, fourth-, and fifth-tier cities accounted for over half of all mobile internet users. Consequently, media organizations of all types—from professional to platform to government media—scrambled to establish presences in these markets. Meanwhile, the government aggressively promoted the construction of county-level converged media centers, aiming for nationwide coverage by the end of 2020.

Compared with 3G and 4G, 5G technology will create more possibilities for the

media industry to innovate product forms and optimize user experiences. As technological progress lowers entry barriers, vertical user markets will further differentiate and sink deeper. With their relatively concentrated reporting content and audiences, industry media must leverage their strengths, address their weaknesses, and accelerate transformation to achieve high-quality development amid the major trends of 5G technological upgrading and audience segmentation.

SWOT Analysis for Responding to User Segmentation

Entering the 5G era, against the backdrop of market sinking, user differentiation, and upgraded information demands, what strengths and weaknesses do industry media possess, and what opportunities and threats will they face? The following analysis addresses these questions based on relevant industry realities.

2.1 Strengths

Industry media target specific industry readers and focus on reporting industry-related information. Most are supervised by relevant government departments or industry associations, giving them certain advantages in funding support and access to interview resources. Taking the author's institution, *China Coal News*, as an example: established in 1983, it has focused on news reporting in coal and related fields, establishing unparalleled authority and professionalism as a mainstream industry media outlet. The newspaper is now directly under the Ministry of Emergency Management, operating “two newspapers and one journal” (*China Coal News*, *China Emergency Management News*, and *China Emergency Management*), along with new media platforms including websites, WeChat, Weibo, and apps, with correspondent stations in most provinces and regions nationwide. In recent years, the circulation of its “two newspapers and one journal” has grown against the trend, while subscription numbers for its public accounts have repeatedly reached new highs.

2.2 Weaknesses

Currently, most industry media operate as enterprises within public institutions. Constrained by institutional mechanisms, many struggle to respond to media technological transformations, often lacking the capacity despite having the will. On one hand, the inertia of “emphasizing editorial over technical” thinking persists in most media organizations, resulting in insufficient innovation mechanisms and capabilities. On the other hand, during the construction of converged media, while the matrix has been established, its synergistic effects have not been fully realized. Using the author's institution as an example, the newspaper must rely on external support when building big data public opinion systems, and the supply-demand alignment between technical and editorial departments remains incomplete. Clearly, technological progress is only a necessary condition for media transformation, not a guarantee of better outcomes.

Entering the 5G era, industry media that fail to improve their institutional mechanisms will likely face shortages in both technology and talent.

2.3 Opportunities

Every technological innovation and transformation presents an opportunity to overtake competitors. If properly utilized, 5G will provide powerful technical support for the transformation and development of industry media, enabling not only richer news products but also enhanced interaction with audiences and improved public opinion guidance capabilities. During the process of market expansion and differentiation supported by technology, industry media will have opportunities to open new reader markets. Taking *China Coal News* as an example: currently, newspaper subscriptions mostly reach only the coal mine level. However, the entire coal industry employs 3 million miners. If a converged media platform tailored to their needs can be built through technological means, it would represent a vast blue ocean market.

2.4 Threats

Facing 5G-era technological upgrades and user differentiation trends, industry media must confront challenges from two directions. On one hand, they face competition from comprehensive mainstream media, which possess inherent advantages in platforms, channels, and resources. On the other hand, they must address their own transformation risks, such as talent loss during full marketization. Using *China Coal News* as an example: due to the downturn in the coal market in previous years, poor corporate performance led to significant talent loss. Additionally, the rise of new media and self-media in recent years has created more channels for publication with higher remuneration, compounding the loss of correspondents for the newspaper.

Strategic Recommendations for Responding to User Segmentation

In the internet era, leveraging new technologies to reconstruct the relationship between media and users is key to new media success. Faced with the major trends of user differentiation and demand upgrading in the 5G era, industry media should utilize technological upgrading opportunities to reconstruct user relationships, adopt big data thinking to unlock big data productivity, achieve a role transformation from information content providers to information service providers, and upgrade from print media to three-dimensional and immersive media.

3.1 Seizing Technological Upgrading Opportunities to Achieve Service Sinking

In the 5G era, as user markets sink deeper, they will further differentiate, making it difficult for media to master all segmented fields. With relatively fixed

audiences, industry media should build on their strengths, cultivate segmented fields deeply, and create differentiated brands. During the process of internet user sinking, county-level converged media center construction requires directional guidance, targeted training, and technical support, presenting development opportunities for professional media. For example, with *People's Daily's* support, Beijing's Yanqing District Converged Media Center established an editorial process of "one-time collection, multi-format production, and multi-channel distribution," demonstrating vertical operational thinking of "news + government affairs" and "news + services." Industry media can adopt similar approaches, cooperating with relevant institutions at various levels within their industries to help them build converged media platforms and provide targeted training and technical support. *China Coal News*, for instance, already provides technical support services for the new media platform construction and operation of some provincial and municipal coal supervision agencies. Furthermore, in the 5G era, industry media can leverage big data and artificial intelligence to construct and improve social public opinion databases, enabling real-time industry public opinion early warning and rapid output of response solutions.

3.2 Utilizing Technological Means to Improve Reporting Quality

In the 5G era, the deep integration of technology, scenarios, and content dissemination can make news collection more precise (through AI), news production faster (through algorithms), news distribution more efficient (through scenarios), and news reception more diversified and immersive (through virtual reality). Industry media should produce and provide higher-quality content by deeply mining their own data. In the news production process, industry media should fully utilize the combination of 5G and AI technologies to build collaborative, integrated, and intensive production processes. For example, industry media in sectors like coal and emergency rescue can use algorithms to automatically capture key information and generate news in accident reporting. After the 2017 Jiuzhaigou earthquake in Sichuan, the China Earthquake Networks' earthquake information broadcasting robot generated the world's first news brief in 25 seconds, containing more than a dozen items including earthquake parameters.

In the news distribution process, industry media can experiment with combining editorial gatekeeping and algorithmic recommendation, transforming from flat presentation to information flow presentation and from people seeking information to information finding people. The success of Qutoutiao and Kuaihou demonstrates that the content industry has enormous traffic dividends in sinking markets, with many opportunities remaining in vertical content segmentation. In the 5G era, industry media must not only capture the "key minority" audiences such as government officials and corporate leaders but also grasp grassroots users with limited information access channels whose time is easily occupied by fragmentation. For example, *China Coal News's* audience covers industry managers, coal mine safety inspectors, and frontline miners. By con-

ducting personalized production and targeted distribution according to different audience needs, the newspaper can enhance user stickiness.

It should be noted that while industry media possess strong professionalism, their interactivity needs improvement. They should develop more new products with social attributes in the future. Short videos, for instance, feature high information density and low acquisition costs, meeting users' highly fragmented needs. Industry media should reestablish the position of short videos in their product matrix according to their positioning and market demand, transform their discourse style, and reconstruct their relationship with audiences.

3.3 Enhancing Innovation Capacity Through Institutional Mechanism Reform

As previously mentioned, without institutional mechanism innovation, technological transformation does not necessarily lead to media progress. Facing changes in the media ecology in the 5G era, industry media must break through institutional mechanism barriers to truly achieve service sinking and quality improvement. On one hand, news reporting quality largely depends on practitioners' overall competence. For industry media, this requires reforming personnel selection mechanisms, adjusting editorial human resource layouts for full-staff transformation, using innovation and incentive mechanisms to enhance team comprehensive capabilities, changing the tradition of "emphasizing editorial over technical," and increasing the recruitment of intelligent technology talent. On the other hand, rigid organizational processes cannot achieve sinking and convergence. Industry media must break down boundaries between old and new media to enhance matrix synergy. Internally, they should build structures suitable for converged media production through process reengineering, strengthen brand building, and achieve integration of old and new media platforms. Externally, they should rationalize relationships with government, industry associations, and enterprises, understand the needs of sinking user markets, and give full play to their role as the main front of public opinion guidance.

Conclusion

In summary, facing the major trends of technological upgrading and user sinking in the 5G era, industry media can only meet continuously upgrading user needs and achieve greater development by taking proactive actions, leveraging strengths while circumventing weaknesses, constantly exploring possibilities for integration with technology, and achieving service sinking and quality improvement through institutional mechanism reform.

References

- [1] Zhang Zhian, Li Aiyong. Changes and Challenges: Media Platformization and Platform Mediatization—2018 Annual Observation Report on China's Journalism Industry [J]. *Journalism and Communication*, 2019(1): 4-13.

[2] Chen Guoquan. Development Report on China' s County-Level Converged Media Centers [J]. *Modern Communication*, 2019(4): 15-21.

[3] Zhou Wentao, Sun Zhinan. Analysis of the Possibilities for Mainstream Media Convergence Transformation Under 5G Background [J]. *News Front*, 2019(3): 66-68.

[4] Chen Mingming. Discussion on the Convergence Exploration Direction of Traditional Media in the 5G Era [J]. *Media Observation*, 2018(11): 42-47.

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

Source: ChinaXiv –Machine translation. Verify with original.