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Transformation Path of Official Media in Convergent Journalism: A Case Study of National Day Special Reports (Postprint)

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Abstract

“Media convergence” represents a development direction with profound technological connotations in the evolution of today’s information society, while simultaneously guiding market reforms and gaining escalating attention within China’s traditional media transformation. The widely observed and debated “media convergence” entails further modifications to news formats under the guidance of internet-based news dissemination requirements. A series of special reports from official media have transmitted signals that official media are advancing toward media convergence, with particular prominence in 2017 coverage. This paper will accordingly analyze the application and developmental pathways of official media convergence news within the context of media convergence.

Full Text

The Transformation Path of Official Media Under Converged News: A Case Study of National Day Thematic Converged Reporting

Abstract: “Media convergence” represents a development direction with profound technological implications in today’s information society, simultaneously guiding market reforms and gaining increasing traction in China’s traditional media transformation. This highly anticipated and debated concept involves reshaping news formats under the guidance of internet-based news communication requirements. A series of thematic reports from official media have signaled this shift toward convergence, particularly evident in 2017 coverage. This paper analyzes the application and development pathways of converged news within official media contexts.

Keywords: media convergence; converged news; official media; development paths

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2. The Importance of Converged News for Official Media

With continuous advancements in internet technology, multimedia converged news reporting has become increasingly prevalent. Converged news refers to the reshaping of traditional news communication “grammar rules” under new internet technologies—a novel reporting form derived from media convergence driven by media globalization. As a product of the internet era, converged news possesses three key characteristics.

1.1.1 Multimedia Presentation of News Information

Converged news is built upon the foundation of media convergence. While traditional media technologies and communication channels carried relatively singular news content, internet development has integrated increasingly diverse elements into news expression and dissemination, creating favorable conditions for official media’s transition. Converged news features two distinctive attributes: comprehensiveness and full-process coverage. Through the integration of multiple media forms, it can effectively provide comprehensive coverage of news content from the inside out. Simultaneously, it displays various nodes and key details of news facts, thereby presenting the entire news process to audiences. Multimedia-based converged news renders the communication process more humanized and efficient, conveying information through text, images (news photos, cartoons, and charts), audio, video, and other means, which significantly enhances its appeal.

1.1.2 Integrated Use of Media Elements

The adoption of converged media methods in official media effectively enhances news dissemination efficiency. By leveraging the in-depth value of text, the visual appeal of audio and video, and the convenient communication of interactive features, information can be better propagated. The integration of media elements does not involve indiscriminately mixing all elements together, but rather strategically employing them according to actual circumstances to improve communication effects. Only through organic integration can media elements achieve maximum effectiveness. This approach enables comprehensive display of entire news processes while continuously optimizing dissemination, thereby creating the true value of converged news.

1.1.3 Emphasis on Interaction, Service, and User Experience

The converged media platform integrates the strengths of various media forms and is renowned for its interactivity. Through the application of diverse media technologies, audiences can express opinions, create content, and share information. Simultaneously, new media's emphasis on user interactivity further ensures the viability of user-generated content. In the new media era, "audiences" have gradually transformed into "users," significantly elevating their status.

3. Case Study: Practice and Effects of Official Media Converged News

October 1, 2017, marked the 68th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. To actively respond to public patriotic enthusiasm, central official media not only conducted thematic reporting but also fully leveraged the outstanding effects of integrating various communication methods, guiding public participation through H5 products, patriotic-themed games, and video livestreaming.

3.1 Case Practice

3.1.1 H5 Products H5 products represent a typical integration of internet and mobile intelligent terminal technologies. Due to their significant technical advantages and user-friendliness compared to traditional channels, the public more readily accepts this new propaganda format. On average, H5 production requires relatively low human resources—six professionals can complete a comprehensive product within two weeks. With cooperation from professional journalists for current affairs components, a complete product is finished. Compared to traditional reporting, current affairs reports packaged with new technologies are widely pursued by online audiences. Consequently, many official media outlets produced National Day-themed H5 products, among which Xinhua News Agency's New Media Center produced works with clear themes that achieved excellent results.

3.1.2 Video Livestreaming The livestreaming industry is currently booming, with vast online audiences considering it a primary form of daily entertainment. On October 1, CCTV Finance Channel and The Paper provided excellent patriotic-themed livestreaming programs for online audiences. Beginning with the flag-raising ceremony at Tiananmen Square, coverage continued through the evening with dazzling light shows in nearly 30 cities. While livestreaming in real-time, they actively interacted with netizens, achieving positive social response. Many official media outlets have also actively launched livestreaming platform projects, committed to providing better communication methods for the public.

3.2 Analysis of Practical Effects

On this important holiday, official media actively employed new technologies for communication. Supported by modern technologies such as digital compression and the powerful loading capacity of mobile networks, the trend of media convergence has become increasingly evident, and industry collaboration has achieved good practical results. The launch of these new products is inseparable from media staff efforts. Through the integration of numerous media and methods, raw data is presented to the public in more novel and vivid ways, significantly improving news quality and depth as well as dissemination breadth and speed.

While enjoying these benefits, we must also recognize that the development journey remains long and should not focus solely on surface-level metrics such as traffic numbers. We must acknowledge emerging issues. For instance, H5 products and similar series have led news toward an entertainment-oriented path, detrimental to building official media authority. Additionally, although patriotic-themed games conduct educational propaganda in a format more easily accepted by online audiences, most netizens consider the game quality to be subpar.

4. Development Paths for Official Media Converged News

Numerous problems have emerged in the application of converged news in China's official media. Currently, the specific application of converged news remains an innovative development space. We must utilize existing networks and technologies to adapt converged news models to contemporary social development.

4.1 Existing Models of Official Media Converged News

In practice, different official media have formed different innovation models according to their own development. Some focus on media platform development and business process reorganization—for example, People's Daily's "central kitchen" model of integrated content production. Others choose project cooperation and integration between different business formats, while some opt for multi-type communication to continuously expand influence.

This paper argues that these various models represent continuous attempts at converged news. Determining whether a particular convergence model aligns with a media outlet's actual situation or achieves success requires evaluation from several aspects: First, are there ideological drawbacks? When certain communication models innovate in form, their grassroots attributes may render products overly entertaining. Second, has product service improved? Any media convergence ultimately requires market recognition to demonstrate value. Third, has it played a role in building consensus? In advancing news convergence, we must never sacrifice political bottom lines for economic interests.

4.2 Development Strategies for Promoting Official Media Converged News

Converged news is a product of contemporary internet development—without internet platforms, there would be no converged news. However, regardless of evolution, truthfulness, objectivity, and fairness remain fundamental news principles. Therefore, we should look to the future, develop alongside technological progress, and center efforts on user service. We must integrate platforms with content as the core and actively promote management system innovation.

Media convergence should innovate across multiple dimensions: concept, technology, platform, content, and service, in addition to industrial and systematic integration. Official media managers should maintain open mindsets and flexible approaches, absorbing influential internet media. Beyond self-established new media platforms, they should continuously cooperate and develop with external parties, creating momentum while leveraging existing trends. They should actively promote management system innovation, implementing specialized operations in production, dissemination, technology, management, and marketing to enable interconnectivity between traditional and new media, continuously accumulating experience and innovating.

Chinese society is currently in a transitional period where openness and conflict coexist. The public may experience considerable anxiety due to information uncertainty. Due to characteristics such as extremism, fragmentation, and superficiality, new media will inevitably further stimulate public anxiety. When information is overwhelming, China's official media should represent authority and uphold fairness, justice, objectivity, and independence in news content—this is the social responsibility and commitment of China's media in the new era.

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

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