

Postprint of the Transformation of Television News Development in the Media Convergence Era

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Abstract

With the continuous development of science and technology in China, new media technology has emerged as the times require. By virtue of its outstanding advantages—including rapid dissemination speed, novel communication forms, and two-way interaction—new media has swiftly gained audience favor, with its audience size surging dramatically and transforming the traditional pattern of China’s media sector within a relatively short period. Against this backdrop, traditional media such as television, radio, and newspapers have actively pursued development through integration with new media, heralding an era of media convergence characterized by the co-propagation of old and new media and unprecedentedly broad communication channels. In this media convergence era, a shared concern among television media professionals is how television news can achieve healthy and stable development amidst fierce industry competition while continuously innovating by leveraging its own advantages. This paper examines the current development status of television news within the media convergence context and explores relevant pathways for its innovative transformation.

Full Text

Preamble

Transformation of Television News in the Converged Media Era

Abstract: With the continuous development of science and technology in China, new media technologies have emerged. Leveraging distinct advantages such as rapid dissemination, novel formats, and two-way interactivity, new media has quickly gained audience favor, leading to a sharp increase in its user base and fundamentally altering China’s traditional media landscape in a relatively short period. In this context, traditional media including television, radio,

and newspapers have sought development through integration with new media, ushering in a converged media era characterized by unprecedented breadth of communication channels. In the converged media era, how television news can achieve healthy and stable development amidst fierce industry competition through continuous innovation based on its own strengths is a question that television professionals collectively contemplate. This article examines the current development status of television news in the converged media era and explores pathways for its innovative transformation.

Keywords: converged media era; television news; innovation; transformation

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Technological advancement has blurred industry boundaries. As emerging media proliferate, the ways audiences receive information and perceive social development have evolved significantly, with cooperation and integration between old and new media becoming increasingly close. The converged media era has arrived. In this new era, television news programs—traditionally delivered through conventional television—no longer produce single products or remain confined to simple one-way transmission relationships. To maintain their position and audience base, television stations have implemented either sweeping reforms or small-scale innovative experiments, resulting in varying degrees of transformation in their original communication methods and strategies. How new television news programs can leverage media integration opportunities to capitalize on their strengths and gain greater audience approval is both the focus of this article and a hot topic among media professionals.

1.1 Multiple Media Collaborative Communication

Keywords such as “integration,” “cooperation,” and “complementary advantages” undoubtedly represent the most prominent features of the converged media era. Driven by technological forces, the once-clear boundaries between various media types have become increasingly blurred. In news program production and dissemination, different media forms are now applied synergistically, transforming professional independent communication into today’s multi-dimensional interactive communication.

The current converged media news communication format is primarily manifested as “triple network convergence”—the integration of voice telephony, video television, and data internet in a state of mutual inclusion. China has a massive internet user population, and with the continuous popularization of mobile

terminal devices, internet applications have long transcended web pages. Audiences can access trending news and information through mobile phones, iPads, e-readers, and even smartwatches. Triple network convergence has enabled the innovation and integration of electronic terminal products, providing conditions for news programs to broaden communication channels and enrich dissemination methods. A single news item can now incorporate multiple content forms including text, images, video, and audio, achieving far greater dissemination power through “cross-medium” and “cross-platform” distribution while simultaneously meeting audience needs to access news content at different times and locations.

1.2 Fast-Food Style Fragmented Reception Mode

Portable media such as smartphones satisfy audience demands for accessing news information anytime and anywhere. With technological advancement, smartphone screens have become larger, portability has increased, and designs have become more intelligent and user-friendly, pushing converged media toward greater “mobility.” Consequently, graphic and video news information has adapted to these media changes by exhibiting “fragmented” characteristics, while audiences have developed “fast-food style” consumption habits. Graphic news editors deconstruct originally complete in-depth reports into information fragments to accommodate media characteristics and audience reading habits, while video news editors control most news segments to just a few minutes in duration.

1.3 Socialized Interactive Communication State

In the traditional media era, audiences for broadcast and television news always played passive recipient roles, receiving “one-to-many” news content. In the converged media era, audiences have gradually evolved into “users” with increasingly strong demands for socialization and interactivity. They actively participate in news programs by expressing their opinions and emotions, even transforming themselves into a link in the news dissemination chain.

When examining news program communication characteristics in the converged media context, we can observe that changes in audiences and changes in news program content and formats are mutually reinforcing and complementary. Technological development has not only enabled emerging media to capture attention with innovative formats but has also made audience groups more personalized in their needs, more focused on experience and service in media communication, and more eager for emotional connection and resonance.

2.1 Transformation of Television News Workers’ Roles

In recent years, various self-media platforms have developed rapidly, with apps like Douyin and Kuaishou experiencing skyrocketing user numbers and social

platforms such as WeChat Moments and Weibo achieving extremely high penetration rates. A single mobile phone or iPad can become a medium for “ordinary people” to create and disseminate news, indicating that the future will be an era where “everyone is a journalist.” Against this backdrop, television news reporters, editors, and reviewers should all recognize the necessity of role transformation.

The author argues that in the converged media era, television media news workers’ roles can transform in two directions. First, they can shift from being news diggers and writers to becoming news interpreters and commentators—moving to the top of the news chain to become authoritative opinion leaders. This transformation requires television news practitioners to go beyond simple message dissemination, instead utilizing advanced technologies like big data analytics to form in-depth opinions and employing animations, videos, and other formats to refine news presentation and optimize program quality, making programs more engaging and easier to understand. The second transformation involves operating official Weibo or WeChat accounts to become members of the self-media community. This approach aims to strengthen communication with audiences, enhancing journalists’ visibility to boost program brand effects while simultaneously understanding audience opinions and feelings to adjust program content in a timely manner.

2.2 Transformation of Television News Institutions’ Roles

The glorious image of television media has long been deeply rooted in the public consciousness. Television sets are essential household appliances in most Chinese families, and television institutions have served as a bond connecting national and government development with people’ s production and daily lives. In the converged media era, with the popularization of computers, smartphones, and other devices, audience dependence on television has significantly decreased. Television news institutions must transform both structurally and morphologically to accommodate the harmonious coexistence and multi-level, multi-angle news information dissemination patterns of the converged media era.

The author contends that maintaining healthy order in journalism and correctly guiding public opinion will be the primary functions of news institutions in the converged media era. News institutions should focus their work on maintaining the authenticity and sustainability of news programs, establishing themselves as defenders of public interest. This requires news institutions to approach news program production with greater professionalism, serve audiences with purer ideals, and undertake the higher mission entrusted by the era.

3.1 Enhancing the “Program as Product” Production Philosophy

The ancient Chinese saying “good wine needs no bush” illustrates the importance of quality—a concept echoed in the media industry’ s long-standing “content is king” principle. However, the author argues that while content is undoubtedly important, in an era of media integration and information explosion, even the

best content requires audience consumption. Television news program workers must establish a “program as product” production philosophy and re-examine the nature of program content.

“Program as product” means television news workers should produce and operate programs as products, requiring the production process to include purposeful design, development, packaging, marketing, and data analysis. Without relaxing content quality standards, they must consider how to attract more viewers and consumption, and how to achieve sustainable commercial development.

As news programs are generally pillar programs for television stations at all levels, stations can collaborate with major social networking sites to leverage their popularity to promote their own programs under the core requirement of improving news program dissemination effectiveness. They should also emphasize celebrity effects, using celebrity dissemination as an important means to increase operational revenue. Producing and marketing programs as products requires media professionals to understand audience consumption habits. New media technologies have enabled the collection of user login times, visit durations, comment numbers, jump times, and other information. Organizing and analyzing this data will provide valuable decision-making support for television news decision-makers.

3.2 Strengthening User “Experiential” Management

As mentioned above, in the converged media era, news information recipients are not only passive audiences but also users requiring personalized attention and emotional-level services. To seek further development in the converged media era, television news must prioritize user needs, enhance user stickiness, and improve television news ratings through strengthened “experiential” management.

The core of “experiential” management is emotional connection. Only when users develop trust in television news programs and subsequently emotional resonance can added value be realized. The author believes that fully utilizing the interactive advantages of social networks is key to achieving this goal. For example, many people currently read news through Weibo and WeChat, including subscribing to interesting official accounts or browsing WeChat Moments. Television news programs can seize these “micro-links” by creating official Weibo accounts and WeChat official accounts to disseminate news content that suits popular tastes, developing these young potential users into loyal fans. There are many other innovative adjustment methods for television news programs. For instance, during the 2017 Lantern Festival live broadcast, Suzhou Radio and Television’s “Social Fax” program introduced “bullet comments” —a new interactive format from new media platforms—onto the television screen, surprising viewers while igniting their passion for participation.

3.3 Establishing Social Responsibility of News Disseminators

In the converged media era, safeguarding public interests and maintaining news information authenticity with firm social responsibility is the mission and task of television news institutions. Despite the rapid development of emerging media, the public still places greater trust in traditional media, with television news remaining their choice for verifying event authenticity and further excavating news facts. This is because television news media possesses more rigorous review mechanisms compared to emerging media, with news typically undergoing multiple layers of authenticity verification from production to broadcast. Simultaneously, as professional media practitioners, they typically adhere to the creed of fair and objective evaluation of news events, ensuring news quality.

In the converged media era, the communication ecology is highly complex, but the principles of authenticity, objectivity and fairness, protecting people's right to know, and safeguarding public interest remain unchanged. While using the internet to expand dissemination scope and accelerate speed, television news programs must also strengthen supervision and constraints, promptly eliminating uncivilized communication behaviors to maintain a clear and transparent online world for the public.

In summary, new forms of television news reporting are gradually taking shape in the converged media era. Only by adhering to innovation and reform, focusing efforts on both content and platforms, and exploring diversified business models can television news media maintain its advantageous position and authority, achieving sustainable development.

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

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