

The Impact of Internet New Media Technology Development on Global Media and Journalism: Postprint

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Abstract

With the emergence of new media and continuous technological advancement, the news and media industry has experienced profound impacts, affecting not only the media themselves but also the broader global media landscape. This paper focuses on explicating the principal characteristics and impacts of online media. Serving as a catalyst, the Internet has stimulated unprecedented global interconnectivity. In the realm of journalism, the Internet's emergence confers superior communication advantages over traditional media, namely instant communication, interactivity, and broad participation. In other words, the immediacy, interactivity, and accessibility of the Internet have significantly altered the fundamental nature of traditional news.

Full Text

The Impact of New Internet Media Technology Development on Global Media and Journalism

Abstract: With the emergence of new media and continuous advancement of technology, the news and media industry has been profoundly affected. Not only have the media themselves changed, but the entire landscape of global media has also been transformed. This paper focuses on the main characteristics and impacts of online media. As a catalyst, the internet has stimulated unprecedented global interconnectivity. In terms of journalism, the emergence of the internet offers stronger communication advantages than traditional media, namely instant communication, interaction, and broad participation. In other words, the immediacy, interactivity, and accessibility of the internet have significantly altered the nature of traditional news.

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Every development and evolution of media technology holds significant meaning for the media industry and journalism. Currently, the internet is the fastest-spreading medium in history. Radio took nearly 40 years to reach 50 million listeners, television took 15 years to achieve the same number, while the internet gained 50 million users in just over three years. In China, the internet spread rapidly, with netizens now reaching 300 million, ranking first in the world. With the popularization of the internet, an increasing number of people are utilizing global computer networks to disseminate ideas, information, and images worldwide, transcending spatial and temporal boundaries. New media technology has become a crucial driving force in the transformation of the global media landscape and the development of journalism. This paper will analyze, based on the inherent characteristics and functions of the internet, how internet technology has brought about global media interconnectivity and its impact on journalism.

Evidently, internet users are not evenly distributed across the globe. Although the situation had not fundamentally changed by 2018—with user numbers in most parts of Africa and South Asia remaining relatively low—these regions are also experiencing the fastest growth in internet users. In light of this trend, CNN already had 11 websites in six languages by 2000, and BBC Global Service has similarly been steadily expanding its online operations, with plans to establish websites in 12 languages. The development of the internet within the global media sphere holds great significance. It has transformed traditional media models, extending them into truly global news media. Within the global community, the internet provides unique opportunities for creating new interactive online communication models.

1. Global Interconnectivity

The most critical factor for increasing the scope, volume, and speed of cross-border information flow is electronic information processing and telecommunications technology. As the fastest-growing segment of the media industry, the internet opens up potential for global interconnectivity. “We are rapidly approaching one billion connected computers”—this signifies not only a networked community but also the formation of a “virtual continent,” meaning vast amounts of information can be transmitted over long distances in the shortest time and at the lowest cost. In 1996, the proportion of the world’s population using the internet was approximately 0.7%; by 2008, it had reached 22%. According to the latest 2018 Global Digital Report from WeAreSocial, the number of global internet users has surpassed 4 billion, while the global population during the same period was approximately 7.6 billion—meaning that more than half of the total population now uses the internet.

What is increasing rapidly is not just the number of internet users, but also the amount of time people spend online. Data from GlobalWebIndex shows that users now spend an average of six hours per day on the internet—roughly one-third of a person’s waking hours. If we add up the time spent online by 4 billion people worldwide throughout the year, we would have spent a total of one billion years online in 2018.

2. Immediacy and Interactivity

Immediacy is one of the internet’s important advantages, breaking down temporal and spatial barriers in news production and consumption. For journalists, the internet has become a widely used source that accelerates the processes of news production and gathering. The World Wide Web, for instance, as an accessible global electronic publishing medium, contains over 5,000 news sites published by newspapers, television and radio stations, and magazines, as well as some native-born digital news websites. In fact, almost all newspaper and magazine journalists today conduct investigations and reporting online (especially for breaking news), and nearly always attempt to be the first to obtain information sources.

“Readers are unwilling to wait for the evening news or the next day’s newspaper to get updates on breaking news developments. They want to know immediately, and the information they receive should be as up-to-date as possible, and through the internet, they can find this information.” When BBC Online News launched, Tony Hall, CEO of BBC News, announced: “BBC Online News will for the first time place the full wealth of BBC news reporting at your fingertips.” He insisted that “you will get the news you want and the news you need 24 hours a day.” These quotations demonstrate that with the development of internet communication technology, the speed of information transmission has become an important quality standard in modern journalism. Modern journalists must write faster and better, raising a new question: whether journalists can conduct sufficiently thoughtful analysis before their reports are published.

Interactivity is another prominent feature of the “value-added” characteristics of new media. Obtaining relevant feedback from audiences through traditional media has always been extremely difficult, with all news reporting being “top-down”: “We publish, you read.” In stark contrast, the rise of internet technology enables everyone to express their opinions and share relevant information. A typical example is Wikipedia, founded in 2001. This online platform serves a dual function as both an online encyclopedia and a news medium, where anyone can become a Wikipedia contributor. To update information, Wikipedia allows any user to edit any page—a natural extension of network functionality in the context of journalism. According to statistics, as of November 1, 2015, the number of English Wikipedia entries had exceeded 5 million.

Interactivity enables multidirectional communication between news producers and their audiences through the creation of online communities, chat rooms,

and public platforms. For example, the online edition of the *Sydney Morning Herald* created a reader forum moderated by editors for extensive mutual discussion. Although the content of online reader discussions rarely transcends mere opinion sharing, it provides alternative perspectives or additional details that can serve as sources of news information and trigger follow-up developments in news stories. It is worth noting that, given issues such as the uncertainty of publishers' identities and the falsity of content on the internet, journalists should be more cautious in selecting and using information obtained online, verifying its news value and sources.

3. Accessibility

Internet accessibility potentially provides new opportunities for more voices to be heard in the public sphere in novel ways. Beyond traditional news sources, an increasing number of people are creating and turning to their own self-media news, publicly providing eyewitness testimony, personally captured scene photographs, and video clips, while updating rapidly changing situations. Citizen journalism has developed rapidly through online media, with many specialized citizen journalism websites emerging. For example, "backfence.com," created in the United States in 2005, serves as a platform for ordinary people to write and produce news, more effectively providing information that interests audiences.

With the integrated development of mobile internet and the growing popularity of smartphones, the speed of news production has further accelerated. Citizens and journalists have also made significant contributions to breaking news reporting, especially during sudden incidents such as major natural disasters or rescue operations, when professional news media channels are clearly limited and cannot immediately access frontline information. People at the scene continuously broadcast real-time evolving situations through instant messaging tools and online platforms, engaging in self-gathering and self-publishing. The internet has become a "microphone" in the hands of netizens. However, whether such information dissemination can be called "news" has remained widely controversial. For example, Weibo—a real-time interactive platform that integrates the functions and advantages of instant messaging tools, blogs, and social networking sites—offers the advantages of convenient information release and simple dissemination methods, yet it is not bound by traditional journalistic standards of objectivity, fairness, and accuracy. People express their views in relatively unpolished ways. If such information is written and published by professional media or journalists, it may be considered to meet the requirements of news reporting. Undeniably, Weibo's media attributes have become increasingly prominent. Based on content provided by various forms of online exchange platforms such as Weibo and blogs—such as alternative perspectives, first-person experiences, and interactivity—we can conclude that readers desire a more balanced or more subjective perspective on the news they consume. "Through the dialogue form of citizen journalism, compared with mainstream media coverage of the same event, citizen journalism provides information with greater transparency,

higher information hierarchy, and greater diversity.”

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

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