

Transformation of Television News Journalists in the Media Convergence Era: A Preliminary Study (Postprint)

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Abstract

Nowadays, media convergence has brought tremendous changes to the media industry. The multimedia convergence environment has placed higher demands on journalists. The so-called “media convergence” and “convergent journalism” are still in their infancy in China. Meanwhile, the production of convergent journalism is also underway. Therefore, this paper elaborates on the dilemmas in the transformation and advancement of Chinese television journalists, and investigates the transformation strategies for television journalists in the context of media convergence.

Full Text

A Preliminary Study on the Transformation of TV News Journalists in the Era of Media Convergence

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Abstract: Media convergence has precipitated profound transformations within the communications industry, imposing heightened demands upon journalists in this multimedia landscape. While the concepts of “media convergence” and “converged journalism” remain nascent in China, the production of converged journalism is already underway. This article therefore explicates the dilemmas confronting the transformation of Chinese TV news journalists and investigates strategic approaches to their evolution within the context of media convergence.

Keywords: media convergence; TV news; journalist; transformation

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2.2 Information Sharing Obstacles

In the twenty-first century, the news distribution landscape has undergone profound transformation. The hegemonic position of traditional media has disintegrated completely, characterized by rapid audience erosion, plummeting advertising revenues, loss of media strongholds, and declining core competitiveness. Confronted with existential crises and the onslaught of new media, traditional media must pursue transformation. News reporting content derives primarily from information, and journalists must ensure the reliability of their information channels before processing and filtering content for audiences. Nevertheless, significant impediments to information sharing persist.

Traditional media's news reporting necessitates multi-channel processing, yet the actual dissemination of relevant information encounters considerable delays. After obtaining and organizing first-hand materials, journalists must undertake comprehensive interviews and commentary to produce in-depth reports. In today's highly developed era of online media convergence, TV news must satisfy fundamental demands for speed and timeliness. Information disseminated within brief timeframes is more likely to gain recognition from stakeholders. Moreover, when international news or major events exert significant impact, effective information can only reach journalists subject to geographical constraints, venue limitations, and fixed personnel conditions. Given journalists' limited capacities, mutually beneficial cooperation must be enhanced. Without such information sharing, actual effectiveness diminishes. Consequently, TV journalists must maintain robust working and personal relationships with their peers in daily practice.

1. Media Convergence Background

Traditional media has furnished considerable convenience for people's daily lives and work. However, alongside social development and scientific-technological progress and innovation, the internet's rise has catalyzed new media's development and revitalization, facilitated continuous integration between new and traditional media, accelerated the advent of an entirely new media era, and continuously impacted both daily life and global patterns.

The effective integration of new and traditional media represents an inevitable outcome of developmental trends and a crucial lever for propelling the media industry's sustainable growth. This convergence constitutes not merely an opportunity but also a novel challenge that TV news journalists must confront. Only through diligent exploration of media convergence's impact on the news industry and its potential transformations, through precise career planning and positioning, and through striving to achieve their goals and objectives can journalists better adapt to the new era. Media forms—including forums, posts, microblogs,

blogs, WeChat, and news clients—have gradually emerged into public view, progressively permeating various dimensions of public life and consciousness while continuously innovating and evolving. In this context, the transformation of TV journalists' roles has assumed paramount importance.

2.1 Management Obstacles Limiting Journalist Integration

In fact, the process of integrating multiple traditional media constitutes a transformative undertaking that introduces managerial difficulties. Previously, media organizations encompassed complex, stable, and independent management systems. However, these relatively stable, fixed industrial chains have been disrupted through comprehensive integration, proving difficult to extricate from the constraints of newspapers, radio, television, and other media. Simultaneously, new media necessitates the integration of key characteristics. Presently, relevant media management departments advocate for improvements and optimization of existing management systems, yet have achieved no conspicuous results. Even with the emergence of basic media frameworks, problems of depth and breadth persist. Our current integrated news production invariably begins with corresponding plans, followed by collaborative news production and processing with journalists to familiarize ourselves with professional content. Media organizations should grant journalists greater autonomy and independence, reduce reporting and review procedures, and enable journalists to exert maximum effort.

2.3 Enterprise Development Concept Obstacles

Journalists frequently consider visuals paramount, believing that excellent photos and images guarantee half the success of TV news production. However, this notion no longer aligns with contemporary contexts. TV journalists serve not only television but also radio, the internet, microblogs, and newspapers. Within seconds, they may report on news websites, then broadcast on television, produce concise reports in the office, and subsequently upload videos or photos online. Contemporary talk shows demand heightened sensitivity from journalists. TV journalists must attend not merely to photos but also to video, audio, and image materials that TV news journalists cannot afford to overlook.

3. Direction of TV Station Journalist Role Transformation

In the media convergence era, audiences emphasize information concentration and equitable exchange in production, with diversified information, pluralistic concepts, attention to interpersonal interaction and reflection, and greater voice. As TV news journalists, only by recognizing these issues can they ultimately extricate themselves from the predicament of TV news communication.

3.1 From the Public's Standpoint

Since then, the concepts of “public opinion sphere” and “mainstream media consensus domain” have gained widespread acceptance. Some have proposed adopting “two media.” In fact, in contemporary society, only three major media constitute the media consensus forum: interpersonal media forum and traditional media consensus forum. Traditional media represents not only a propaganda domain but also a media domain. For TV media journalists, they must adhere to a citizen's standpoint while simultaneously promoting media and public opinion, unifying media propaganda, and prioritizing public opinion. Otherwise, not only will anticipated propaganda effects fail to materialize, but they will also trigger encirclement and questioning from relevant parties. Therefore, as TV news journalists, they must be skilled at gathering people's opinions, daring to place facts on the table, speaking out for the public voice, and fostering social cohesion.

3.2 Judging Information Value from a Global Perspective

High-efficiency information dissemination has shattered traditional concepts of time and space, while advanced media technology enables audiences to engage in point-to-point communication within the “global village.” Compared across present and future, local and foreign, individual and societal, central and local, domestic and international contexts, significant differences typically exist across different periods and regions. Due to these substantial disparities in news value, seemingly ordinary matters may generate highly valuable news.

3.3 Problem-Oriented News Strategy

Transforming from news producers to problem solvers requires satisfying not only competition among disseminators but also journalists' missions and government-enterprise requirements. During social transformation periods, every government and enterprise encounters numerous internal and external problems. Journalists must deeply understand the livelihood issues that audiences care about most, shifting from news to problems, from notification to commentary, from balanced viewpoints to unified public opinion, breaking rumors and eliminating divergences. News background analysis and social hotspot perspectives all require in-depth excavation by journalists, enabling audiences to feel reassured, re-establishing trust in enterprises and government, and solving actual social problems.

3.4 Content is the Essence of News

In recent years, whether media should rely on “content is king” has remained controversial, with advocates for “technology is king,” “product is king,” “channel is king,” and other notions. Currently, media still falls far short of meeting audience information needs. TV media journalists must master the following four aspects:

First, establish the starting point centered on the audience, highlighting characteristics such as commentary, investigation, and interactivity, breaking cumbersome TV news live broadcast models and dissemination patterns.

Second, reports should avoid being all-encompassing, requiring suspense creation and emphasis on key points.

Third, journalists should de-emphasize the role of presenter appearances, properly positioning themselves as news reporter-interviewers who express their own views to the camera, rather than relying excessively on on-camera reporters.

Finally, they should strengthen communication depth, eliminating the common problems of “pan-entertainment” and “fragmentation” in new media, and highlighting the value, responsibility, and quality of TV news.

3.5 Using Data to Discover News

The strategic significance of big data technology lies not in possessing massive data information but in “processing” data to achieve “value-added” outcomes. By integrating vast data volumes through “data technology,” journalists can discover “news stories” hidden behind numbers and abstract facts, then present news through visually interactive methods, commonly known as data journalism production. Currently, many foreign media outlets have begun exploring data journalism. In a sense, data constitutes news, and data constitutes anecdote. For TV journalists, obtaining news clues through big data will also be a more convenient channel. In August 2014, the state examined and approved the “Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Integrated Development of Traditional and New Media,” marking media convergence as a national ideological consciousness.

4. Analysis and Countermeasures of TV News Journalists’ Role in Social Media Transformation

For TV news journalists to successfully transform in the all-media era, several imperatives must be met. First, they must consistently adhere to the principle of seeking truth from facts, abiding by strict information review protocols while ensuring rapid news dissemination. Journalists must cultivate robust professional ethics, embracing innovation, enterprise, integrity, and diligence while eschewing false reporting and sensationalism. Second, they should comprehensively transcend temporal and spatial limitations from a developmental standpoint, analyzing issues and reporting events rather than clinging to traditional, conservative mindsets. Third, journalists must insist on acquiring first-hand materials through personal participation in events, deeply identifying problems that allow facts to speak for themselves, thereby garnering public support. Finally, TV news journalists should skillfully leverage new media to enhance professional communication, foster mutual assistance and promotion, and fully exploit information resources.

5. Successful Transformation of TV News Journalists' Role

Transforming ideas and concepts necessitates an open-minded approach to role evolution. Journalists must not cling obstinately to established notions; rather, they should first confront the challenges posed by media convergence, analyze the trajectory of media diversification, determine their own positioning from an industrial restructuring perspective, and identify the most suitable development pathways. They must strengthen theoretical and practical capabilities to adapt to transformation and development, further enhancing their media technology competencies. While continuously improving skills in writing, communication, editing, and expression, they should thoroughly master computer network technology, information processing technology, and multimedia technology to become composite TV journalists capable of successfully managing diverse roles, contexts, and challenges. Within the media convergence landscape, TV news development and journalist transformation must align with epochal trends, enhancing TV news ratings, authority, and credibility, adjusting and optimizing TV news structures, and constructing three-dimensional multimedia platforms. Integrating news media while continuously elevating journalist literacy, professionalism, and expertise constitutes an indispensable factor. One must follow the current, not swim against it.

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

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