



Innovation of Radio and Television News Production in the Era of Media Convergence

Chen Wang

Communication University of China, Beijing, China

eeelovehappy@gmail.com

Abstract. In the age of media convergence, the production of radio and television news confronts a myriad of fresh challenges alongside promising opportunities. Against this backdrop, this paper delves into the production and innovation of radio and television news in the new media environment with an aim to gain a profound understanding of its predicaments while exploring characteristics, contradictions, and paths for innovation. Through literature review and case analysis combined with communication theories, this paper conducts a micro-level study on the current situation and trend of radio and television news production in the era of media convergence. It offers theoretical and practical guidance to foster the innovative advancement of radio and television news in China.

Keywords: media convergence; radio and television; news production; innovation; communication pattern.

1 Introduction

The media landscape in China has undergone substantial evolution since the 1990s, transitioning from a period dominated by traditional media to one marked by the acceleration of media convergence in 2008, and ultimately reaching a stage of comprehensive media convergence dissemination in the present day. Against this backdrop, the innovative development path of traditional broadcasting and television news production is an inevitable trend in today's society with informatization and media development. Under the impact of new media, traditional media such as newspapers and television are gradually declining. To address this situation, China has proposed a strategy of integrated development in the media field. In 2014, national leaders presided over a meeting of the Central Leading Group for Deepening Overall Reform and called for promoting media convergence. As a result, media convergence has become a national will (Zhong, 2021).^[1] Currently, traditional mainstream media face significant challenges. In the online social space, media organizations, governments, and individuals are all equal "nodes". "The importance of each node in the network does not lie in its own attributes but in whether other nodes in the network believe in its capabilities. Therefore, news truth is no longer "monopolized" but becomes "competitive truths" from multiple nodes from different perspectives. In this environment, traditional mainstream

media in our country have no choice but to "deploy the main force to the main battlefield", striving to become a part of the modern communication system, and enhancing the communication power and credibility of their "nodes".(Zeng & Zhu, 2023).^[2] Although there have been extensive advancements in different levels of media convergence - from the "Integration of Newspaper and Website" to "Weibo, WeChat, and News Client" operational strategy and "Central Kitchen" management, as well as efforts made by various radio and television outlets through initiatives like constructing county-level converged media centers - they still have a long way to go before truly helping traditional media break free from difficulties. Therefore, innovation in content, form, and process is urgently needed for radio and television news production.

The concept of Media Convergence was initially proposed by Prof. Pool from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States, originally referring to the trend of multifunctional integration observed across various media platforms. Some scholars have cited media convergence pioneer Ithiel De Sola Pool's assertion, stating that "We are currently experiencing a period of media transformation characterized by tactical decisions, unintended consequences, mixed signals, and competing interests, but most importantly, directionless and unpredictable outcomes" (Jenkins, 2006).^[3] Media convergence exhibits an explicit technology-driven characteristic, and its process always accompanies the adoption and application of emerging technologies. With the vigorous development of science and technology, the transformation direction of media convergence can be seen as three stages in terms of duration: "addition", "integration", and "center of gravity shift". Innovation practices at various levels of technology, content, personnel, and organizational structure run through these stages. (Zhao & Zhou, 2023).^[4] Additionally, some scholars argue that driven by technological advancements and national policies, media convergence has transitioned from simply adding different forms of media to a stage where mediums fuse together. At this stage, the concept of converged media reflects the primary characteristics and mission of media convergence (Luan, 2021).^[5] In addition, some scholars have proposed that media integration, as the initial manifestation of media convergence, arises from the competitive pressure faced by traditional media in response to emerging media. Intervening and integrating emerging media based on fully leveraging their existing information platforms and resource advantages is an inevitable choice for them (Meng & Zhao, 2006).^[6] By examining the development of European media, it can be observed that regulatory convergence serves as a practical guarantee for achieving media convergence. The earlier the regulatory reform takes place, the faster and smoother the progress of media convergence becomes. Regulatory convergence entails promoting integrated competition among different media industries and meeting audiences needs for diverse information through various regulatory approaches (Collins, 2011).^[7] Currently, most articles analyze and summarize the trajectory and development trends of media convergence along with traditional radio and television news programs from a macro perspective. This article aims to scrutinize the characteristics of existing radio and television news production from a micro perspective in order to gain profound insights into challenges encountered during innovative breakthroughs. It will consider these challenges across three dimensions: content, form, and process. Through specific case studies, this research will conduct an in-depth analysis of the current situation and

trends in radio and television news production during the era of media convergence while providing theoretical and practical guidance for the innovative development of radio and television news in China.

2 New Characteristics of Radio and Television News under Media Convergence

2.1 Technological Advancement Fosters Diverse Forms and Enhanced Interactivity

In the context of media convergence, traditional radio and television news production primarily follows the mode of camera/professional recording, wireless transmission, and terminal media. However, with the integration of channels, applications, and interfaces in mobile terminals, all tasks related to news live collection, transmission, processing, and display are now incorporated. The dissemination of news content is no longer confined to traditional audio broadcasting or television signals. Conversely, it encompasses diverse forms such as H5 technology, live streaming, VR experiences, short videos, etc., which have significantly enhanced diversity and interactivity. For instance, "The Sky Channel: The 36-Year Story of Huang Dafa, the Old Village Secretary in Zunyi Leading Water Diversion and Canal Construction" by The Paper News employs a creative comic strip produced with progressive animation that ingeniously harnesses the integrative capabilities offered by H5 technology. It seamlessly combines elements like 360-degree panoramic photos and innovative galleries to present viewers with a contemporary rendition akin to the painting "Along the River During the Qingming Festival," vividly and comprehensively showcasing Zunyi Secretary Huang Dafa's leadership in canal construction for poverty alleviation and prosperity.

The traditional media typically adopts a unidirectional broadcasting model, where audiences passively consume and comprehend news content, with limited opportunities for personal viewpoints and opinions beyond casual conversations. This physical distance exacerbates the audience's sense of detachment, weakening their participation in news events and hindering proactive information acquisition. In the era of media convergence, new media platforms establish intimate relationships with users through mobile devices. By leveraging diverse and convenient interactive technologies and platforms, multidirectional communication among different subjects during the process of news dissemination is formed. For instance, during the Two Sessions in 2023, CCTV News New Media utilized integrated live broadcasting to cover the event. Through this platform, news broadcasters were able to instantly view barrage comments and message boards while responding to audience viewpoints and addressing their queries. This approach enhances interactivity and engagement in the news broadcasting process while providing a more immersive on-site experience that aligns better with the demands of a large user base.

2.2 Reduced Space Constraints and Improved Timeliness

The delivery of traditional broadcast television news is often confined to fixed channels, restricted by channel broadcasting schedules and the limited viewing time of audiences in stationary environments. As a result, it typically adopts a continuous format consisting of brief and intermittent broadcasts lasting approximately ten minutes per segment. News editors and reporters are required to meticulously design program content, settings, and timing in order to effectively convey valuable information within the constraints of a limited timeframe. Audiences receive curated and tailored news content that is characterized by its brevity, focused subject matter, and prominent editorial guidance, thereby posing challenges for achieving an immersive on-site experience.

In the era of media convergence, traditional broadcast television news has greatly benefited from the diverse range of communication channels and the portability of mobile devices, significantly reducing the time required for audiences to actively acquire news information and enhancing their spatial flexibility. Users now have access to up-to-date news anytime, anywhere through various platforms. News productions are no longer confined by space and time. They can be streamed live in their entirety, such as the coronation ceremony of Prince Charles in the UK, which was extensively broadcast on mobile apps and video websites, enabling viewers to witness every aspect of the ceremony on their smartphones. Alternatively, news can be disseminated through concise and impactful short videos on new media platforms that deliver essential facts about an event within seconds, allowing viewers to grasp its key points instantly. Subsequently, they can choose whether or not to delve into specific details based on personal interests. This exemplifies the ongoing reduction of spatial constraints and continuous improvement in timeliness during the process of news dissemination in this new era of broadcast television, providing audiences with more immediate and fresh news content.

2.3 Traditional TV News and Audience Value Co-creation

Henry Ford once offered counsel to novelists, suggesting that they should always consider their readers as the sole recipients of their message. This advice holds true for news communication as well. In contrast to traditional one-way dissemination, there is a growing imperative for audience participation in news reporting, particularly when societal and environmental conditions permit. This necessity becomes particularly evident in the construction of news events. With China's continuous progress towards social democracy and the ongoing advancement of media convergence, traditional television news media has transformed from a top-down propaganda tool into a dialogue platform where the vast Chinese population can freely express their thoughts and engage with content even after meals. Today's audiences increasingly reject previous rigid and conservative agenda-setting practices, instead desiring to actively participate in news events to enhance their sense of involvement and influence over discourse. Throughout this process, the boundary between audience members and media outlets gradually blurs while continuously integrating together. The emergence of "news hotspots" and "trending news searches," driven by the active audience or netizen

participation, is not uncommon anymore. These "netizen trends," facilitated by platform mechanisms and media convergence, have become the mainstream method for most netizens to quickly comprehend current affairs. They swiftly navigate across various platforms during the initial moments of news generation, gathering new details from multiple perspectives while exchanging information with other like-minded netizens interested in similar content. Consequently, they rapidly amplify, focus on specific aspects, and disseminate what could be considered a "conflict point," ultimately shaping it into prominent "hot topics" or significant "public events." For instance, journalist self-reporting, short video sharing, WeChat public accounts, mobile live streaming, interactive features on Weibo platforms, and more all contribute to a collage of "official discourse" and "folk discourse," creating an open, diverse, and bidirectional space for full media convergence.

3 Contradiction and Deficiency of Radio and Television News Production Under Media Fusion

3.1 Similar in Form but not in Spirit, Lacking Depth of Integration

In the process of constructing new mainstream media, numerous mainstream media outlets have endeavored to undergo self-revolution and transformation. However, they still grapple with the predicament of resembling each other in structure but lacking congruity in essence. For instance, during the course of media convergence, they merely convert and graft traditional media content into the framework of new media, thereby failing to achieve genuine integration at a profound level. The fundamental reason behind this lies in the fact that although traditional media have been significantly impacted by new media in areas such as technology and market dynamics, compelling them to undergo a transformation, their own operation and survival are always prioritized to a minimal extent. Consequently, standing out is often not considered the foremost objective. In this context, external innovation and internal self-revolution within news production may not possess decisive significance. There is frequently an excessive emphasis on content accuracy and its role in shaping public opinion while neglecting content that truly captivates audiences' interests and failing to actively engage in immediate communication and interaction with users. The transformation of traditional media content production should not solely rely on high-quality information content but also involve timely adjustments to program positioning and rational allocation of content resources. For instance, Hebei Radio and Television Station's Economic Life Channel has undergone a complete revamp of its long-standing news program "Today's Information," which has been on air for 23 years, clearly repositioning it as "news information + public opinion supervision + assistance service." In terms of content, the program has introduced large-scale multimedia live broadcasts such as "3.15 Focus on Boosting Consumer Confidence in New Consumption" and "Good Grains in Hebei: Conversations about Wheat Fragrance in Saline-Alkali Land," providing comprehensive coverage of important speeches.

3.2 Imbalance Between News Quality and Internet Traffic

Under the influence of platform capital and monetization dividends, the concept of "traffic supremacy" has become the prevailing logic in the internet content industry, profoundly impacting media content production, operation, and consumption. The conflict between news content production and market competition demands has always existed for mainstream media, as they constantly struggle to balance content quality with timely hot topics. However, for new mainstream media outlets, the concept of "traffic supremacy" and its underlying logic not only affect content operation but also penetrate traditional professional content production concepts. This poses a significant challenge to realizing the value of media content from its very foundation. For example, Sichuan Guancha, as a typical case of provincial-level mainstream media integration and transformation in China, has been influenced by the logic of "traffic supremacy" since its inception. As a result, it faces certain dilemmas and uncertainties in practice. On one hand, there is a demand for traffic that requires Sichuan Guancha to quickly capture hot topics and create viral content to attract more user attention. On the other hand, traditional professional content production concepts require them to ensure high-quality products that maintain their authority as mainstream media outlets. Similar to many other media organizations, Sichuan Guancha encounters significant conflicts when choosing between prioritizing traffic or maintaining quality standards and timeliness. Therefore, reshaping content production concepts within the media field becomes an essential issue that needs addressing during current explorations into rebuilding the content ecosystem.

3.3 Emphasis on form Over Content and a Lack of Quality Depth

The rapid advancement of digital technology has given rise to a myriad of technological products suitable for news dissemination, such as virtual reality (VR), artificial intelligence (AI) digital avatars, augmented reality (AR), and more, akin to an abundance of mushrooms sprouting after rainfall. While the integration of new technology has brought forth greater potential for innovation in broadcast television news, certain media outlets have overlooked the quality and depth of content in their pursuit of flashy formats.

Taking VR technology as an example, VR technology enables users to fully immerse themselves in virtual environments by utilizing specialized equipment known as head-mounted displays. This cutting-edge technology finds extensive applications in gaming, entertainment, and education. However, within the domain of broadcast television news, it is crucial to acknowledge that while VR offers unparalleled advantages in terms of presence and interactivity compared to traditional video and audio media, the provision of low-quality VR news content not only fails to captivate users but also hampers the overall development of VR news itself. Some presentations of VR news rely solely on recreating the visual aspects without adequately emphasizing textual content or delving into the underlying meaning behind each piece of news. Furthermore, it is worth noting that there currently exists a lack of standardized models throughout various stages encompassing collection, editing, production, and publishing processes for VR

news. Consequently, issues such as excessively long production times, high costs involved at certain stages along with a dearth of technical personnel have emerged which ultimately fail to meet audience demands for timely dissemination of information.

4 The Innovative Path of Radio and Television News Production Under Media Convergence

4.1 Continuously Optimize the Production Process and Build a New Dialogue Platform

Currently, traditional broadcast television news producers need to understand the inter-relationships and interactive modes between different media, as well as the impact of new media technologies on news production and dissemination. According to media ecology theory, there exist interdependent and mutually influential relationships between different media forms. Therefore, it is crucial to optimize the news production process and management mechanism, break the linear production process of the past, redefine their positioning, and drive the production of timely, accessible, and in-depth news content through the innovation of production processes, to meet the requirements of the new media environment. Additionally, traditional broadcast television news production institutions need to cultivate journalists with cross-media reporting capabilities. In the past, traditional professional news media primarily undertook the functions of news gathering and dissemination. However, in the new media environment of media convergence, the roles played by news media in the content production process are gradually changing, and their functional focus is also shifting. Professional media are not only content producers but also platform operators. They need to provide information services for users as well as community support and services, understanding user needs while also supporting news production outside traditional media. Furthermore, the functional focus of professional media has gradually shifted from original reporting to backend editing and planning. Professional media should establish channels through platform construction, set agendas, encourage user participation in news production, integrate and edit user-generated content, and utilize resources for the systematic planning of news content.

4.2 Enhance the Audience's Sense of Participation and Establish Communication and Interaction Space

Traditional broadcast television news production should actively enhance audience participation, allowing each viewer to become the protagonist of news reporting and establishing a genuine two-way communication bridge. An audience-oriented approach breaks the traditional "transmission-audience" opposition, redefining the relationship between media and people in news production. For instance, social media platforms can be utilized for real-time live streaming and instant interaction, enabling viewers to comment and engage with news anchors, reporters, and other viewers. This two-way interaction not only provides more information but also promotes progress in the

industry by encouraging the sharing of viewpoints and broadening perspectives on news reporting. By collaborating closely with audiences, an open and diverse news ecosystem can be collectively built by broadcasters. Additionally, the theory of news ecology opposes segregation among journalist, editor, and audience identities, instead, it suggests that they all act as different types of actors "entering" into a multi-subject ecosystem architecture viewed as information nodes in a network. Therefore, professional journalists should create value while utilizing interactivity from social media platforms that encourage audience comments or sharing to increase engagement levels further. News organizations may establish online forums or discussion communities providing gathering places for audience communication fostering conducive interactive atmospheres.

4.3 Collaborate with Multiple Parties to Create a News Communication Matrix

The full-media communication system is a closed-loop and complex adaptive system comprising multi-layered new mainstream media. Media organizations need to collectively exert efforts under the same frequency, enhancing the vitality of communication content as a whole, and breaking down barriers to news resource sharing among different media, rather than simply replicating or disseminating hard news. We should bridge the gap between major traditional television news media and new platforms such as self-media and internet media. Official platforms like major traditional television news media centers should actively engage in information resource-sharing cooperation with internet media, self-media, and other platforms. Both parties should promptly exchange news materials, ultimately achieving a "free flow" of news resources while fully leveraging the leading role of official media platforms. These platforms can provide convenient link ports for other media's news resources, while self-media and other platforms should also leverage their natural advantages in accessing news resources by actively connecting with official media platforms. Various media can jointly establish a unified organization for managing shared information on news resources to improve efficiency in resource sharing. This approach highlights the continuity and unity of modern converged media's communication on the news while further strengthening the advantages of shared and comprehensive modern media resources.

Meanwhile, the seamless integration of multiple communication channels in news production under media convergence is crucial. Currently, some official media outlets are hesitant to actively participate in news resources on new media platforms due to their belief that these unofficial platforms lack an objective basis and struggle to achieve authenticity, fairness, and comprehensiveness. However, data research indicates that the majority of news messages provided by non-official new media and others are grounded in reality. While they may not be entirely comprehensive, they are not completely distorted either. Although personal emotional elements from authors may be present, their impact on the objectivity of the news is not as significant as perceived. Therefore, it is essential to fully open up interconnected communication channels for news production in order to reduce information congestion during dissemination between different media outlets. This task lies at the core of establishing a favorable

environment for news production. Achieving this requires collaboration between both official and non-official platforms to overcome obstacles. Traditional official media should alter their conventional mindset by actively embracing new technologies and new media while proactively engaging with news resources on non-official platforms. By expanding coverage and influence in news dissemination together, exploring innovative communication methods and channels can enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

5 Conclusion

As Federer stated, "the existing form of media must change in response to the overall media" (Federer, 2004).^[8] In the new media environment, the production methods and survival status of television news have quietly shifted, and an increasingly open discourse space is gradually emerging. However, at the same time, it is also evident that this transformation is still far from meeting the demands of reality. There is a need to further establish the core concept of media convergence, increase cooperation with emerging media, and continuously explore new production methods, narrative techniques, and dissemination pathways for television news in the context of new media. It is essential to seize opportunities to create value in collaboration with users and foster stronger connections between news producers and audiences.

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