An Analysis of the Characteristics and Trends of China's Mainstream Media Integration

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Abstract

China's new media has been continuously bringing about innovation and reform, including media integration development, as a result of growing policy guidance, industrial demand, and industrial development. These factors have propelled China's new media into a phase of intense effort, ongoing reforms, and system building. Promoting the complete integration of media is a crucial opportunity in this new era. Mainstream media must accelerate the promotion of deep integration on a scientific basis because new media is evolving quickly, and the industrial structure and ecology are constantly improving. To do this, mainstream media must grasp the situation and tasks, analyze, and judge the characteristics of the stages, set the direction scientifically, and concentrate on improving the integration effect.

Keywords: mainstream media, artificial intelligence, characteristics of new media, innovation and reform

1. Introduction

Media convergence, in its most basic sense, describes the natural fusion of information content, technological applications, platform terminals, talent teams, and management strategies brought about by the new generation of information technology revolution. This includes both traditional media, such as newspapers, radio stations, and television stations, as well as new online media, including communication content, channels, and forms (Feezell, 2018).

Users are increasingly adopting mobile Internet for work, education, leisure, and expressing their ideas thanks to the expansion of digitization, mobilization, and socializing of news distribution.

Chinese president Xi Jinping emphasized the need for the development of a group of new mainstream media with a variety of forms, cutting-edge technology, and competitiveness as part of his speech's policy (Party Literature Research Center of the CPC Central Committee [CCCPC], 2017). He also emphasized the need for the formation of several new media groups with strong power, communication, credibility, and influence over the development of new mainstream media. A task book, a schedule, and a road map were created (CCCPC, 2017).

2. Current Situation

The number of newspapers in China decreased from 1,894 to 1,810 between 2016 and 2020, while radio broadcast hours increased from 14.56 million hours to 15.8 million hours, while television broadcast hours increased from 17.92 million hours to 19.88 million hours (Cui, B.G, Xu, L.J & Ding, M., 2021). New online media has put tremendous pressure on mainstream media to survive and grow in recent years. In terms of platform, discourse, and business model, the new network media rapidly disintegrates the influence of traditional mainstream media. This puts the traditional mainstream media at a severe disadvantage. The move from reading

paper to reading screen has led to the loss of mainstream media users, and the circulation of most newspapers and periodicals is shrinking (Haller, 2019). Due to economic pressures, they are forcing staff to be laid off, reducing publications, or even suspending them altogether. Seven papers have announced the suspension or suspension of publication since the beginning of 2021 alone, including Zunyi Evening Post, Tongdu Morning Post, North Anhui Morning Post, Yiyang City Post, Guangyuan Evening Post, Neijiang Evening Post, and Deyang Evening Post. Traditional mainstream media whose revenues are based on advertising and distribution have suffered because of the user's transition. Currently, most provincial and municipal television stations are struggling to operate, and all but a few are unable to pay salaries normally (Yang, M.P., 2022).

As a matter of fact, online new media shows an explosive growth trend. The number of Internet users in China has reached 1.011 billion, while the penetration rate of the Internet has reached 71.6% (Yang, Z.K., 2021). Increasingly, people are obtaining information through new online media, and the younger generation relies heavily on the Internet. In order to "save the nation and survive", the traditional mainstream media must increase the Internet through integrated development.

People's Daily, Xinhua News Agency, China Media Group are among China's state-owned media. These include news agencies, newspapers, radio, and television channels as well as websites and other forms of media. Chinese state-level official media have a long history, a fairly complete institutional framework, strong news gathering capability, and a large influence. These factors have been a driving force in the development of new media groups in the country. In analyzing the situation and tasks accurately, researching and judging the characteristics of the stages, scientifically determining the direction and path, and focusing on enhancing the integration effect, China's national mainstream media has demonstrated a new communication system, content production and supply-side structural reforms, creative-led "intentional" communication methods, as well as other characteristics of integrated development, in order to build new mainstream media and new media groups to expand mainstream value influence.

Social media changes the cognitive structure of users due to its media properties. Due to the emergence of a "post-truth era," in which users pay for emotions and experiences rather than truth, they are choosing information less on the basis of truth and more on the basis of social emotions. As a consequence of the "implosion" of information caused by the change in meaning of the use of media, off-site interveners are being forced to pursue hyperreality even more vigorously. Unlike the field of traditional media, the field of new online media is noisy: Because the joint point is changed from advance to lag, the public opinion is easily misinterpreted; as the empowerment of technology grows, the opinion climate is rapidly generated, and public opinion may become extreme; bad fan culture such as chasing stars, pan-entertainment, etc. affect the network ecology, causing some young people to lose their values. The mainstream media, as the main force in shaping public opinion, can only accomplish the missions of raising the flag, gathering the hearts of the people, cultivating new talents, revitalizing culture, and enhancing the image by advancing into the main battleground and occupying the main position through an integrated approach (Zhang, X.S., & Huang, X., 2018). In order for the mainstream media to be responsible, integrated development must be answered, not presented as a choice.

Chinese president Xi Jinping emphasizes that controlling the ideological dominance of the Internet is important for the country's sovereignty and political power, as well as for resolutely winning the Internet ideological struggle (Xi, J.P., 2020). In today's world, the Internet has become the source, conductor, and amplifier of multiple risks. Also, it has become the main battlefield, the main front, and the center of ideological conflicts. It is the "biggest variable" facing the field of public opinion. It is essential for the integrated development of mainstream media to bring more high-quality content, advanced technology, and professional talents to the Internet's main front and tilt it toward mobile devices, so that the forces scattered throughout the Internet can enter and penetrate the Internet as quickly as possible (Xu, L., 2020). This involves not only strengthening the social and mass foundations of the Communist Party of China, but also safeguarding national political and cultural security as well as ideological security.

3. Characteristics of China's Mainstream Media Integration

The transformation and development of online new media have become a conscious decision of mainstream media organizations. Taking into account the paths taken by China's three major national media—the People's Daily, the Xinhua News Agency, and China Media Group to promote product integration, channel integration, platform integration, and ecological integration, the development of mainstream media integration in China can be divided into the following five stages.

3.1 Reform of Internal Operating Mechanism

Developing an all-media communication system involves constructing a multidimensional and multilevel composite system (Holt, 2018). Holographic construction must take into account aspects such as system design, functional coupling, and target optimization. In the integration of mainstream media, the biggest obstacle is that

the original system and mechanism are not appropriate for producing new media content (Xi, 2019). There is a need for China to build a new communications system that is characterized by intensive resources, a reasonable structure, differentiated development, and synergy and efficiency. As a result, Chinese media practitioners should not only be willing to step out of their comfort zones and proactively reform the editorial process and structure, but also be willing to innovate the system and mechanism in order to comprehensively promote the reengineering of the production of content, platform channels and management mechanisms.

From a practical perspective, People's Daily has established Unified Newsroom to make available the editorial resources of the entire company, to carry out one-time collection by reporters, to create multiple generation of editors, and finally to facilitate multiple channels of dissemination, such as WeChat, advertising screens, and other media matrixes for more than ten different carriers (Lee, 2021). In addition to establishing an integrated command system, an "all-media platform for internal reporting" and a "platform for international reporting", Xinhua News Agency focuses on the key activities of the news agency (Romer, 2020). Unlike traditional radio and television media, China Media Group breaks the path dependency and form constraints, and pays equal attention to television stations and online platforms, focusing on the development of online platforms, and continues the transformation from traditional radio and television to providing world-class original video and audio production and distribution (Xu, 2020). As can be seen, mainstream media did not simply abandon the traditional media form and develop online platforms independently, but rather integrated their development with the emerging online media, thus expanding the development space and consolidating and strengthening mainstream stances.

3.2 Promote the Development of Mobile Communications as a Priority

Hence, China's convergent media should adhere to a mobile-first strategy, build its own mobile communication platform, manage and utilize commercial platforms and social networks, and utilize mobile communication to achieve public opinion guidance, ideological guidance, cultural inheritance, and to serve the people's communication needs (Xi, 2020). the mainstream media seeks to build platform terminals, or sound on mobile, under their own control.

Social mediatization and communication platformization are viewed as one of the key determinants of a new mainstream media construction that goes beyond a media-centric industry mindset and a sense of isolation between media and platforms, that is, the dichotomy between content and channels during the era of mass media law, and then applies a new stage of building an independent and controllable open platform, enhancing the ability to incubate and debug multi-content, and meeting social interaction and information governance needs (Ji li, 2022).

Currently, the construction of mainstream media integration referred to as 'dichotomy' is moving from "dichotomy" to "integration". People's Daily, Xinhua News Agency, and China Media Group utilize WeChat, app, TikTok ID in addition to their own professional platforms. Furthermore, individual platforms can utilize their own complete shared platforms from the beginning and are initially controlled independently.

3.3 Supply-Side Structural Reforms in Content Providers

Traditional media have developed a short video PUGC aggregation platform that helps improve the efficiency of video content production, transmission and conversion recently, as well as intelligent distribution, and have achieved excellent communication results; People's Daily has released an independent short video app called People's Daily+, making full use of artificial intelligence technology in content distribution, as well as algorithmic recommendation and manual optimization of key content combinations.

A communications instrument is always just a tool, high-quality content is a scarce resource, and the media depends upon it. A key aspect of mobile Internet development has been the promotion of short video as an important means of transmitting information and obtaining information. It is necessary to bolster the production of video content by producing more short videos, microfilms, public service advertisements, poster pictures, audio news, and other products, and to increase the production of works that are loved by the masses and popular on the screen (Attfield, 2020).

There were 888 million short video users in my country as of June 2021, representing 87.8% of the total number of internet users (Yang, Z.K., 2021). With short video as a representative form of content in the mobile Internet era, it allows for greater ease of creation, while also catering to fragmented reading scenarios and people's habit of efficiently obtaining information, which is more in accordance with the new generation's media preferences. A variety of short video content including entertainment, light information, traffic, and quality has plagued the cyberspace, raising concerns about the advertising-driven nature and homogeneity of the short video market. News short videos are becoming a new competition for the integration and development of mainstream media.

3.4 Communicating in an Innovative Manner

As mainstream media actively innovated the form of expression and changed the way of discourse, they utilized new technologies, including H5, VR, MV, and others, in order to gain the attention of users and break through the glass ceiling of traditional communication modes. Furthermore, China's mainstream media has made use of new media platforms such as TikTok, WeChat, Bilibili in order to create IP-based network celebrity reporters and hosts, and to use a more powerful communication method in order to reduce the distance between them.

By emphasizing user supremacy in the way of expression, convergence media allow mainstream media with absolute advantages such as authority and authenticity to significantly improve international communication effect.

As things stand, mainstream media adhere to mainstream values, increase user awareness, create innovative content presentation forms and expressions for the Internet, youth, and overseas audiences, continually stimulate communication vitality, and establish an ecosystem of high-quality online content.

3.5 Transforming Media Through Technology Empowerment

In the field of news communication, technologies such as 5G, big data, cloud computing, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, blockchain encourage the digital and intelligent transformation of the media. In today's media world, new technology applications are used as support and guidance, and integration and development are accelerated.

As technology empowers communication subjects and objects, the circle-level integration that is enabled by this empowerment accelerates the flow of information. The Xinhua News Agency is a good example. In recent years, Xinhua News Agency has established the State Key Laboratory of Media Convergence Production Technology and System and the Satellite News Laboratory, from the world's first artificial intelligence platform "Media Brain" to the "5G holographic different places on the same screen" interview technology, always staying ahead of the technology trend and providing media coverage around the globe. Media organizations conform to the development trend of modern communication, place a high value on technology's leading role, and are embarking on a development path which integrates technology and content.

4. A Strategy for Enhancing Mainstream Values' Influence

4.1 Develop a Powerful Mobile Media Terminal Platform with Independent Control

Several core functions are inherent to the new mainstream media, including public opinion guidance, information governance, and public service, both on the domestic and international fronts (Attfield, 2020). Nowadays, most mainstream media channels have established accounts on leading social media platforms that are dominated by social capital. These platforms use interactive topics and pop culture symbols to attract young audiences. Platforms generate traffic, users, and advertisements, while mainstream media produces content. This appears to be a win-win situation, but in reality, it is mainstream media that is contributing to the platform's success. In fact, some online platforms use big data analysis and algorithm recommendations to create "information cocoons" for user portraits and personalized messages, thus making it difficult for mainstream media voices to penetrate the complex maze of websites and applications, resulting in audiences becoming increasingly alienated from mainstream ideas.

Any individual who has a strong online platform will have the opportunity to influence public opinion in the Internet era. Rather than rely exclusively on other Internet platforms, the mainstream media should also create their own platforms, and through technological advancements and resource sharing, they should strengthen and expand the terminal platforms under their own control and grasp the initiative of survival and development tightly. The Hunan Satellite TV Company, located in the central and southern regions of China, began building its own platform, "Mango TV" in April 2014. After three years of construction, the company started turning losses into profits, and it once reached a market value of hundreds of billions of yuan.

Platformization of mainstream media aims primarily at preventing the formation of public opinion and the outflow of high-quality resources, but also to avoid becoming a vassal of the existing leading online new media platforms. Media companies should allocate resources such as high-quality content, advanced technology, professional talents, and project funds to their own platforms in order to maximize the agglomeration effect of their own development.

4.2 Develop a More Effective Method of Providing Valuable News

The Internet era dispenses all types of information everywhere, and the audience's attention is divided by an abundance of information, but high-quality content with profound thoughts, original insights, and distinctive value is still scarce. It is imperative to continue to reform the supply side of content production, to strive for high quality, original, and innovative content, as well as to improve the quality of personalized production, visual presentation, intelligent push, and interactive communication.

Despite the fact that online media contains extensive information, the information is fragmented, and good and

bad are indistinguishable, even though there are many participants. The product cycle is becoming shorter and shorter, and the product replacement process is becoming faster and faster. Therefore, mainstream media institutions must fully utilize the advantages of content production, including professional editing and editing teams, the authority of information channels, and standard editing and editing procedures, while always maintaining content concentration, focusing on content quality, and ensuring the influence and competitiveness of mainstream media in the field of social communication. Sharing is at the core of the Internet, which means mainstream media need to reexamine the content ecology and recast their conception of content creation. Those in mainstream media should place considerable emphasis on "user thinking", focus on the target audience and organically integrate information supply with user needs. Further, Internet products should be more thoughtful, authoritative, and accurate, as well as have the ability to answer, for example, questions for users. We must establish "social thinking" and transform one-way communication into two-way interaction. Content advocates must use moving media quality products, based on advertising standards and film-making techniques, to strengthen confidence, gather people's hearts, warm hearts.

4.3 Emphasis Is Placed on Both Independent Innovation and Technological Empowerment

Currently, mainstream media must continue to depend on 5G and artificial intelligence in order to deepen their reporting effects and optimize user experiences. As the 5G era unfolds, everything will become a medium, an information receiver and output, and a medium may be every intelligent machine. By integrating technologies such as near-eye displays, perception interaction, and rendering processing, VR, AR, and MR will be able to build immersive or virtual-real human-computer interaction scenes, creating a panoramic, multidimensional perspective of the news, resulting in an immersive experience across time and space for the audience. It is expected that the proportion of high-bandwidth content consumption, such as high-definition pictures, well-produced high-definition videos, and mobile live broadcasts, will increase significantly over the next few years, and that immersive and holographic live news will become the norm in the future. Meanwhile, artificial intelligence is being applied throughout the entire news dissemination process, promoting innovation in new forms of news products. By leveraging mature technologies such as intelligent production, intelligent identification, intelligent synthesis, and intelligent distribution, it is possible to adapt and improve the editing business process towards human-computer interaction, as well as systematically reengineer the socialized information collection and production mode. This will have a tremendous impact on news production efficiency.

It can be difficult to predict the process by which information technology will transform in the future. China's mainstream media should remain sensitive to new technologies, follow up in a timely manner, and take the initiative to avoid technical friction. They should focus on business reality, understand technical pain points, and embrace the future. It must embrace new technologies, develop new platforms, expand new fields, iterate new products and increase the technical gold content of media integration and development.

It might be difficult to forecast how information technology will evolve in the future. To minimize technological friction, China's mainstream media have to be proactive, responsive, and receptive to new technology. Media outlets in the mainstream should embrace the future, pay attention to commercial reality, and comprehend technological difficulties. It must adapt to new technologies, create new platforms, grow into uncharted territory, iterate on fresh goods, and up the technical bar of media production and integration.

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