

Analysis on the Role of Convergent Journalism in Media Community and Press Circles

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ABSTRACT

This paper is based on the freshly-minted Html-5 format of Internet, gradually replacing the Html-4.01 technology, which is catching on quickly among media users globally, and surely its interactive form and more advanced elements have appealed numerous users. To find out the impact of this burgeoning technology on the media community or press, the author searched lots of literature to look for examples that have been implemented over these years. Then the three typical examples were analyzed, which could best represent Html-5 technology applied to multimedia: Snow Fall of the New York Times, A Game of Shark and Minnow of the New York Times, and Life After Loss by China Daily. These three examples all received good reviews and made waves to the public. Besides, the special writing techniques and visual elements were analyzed and compared with the conventional form of media. The results showed that the average and total audience ratings of convergent journalisms are much higher than those of conventional journalisms. As for the techniques, most of them are combinations of multimedia and texts, which obtain the news' raw materials presented by different media elements and stimulate readers' sense of presence. Through organizing those findings, it can be concluded that convergent journalisms have made great contributions to the future of online journalisms and marked the counterattack of traditional media to redefine news production. However, it can also be found that this form of media has not been widely used yet, due to its high expenditure and long term of preparing.

Keywords: *Convergent journalism, multimedia, Snow Fall, A Game of Shark and Minnow, Life After Loss*

1. INTRODUCTION

The convergent journalism is a kind of activity that can ensure the accuracy and rapid dissemination of news through the application of multimedia. Through the analysis of the advantages of this technology, it can be found that its emergence not only breaks the privilege of journalists in the traditional concept of news dissemination, but also changes the information structure and news work of traditional media in the face of unexpected new form of work. In addition, "convergent journalism" will affect the presentation of traditional media functions in the processing of news to a certain extent. There are three typical examples succeeded in the media area which best represent Html-5 technology applied to multimedia. One is the first convergent journalism ever exposed to the public, which is Snow Fall by John Branch of the New York Times. Another is the following convergent journalism also published by the New York Times, called A Game of Shark and Minnow and the last one is published by China Daily, named Life After Loss. By analyzing these three examples, it was found that the average and total audience ratings of convergent journalisms are much higher than those of conventional journalisms. However, it is also found that those forms of journalisms only fit in a few areas. It is true that this form of media is being considered "the way out for traditional media", but whether it will become a permanent form or only a flash in the pan depends on the future innovation in this era of "post tablet". The more these journalisms are

being created, the more people might have aesthetic fatigue over them. So there has to be more combinations of other practical stuff, for example, making use of advertising resources to appeal users.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the 21st century, with the vigorous development of science and technology and network communication, mass media has also ushered in unprecedented changes. "Media convergence", as a key word of change, includes the integration of media form, media function, means of communication, capital ownership, organizational structure and other elements. It refers to the results of various integration, also covers the process of integration. "Convergent journalism" is based on the background of media convergence technology, which means the use of multimedia in communication activities. It concentrates on different media forms such as text, picture, video, audio and animation in one report, thus enhancing the attraction and influence of information dissemination.

The convergent journalism is based on the application of digital mobile communication technology. The characteristics of "mobile" are embodied in transmission, reception, feedback, interaction and other links, and new phenomena such as "mobile first launch" and "mobile live broadcast" are derived. It is also based on the Internet information platform. Big data, cloud computing and other technologies offered by the Internet platform provide not only strong technical support for the accuracy of the

"convergent journalism", but also technical support for the production, circulation, sales and feedback channels of the "fusion report". Moreover, by means of innovation of news production mode. "Convergent journalism" is a new mode of news production. In addition to the organization form, production mechanism, circulation channel and benefit evaluation of news production, this new mode is more important, which combines user production (UGC) and professional production (PGC) in content production.

In Lev Manovich's book *Language of New Media* [2], he proposed the concept of "interface" for new media, and pointed out that "interface creates unique materiality and user consumption experience. Even if the interface is slightly changed, it is necessary to rethink the whole work comprehensively.

The professional subjects in the convergent journalism can be divided into knapsack reporter and super team. Knapsack reporter plays a leading role in the integrated news report. Journalists stationed abroad, field reporters and small media can set up more backpacking reporter posts. The number of super team members should be considered in the operation of integrated news. The main requirement for team members is technology complementarity, and the team members should have good sense of team cooperation and fairness preference.

3. ANALYSIS

3.1. Features of Convergent Journalism

The first part is focusing on the features of this form of convergent journalism and the comparison between this new form of news and the traditional form of news. Convergent journalism appeared because of the promotion of technology, the emergence of We-media, and the intensified competition between different kinds of media. The convergent journalism refers to the activities to ensure the accurate and rapid dissemination of news through the accurate application of multimedia. Through the analysis of the advantages of convergent journalism, we can find that its emergence not only breaks the privilege of journalists in the traditional concept of news dissemination, but also changes the information structure and news work of traditional media in the face of unexpected new form of work. In addition, convergent journalism will affect the accurate presentation of traditional media functions in the process of news processing to a certain extent.

3.2. Procedures of Operation

The working procedure of convergent journalism is based on the fusion of different media. The success of many companies in applying this form of Html-5 technology to their own operation mechanism also illustrates the inevitability of the existence of this form of media. Therefore, in order to keep itself in a favorable position in the ever-changing news industry, the top priority of traditional media is to innovate the operation mode and work flow.

Traditional media's accesses to news are relatively single. It is difficult to achieve efficient access to information. With the development of technology, access to information channels is increasing, the role of citizens in the process of news dissemination has been given a new definition, the emergence of this phenomenon has a very important significance for the optimization of the crowd structure faced by news. In other words, in the context of media convergence, news communication has become a collective oriented media, and the shortcomings of traditional media have been made up one by one.

To operate this form of convergent journalism, a lot of work should be done. Firstly, news materials should be collected and processed. Different from the traditional media which completely rely on reporters to complete the collection of materials, convergent media not only uses the contributions from journalists, but also integrates the multimedia materials uploaded to the network by ordinary users. In order to achieve the best news presentation effect, the editors must collect and possess enough news materials, obtain the news raw materials presented by different media elements, and vigorously explore the text, pictures, video, audio that are related to this report. The massive source of news material provides the possibility of "selecting the best among many" for news presentation.

Secondly, news resources should be selected and integrated. Compared with the traditional media, the network has almost no capacity limit. Moreover, the convergent media is not the whole presentation of the collected information, so that users are submerged in the huge amount of complex information. To produce convergent news, there must be a choice. In the form of collecting, select the most relevant and valuable content of the news itself and sort it out in a logical way; in the form of presentation, it is not the mechanical application of all elements such as text, pictures, audio, video, interactive settings and hyperlinks, but the reasonable integration of some elements and the proper allocation of all resources to achieve the best overall effect of news communication. Through the discovery, identification, transformation, integration, display and value-added of news information, the development and utilization level of news information resources is improved, and the core competitiveness of integrated news is enhanced.

Thirdly, it is necessary to set up interactive sections. The audience is not only the spectators of news events, but also the participants of news reports in the new media environment. Foreign media convergence experts believe that we have come to an era in which both news communication and interpersonal communication are needed. In the process of news reporting, people should consider the embedded application of "social media" in interpersonal communication, and try our best to play the role of author and commentator ourselves. Through the interactive function, the audience comments, fill in the network survey, and one click sharing, even user comments themselves can become news materials. The celebrity comments can be published as news alone, and relatively concentrated vox populi can form public opinion. The interaction, communication and feedback with the audience make the news report more comprehensive, rich and profound [6].

3.3. Three Typical Examples

There are some of the typical examples of convergent journalism. The first one is the pioneer of convergent journalism, which is *Snow Fall* by John Branch of the New York Times. It is the first time that news media try to use multimedia form and interactive technology in reporting and presenting single news story. This work, to some extent, has had an "avalanche" effect on the press. After that, various mainstream news media organizations began to try the "Snow Fall Style" network news reporting. *Snow Fall* vividly describes a shocking disaster in Washington State Cascade Mountains. It comprehensively describes the process of the accidents of skiers and explains the scientific principles of an avalanche. After it was published, it received 2.9 million visits and 3.5 million pageviews in six days. The significance of *Snow Fall* is that it has basically established the content form of convergent journalism and the basic framework of narrative concept.

Opening the news page of this work, the first thing people can see is the full screen video of snow falling down the hillside. Sliding down the page, the text is interspersed among the videos, photos and information maps. Behind the subversive news presentation is the tacit cooperation of the entire news production team. Therefore, this Pulitzer Prize belongs not only to the organizer John Branch, but also to the whole team. This news award is different from the general award. It has aroused the shock of the press. It has put the future news form and development direction, as well as how news reports follow up the application of new communication technology on the agenda again, resulting in more intense discussion than before [3,5].

There is also a very careful design of the work: after each interviewee appears, a background information box marked by the portrait of the person will appear on the right side of the page. People can click to find out the specific information of this person, including their age and occupation. The author believes that this is the unique presentation of journalistic professionalism in the new media environment. The professionalism of news reports largely depends on the accuracy of "reporting sources". Moreover, emphasizing the information of the interviewees is a more vivid and intuitive way to highlight this professional awareness [3,5].

What is more amazing is that the *Snow Fall* web page can automatically adjust the video playback speed and corresponding content according to the speed of the reader's mouse browsing action, which truly realizes real-time interaction. If readers love the work, they can share it through the social media link at the top of the site. A netizen named Cal commented: "This work is so moving that I can't express my love for it. Thank you, John, for bringing us a strong spiritual impact of media convergence. I've shared the link with all my skiing friends" [1].

After *Snow Fall*, there appeared other convergent journalism that also made waves in public. The following convergent journalism also published by the New York Times, called *A Game of Shark and Minnow*, is one of those examples. This work is basically consistent with the narrative logic established in *avalanche*, but it has stepped

up a new level in the exploration and application of narrative principles. As a result, it once again earned the New York Times a reputation, winning the "best video and animation application" award from the Webby Awards, known as the "Internet Oscar". The news is set in the context of a territorial dispute between China and the Philippines over the South China Sea, focusing on the *Sheramadre*, an abandoned warship in the South China Sea during World War II. Since 1999, the Philippine government has regarded the stranded warship as a post-apocalyptic military fortress. A small group of Filipino soldiers have been stationed there all year round, surviving in extreme mental loneliness and physical torture. The story unfolds when a Philippine fishing boat boarded the ship by the team reporting the news.

Then, a famous convergent journalism appeared in China, it was *Life After Loss* by China Daily in 2013. It records and discusses a concern of the loss of the only child in the family. Compared with the first two works, although there is still a certain gap in the overall reporting and production level with the international mainstream media, to a certain extent, it has played a role in enriching samples for comprehensive exploration of the integration of news narrative law. In addition, the work also uses a lot of multimedia forms and responsive web technology of convergent media.

3.4. Summary and Reactions of Those Examples

According to the three examples above, it can be concluded that those attempts of convergent journalism all caused big reactions in the press circle. They are certainly regarded as a game changer to the media community. They have brought numerous challenges to the traditional media. As for the media literacy of citizens, the convergent journalism not only refers to the activities of integrating different news media, but also realizes the citizens' participation in the process of news dissemination through network technology. As a result, the media is more independent when it comes to the communication process. In this platform, the status of journalists and citizens in the news industry is completely equal, so different people will have different views on the same news. As for the journalists, through the research on the enterprises that have achieved success in the application of convergent journalism, it can be found that the news industry after the completion of media convergence generally needs the following two aspects of high-quality talents: from the perspective of news managers, in the context of integration media managers need to have a solid theoretical foundation, and can ensure that the news dissemination process needs to be responsive. The accurate selection and scientific application of the media make the news content more complete. It can be seen that the requirements of convergent journalism for news managers are embodied in three aspects of planning, technology and management. Compound talents meeting the above requirements are difficult to obtain only through school training, but they need to be constantly practiced and tempered to effectively improve their comprehensive ability. Secondly, in the

context of integration, the requirements for journalists in terms of skills are more stringent than in the past. Take the United States as an example, in the process of media convergence, news gathering personnel needs to have extraordinary business ability, not only writing text for newspapers and websites, but also shooting corresponding news videos for TV stations. Indeed, the interdisciplinary talents of journalism industry are obtained by the existing workers through continuous training and practice. Compared with the western developed countries, there are still some deficiencies in personnel training in China.

4. DISCUSSION

As for media regulation and management, the traditional news industry usually chooses a relatively single form as the media, such as newspapers and magazines. However, there are some limitations in the application of means. For example, television usually uses the way of image and sound to spread news, which is not always conducive to the development of the news industry. The emergence of convergent journalism avoids the limitations of traditional media to a large extent. The advantage is that it can ensure the in-depth mining of news content, and form the corresponding industrial chain. In addition, it is necessary to reform the media. For example, in the coverage and reporting of unexpected news, the relevant ideas of convergent media are applied to reform the organizational mechanism, and a professional team is selected to go to the scene of the accident for interview. It should be noted that at this time, the group is no longer a traditional "reporter", its role is to collect news for all media of its group. By analyzing this phenomenon with the content of management science, we can draw the following conclusions that News group belongs to a kind of network management mode, different news have corresponding media, and different media can also maximize their own effectiveness in the process of news dissemination.

However, as the convergent media has brought about so many influences in the traditional form of media, many people cast doubts on it. They think that it cannot represent the future direction of the development of online news, it is likely to be a flash in the pan news luxury. "The forms like Snow Fall will not be the future of the news industry, it is just an innovation, and it does not bring about a radical change in news reporting", wrote the Atlantic Monthly.

There are three kinds of questions about this kind of news work. Firstly, the high cost of production is daunting to the media. For instance, The New York Times *Snow Fall* had an expenditure of about \$250,000, so it was jokingly called a luxury that only the "handsome and rich" media that only the New York Times could afford to play. Secondly, works like Snow Fall easily make readers fall into aesthetic fatigue. The interactive production template is easy to imitate, and if the freshness is too much, the reader's interest will be reduced. Cody brown, co-founder of Scroll Kit, copied another version of Snow Fall in just an hour, sparking a copyright dispute with the New York Times. Moreover, when browsing Snow Fall, readers tend to indulge in the unpredictable multimedia elements rather than the feature itself, which was said to be a pity. Thirdly,

the planning of Snow Fall takes half a year, which impairs the timeliness and freshness of the news. From this point of view, avalanche is not strictly regarded as a news work, but more like a work of art carefully created by new media. Since we are in an era of information explosion, people are more and more inclined to obtain more information in a limited time. This makes information short and concise. Also, this makes modern people's reading fragmented. Herbert Simon, an American economist, said, "information consumes the attention of the receiver". It is thought that readers had already lost their patience in the face of long and profound news features, while Snow Fall showed the hope of innovation and change for traditional journalists. "Content is king" should continue to be regarded as the standard, and playing with multimedia seems to be a necessary magic weapon for survival. The future is full of challenges. As the Atlantic Monthly commented, although Snow Fall has achieved a beautiful leap in the content production of news works, the traditional profit-making mode relying on distribution and advertising has not been broken through. Can the press "avalanche" out more subversive news products? Everything remains to be seen [4].

The author's suggestion for the solution of these drawbacks is to focus on making best use of the benefits and to bypass the drawbacks as much as possible. Since that most convergent journalisms are suitable only for certain topics, by analyzing the three examples, it can be found that this form of media best fits with big events such as a large natural disaster that causes not only injuries and deaths, but also argumentum among the public. On the contrary, convergent journalisms can be suitable for historical or cultural events, which includes numerous amounts of information being collected. They are also suitable for social topics that have been the gossip of people for years. Those areas are worth spending time and money for closely researching. Moreover, for the development of convergent journalism in the future, more innovations should be made in order to keep pace with the society. Furthermore, as new media technologies emerge in endlessly and news reporting forms are constantly enriched, no matter for the integration of news, data visualization, or VR panoramic report, the fundamental appeal should still be "narrative".

5. CONCLUSION

It is still a question that how this form of convergent media such as Snow Fall still will take its importance in the media area in the future. Since it has both benefits and drawbacks, the professionals should focus on making best uses of the advantages and bypassing the disadvantages. Most convergent journalisms are suitable only for certain topics. By analyzing the three examples, it has been found that this form of media best fits with big events such as a large natural disaster that causes not only injuries and deaths, but also argumentum among the public. Convergent journalisms can also be suitable for historical or cultural events, which includes numerous amounts of information being collected; or for social topics that have been the gossip of people for years. Those areas suitable

for convergent journalisms are all unfailing over a long period of time, and they are worth spending time and money for closely researching. For the development of convergent journalism in the future, more innovations should be made in order to keep pace with the society. Furthermore, as new media technologies emerge in endlessly and news reporting forms are constantly enriched, no matter for the integration of news, data visualization, or VR panoramic report, the fundamental appeal should still be "narrative". In other words, no matter what kind of media form and technology are used, they should serve narration. Therefore, to explore the logic and principles of the integration of news reporting is also to provide a reference and supplement for the diversified news narrative picture and challenges [7].

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