

# Research on the Reconstruction of the Relationship between Traditional Media and Audience in the Age of Algorithm

Han Xiao<sup>1</sup>, Liu Feng<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Journalism and Communication, Shanghai University, Shanghai, People's Republic of China

<sup>2</sup>(Corresponding author) School of Journalism and Communication, Shanghai University, Shanghai, People's Republic of China

Email address: panda197 @ 163.com

**Abstract**— *The arrival of the age of intelligence media with algorithm as the core has prompted the traditional media to have a great change from form to content, and the algorithm platform is the carrier of its change. Based on this carrier, the audience, as the target of media pursuit and service, has also changed in different degrees. The dual transformation of traditional media and audience is the result of interaction, and the relationship between the two is not a simple causal relationship, but a kind of "reconstruction". This paper will start with the reconstruction of the relationship between the traditional media and the audience in the algorithm platform, discuss the changes of the relationship between the two, the reconstruction performance and the problems brought by the reconstruction, and analyze how the traditional media can realize the reconnection with the audience in the algorithm communication pattern, trying to solve the problem of how the traditional media can find the audience who lost in the algorithm platform.*

**Keywords**— *The algorithm; Traditional media; The audience.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The continuous integration of artificial intelligence and media technology has opened the era of intelligent media, and the rise of intelligent media platforms with algorithms has gradually created a new communication pattern. It has greatly affected and changed the relationship between media, especially the traditional media and the audience. Redefining the relationship and reconnection between the two has become an urgent problem for the traditional media. US scholar Michael Gold haber, who coined the term "attention economy", said that attention is becoming a scarce resource in the online world. At present, various digital media platforms dominated by algorithms are in the ascendance, which greatly capture the attention resources of the audience. The sight of the audience is the source of traffic realization. The competition of new media is still fierce, and traditional media need to carry out certain changes and innovations to ensure its vitality. In the massive update of the communication pattern, the vitality and potential of algorithms have been appreciated, and the communication "rules" dominated by algorithms are also different from the past. At this time, how traditional media "position" in the algorithm platform is particularly important. Especially in the face of the audience, the traditional media is facing the danger of "disconnection" with it. But the change means the flow, the change of the relationship between the two provides an opportunity for the

reconstruction of the relationship between the two, seize this opportunity is the inevitable choice of traditional media.

## II. CHANGES IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRADITIONAL MEDIA AND AUDIENCES IN THE ALGORITHM PLATFORM

The traditional media in the algorithmic platform is no longer the "leader" who has the absolute authority in the process of communication in the past. No matter in the form or in the content production, the traditional media are trying to integrate into the tide of intelligence. And the role of the "audience" at the end of communication has also changed a lot. Therefore, traditional media need to re-examine the relationship with the audience.

### 1. *The two-way interaction of transmission and reception covers single chain propagation*

Levinson, author of "New New Media", believes that "users of new new media are endowed with real rights, and full rights, they can choose to produce and consume the content of new new media, and these content is provided by millions of other new new media consumers - producers" [1]. He clearly describes the interactive communication mechanism of current social media, and this mechanism highlights the psychological motivation and personal motivation of interaction and participation, which are new media ecological factors that traditional media cannot ignore.[2]

On the whole, traditional media symbolized the elite class in the past and held the main discourse power. In addition, the characteristics of communication media made the feedback of the audience extremely limited, so the information communication mode was relatively single and solidified. The rise of mobile media gives the audience the right to receive information, feedback information, transfer and disseminate information anytime and anywhere. The characteristic of the network without threshold brings all users into the public domain as Habermas said without any difference. They are spectators, forwards, commentators, and even promoters and participants of news production or development process of news events. Based on the situation that interpersonal communication and group communication prevailed. The grass-roots class represented by users stepped on the stage and

started a dialogue with the former elites. With the application of algorithmic recommendation system in media platforms, the needs of audiences rise to a key position, and the concept of "user first" prevails. For traditional media, the audience is no longer just the audience, and the transformation from the audience to the "user" is not only reflected in the different environment of media use, but also reflected in the different ways and behaviors of using the media. The strong interactivity requires traditional media to consider the feedback and needs of the audience, and even to borrow its strength when gathering news.

2. *The "field control ability" of traditional media is gradually weakened*

On the one hand, in the era of communication dominated by newspapers, traditional media has absolute control of power and discourse power, but the elite era symbolized by traditional media has gradually come to an end. In the stage of dialogue between grassroots and elites, the discourse power of elites is constantly being divided, especially in the process of algorithmic communication. Audiences no longer look up to traditional media, but consciously strengthen their own thinking and views. This "dialogue relationship" directly affects the traditional media's control of the communication effect. In addition, the algorithm recommendation strengthens the personality of the audience, which constantly separates all kinds of groups. As a result, the public opinion on the algorithm platform often shows the tendency of extreme polarization, and the concept of "collectivism" is constantly diluted. On the other hand, the "personal daily" customization service brought by the algorithm once aroused Sunstein's worries: the unlimited filtering function of the network makes people with the tendency of selective contact in the pre-selected information environment, and the pre-selected personalization actually constitutes the "field" of self-selection [3].

3. *The role of gatekeeper of traditional media is weakened and the trend of transferring it to algorithm is strengthened*

In the process of news production and distribution, "gatekeeper" is a key link. In the era of traditional media, adhering to the principle of "content is king", editors, as gatekeepers, will verify and filter the content according to value judgment, and finally decide the content to be watched by readers. They have a set of exclusive production process and mode. In the age of algorithms, the gatekeeper power that belonged to traditional media has largely been handed over to algorithmic technology, which identifies audiences' preferences and recommends content that they may be interested in. As a typical algorithm platform of "today's headline", it has an express vivid slogan: What you care about is the headline. To some extent, traditional media also give up more of the right to speak, which is not conducive to its long-term development. In the algorithmic platform where users come first, traditional media will lose traffic if they lose users, and the lower economic benefits will easily make them gradually edge in the competition with emerging media, so

that they will be completely replaced or even controlled by algorithms.

III. THE PERFORMANCE OF THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRADITIONAL MEDIA AND AUDIENCE

The revolution caused by technological renewal is not only a media revolution, but also a social revolution. From social structure to human nature, it is dominated and driven by the new technological logic. In this storm, traditional media must shift the focus of development to the wishes of the audience, and a new relationship between transmission and reception is being constructed.

1. *The audience under the lazy portrait and the content choice of traditional media*

Today is an era of information explosion. Both the audience and the traditional media are slightly insignificant in the vast ocean of information. On the one hand, audiences are controlled by more sophisticated and complex media machines, while people living under life pressure lack enough energy to screen and search for information, and more people are used to passively accept it, which also explains why the algorithmic news push represented by "Today's Headline" is so popular. On the other hand, the audience in the dazzling visual media is taking the initiative to give up choice, and choose to embrace the media content of easy entertainment [4]. These two aspects together paint a "portrait of the contemporary audience's laziness". The audience in the portrait pays more attention to the entertainment demand, which is easier to meet. Therefore, relying on the algorithm platform, the traditional media mostly provides "fast food" content to meet the audience's "immediacy" consumption demand. However, this part of fast food content is not the mainstream pushed by traditional media. Deep and professional content is still the first priority for traditional media when selecting content.

2. *The audience under the information cocoons and the content production of traditional media*

"Information cocoon" is the inevitable result of personalized recommendation. This concept was first put forward by the American scholar Sunstein, which vividly describes the "selective psychology" and its results proposed in the past communication studies [5]. In his opinion, information cocoons means that people only listen to what they choose and delight them. Audiences living in the information cocoon rely on algorithms to push information every day. Under the influence of echo chamber, their media literacy is getting lower and lower. Most of their clicking behaviors rely on social media platforms to share, thus forming viral transmission. In view of this situation, mainstream authoritative platforms created by traditional media often attach importance to seizing social access, establish official accounts in as many social platforms as possible, release and share real-time news information, often create or bring various topics, actively pursue current affairs hot spots or comment on a hot spot, and get close to all audience groups as far as possible, so as to ensure that the

content produced can meet the needs of all audience groups to the greatest extent. When traditional media platform in algorithm, however, what is now the major mainstream media, although the information of the swarm cocoons separation of trend is strong, the voice of the mainstream media is still the strongest.

### *3. The audience under the desire of performance and the social tendency of traditional media*

Goffman's "drama-mimicking theory" [6] defines the foreground and background behaviors of people in social processes, and this theory reveals the innate desire of human beings as social animals to "perform". As the cost of technology fell and the web celebrity effect stimulated, this desire grew stronger, shaping the social nature of today's users. Users expect dialogue, desire to display themselves and construct identity, and hope to construct an ideal and perfect self-portrait on the Internet with the help of these forms, which means that every user in the cyberspace has more or less the desire to perform. If traditional media continue to follow a serious, rigid discourse model, users are bound to lose. Formally, most of the news clients of traditional media still inherit the form of "couch potato". The ideal audience is still those people who curl up on the sofa with remote control and follow the TV program. But today's users prefer the feeling of "onlookers" like bullet screen videos and movies in cinemas. In terms of content, users also prefer funny, non-didactic sentences. Therefore, while changing the voice of traditional media and becoming more intimate and down-to-ground, they no longer blindly adhere to the original orthodox comment views and discourse expression. The content and form of the text try to meet the performance desire of users, so that users can build a unique and distinctive personal image in the circle of friends by sharing personalized, ideological and in-depth content.

### *4. The audience under consumer psychology and the special economy of traditional media*

In pursuit of good communication effect and to account to absorb more "fans", in addition to the content on the morphology of transformation, the traditional media in the specific content production (such as the nature of entertainment content, or to comment on a hot search too negative events) implanted in traffic star liquid to flow and enhance the influence, in order to achieve explosive spreading in a short time. Baudrillard once put forward the "consumer society", believing that people pay less and less attention to the practicality of goods when buying them, and pay more attention to their symbolic meaning, such as the manifestation of social status. It is obvious that today's audience not only has a strong desire to perform, but also the psychology of reading has gradually turned to the psychology of consumption. Under the algorithmic communication pattern, economic benefits are becoming more and more important for traditional media. It is a special economy for its development to improve the reading volume of its content with the influence of stars. But there are risks. First of all, official media usually pay close attention to various current affairs and play a guiding and supervising role

in the entertainment industry. Even if the choice of the righteous star also need to bear a huge risk of time and money; what's more, now the stars have "updated" too fast, the choice of popular traffic needs to bear high costs, and once the stars are stuck with negative news, it will greatly damage the authoritative image of traditional media. In short, this special economy is the embodiment of traditional media platform-based production and an attempt to cater to the algorithm era, but it still needs to grasp the balance between economic benefits and communication benefits.

## **IV. PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRADITIONAL MEDIA AND AUDIENCES**

The birth of the new type of transmission and reception relationship is inevitable for the development of The Times, while the traditional media still face challenges in the process of seeking the new type of transmission and reception relationship.

### *1. Information dimension: distribute the attention resources of traditional media*

With the rise of algorithmic aggregated news clients represented by "Today's Headline", technology-driven personalized recommendation has become an effective way to attract the attention of audiences in the digital era. It has also become a new market force, rapidly squeeze and seize the media information market originally dominated by traditional media, and re-construct the attention market [7]. Algorithmic check instead of human check has become the core force of information resource allocation, which has brought subversive changes to the production and operation of the traditional media industry, forcing it to adapt and innovate both in concept and form. After all, under the trend of attention economy, losing the audience is about the same as losing the market. When the algorithm becomes a widely recognized source of information outside the traditional media and the government, it has the ability to influence the formation and expression of public opinion and social emotion. The algorithm can even make the public deviate from the fact in the "information cocoons" woven by their own will, weaken their rational judgment, so as to realize the consciousness manipulation of the public [8]. Adaptation to the new distribution model, however, did not happen overnight. These jointly lead to the traditional media and the audience "lost contact".

### *2. Interactive dimension: traditional media need to adapt to the new interactive mode of transmission and reception*

The personalized recommendation system in the algorithm platform realizes the transmission and reception relationship of "thousands of people, thousands of faces", which completely breaks the one-to-many transmission and reception relationship of traditional media and makes the audience become the center in the true sense. This is different from the traditional news value orientation and the utilitarian pursuit of traditional media production and management. Under the influence of various factors such as system, power, interest

class, cultural orientation and so on, traditional media is responsible for providing information, guiding public opinion, educating the public, providing entertainment and other functions, and the relationship with the audience is active and passive, leading and following, educating and taming. Then personalized recommendation breaks the structural relationship of binary opposition and constructs a binary interactive structural relationship with users as the main body. The traditional media, which is accustomed to the single-chain transmission mode, is not adapted to this highly interactive structure. Moreover, not only the algorithm technology "inherits" part of the gatekeeper rights, but also the communication audience recommended by the algorithm is one of the gatekeepers. All these impact the interactive thinking of traditional media to varying degrees.

### 3. *Credit dimension: the pursuit of interests causes the trust crisis of traditional media*

Traditional media authoritative professional image depends on the domestic building of credit system and foreign production of high quality content. In the past dominated by paper media, newspapers were the carriers of in-depth reports and comments. Moreover, traditional media dominated the setting of topics due to the relatively concentrated attention of the audience and the slow pace of the media. However, in the new situation where algorithms are prevalent, the audience completely decides the issue independently, so the audience's eyes have become a necessity for the survival and development of the media. In this situation, the importance of economic benefits has surpassed the communication benefits. Traditional media have to change their thinking if they want to consolidate their position. The reading quantity of high-quality content is getting worse and worse. Traditional media gradually pay attention to the pursuit of interests, and the output of worthless content is increasing. In order to pursue timeliness and become the first publisher of news, fake news and reverse news emerge one after another, resulting in the credibility of traditional media is not as good as it used to be.

On the other hand, the enhancement of civic awareness leads the audience to actively participate in news events. The existence of information cocoons enables the public opinion information to quickly find consensus in the social media platform and form a group influence, which affects the guidance of public opinion of traditional mainstream media to a certain extent. Such collectivization intensifies the emotional transmission in the post-truth era. Traditional media cannot carry out benign public opinion supervision, and the audience is often "out of control". Generally speaking, the trust crisis of traditional media still exists. As a national public organ, it is urgent to repair the credit.

## V. HOW TRADITIONAL MEDIA REALIZE "CONNECTING" WITH AUDIENCES IN ALGORITHMIC COMMUNICATION PATTERN

American scholar Clay Shirky once said, "Media is the connecting organization of society." The essence of the Internet is connection [9]. Whether it is between information, between information and people, or between people, there is strong stickability. Under the algorithmic communication

pattern, the change and deconstruction of the relationship between the traditional media and the audience mean that they must be "reconnected". Compared with conventional traditional media, It's more necessary to break through the traditional mode as well as think and find a new connecting road.

### 1. *Based on the development perspective of traditional media*

#### (1) *Attracting audiences based on professional content*

In a society where the pace of life is too fast and the network society is too impetuous, it highlights the importance of reporting professional content. Traditional media need to show and stick to their own professional, they must not be excessive entertainment assimilation, otherwise will only continue to lose audience. Although some users are in favor of worthless entertainment information, there is a motivation gap between different audiences, which divides the demand types of audiences into two types. The entertainment demand is only the bottom demand, while a considerable number of other audiences pay more attention to the higher demand of self-improvement. "Less is more, and more is less". Even the users who love entertainment and recreation will take the initiative to ingest in-depth content "for a change" when the sight is full of meaningless information. Good content never goes out of style, but it's even more valuable today. As a typical case, "The Death of Mi Meng" illustrates the truth that "channel is king, and content is gold". If we do not pay attention to the quality of content production, but only make use of the audience's psychology of curiosity, novelty and following the crowd to fabricate stories and create explosive points, it is tantamount to "playing with fire and getting burned". Therefore, high quality content is always the cornerstone of the survival and development of traditional media, and it is also the communication responsibility that it needs to undertake.

#### (2) *Traditional media should make innovative use of smart technology and innovate the way audiences interact*

On the surface, algorithmic technology may seem to be at the forefront, but the role of news editors is still important. On the one hand, traditional media should accept the application of intelligent technology and the form of the man-machine cooperation in content production. The algorithm recommendation system is driven by machine data, so it is impossible to make independent and complete value judgments for diverse and complex questions that have no standard answers to follow and require fact checking. However, news editors generally play the roles of "chief designer" and "chief commander" in the news production of traditional media. They have rich experience in value judgment and correct values, and can conduct fact verification with professional and truth-seeking attitude and rich experience to ensure the authenticity, objectivity, orientation and independence of news. Traditional media should uphold the guidance of journalistic professionalism, innovate ideas and combine the core mining of big data to strike a balance between the high quality selected by human editors and the individualism recommended by algorithms.

On the other hand, the change of audience's attitude towards traditional media is obvious. Traditional media is indeed under the pressure of losing audience. To rebuild a harmonious relationship with the audience, in addition to narrowing the distance with the audience, traditional media should innovate the way to interact with the audience, step down from the "sacred place" to have an equal dialogue with the audience, explore the real and potential thoughts of the audience, and strengthen online interaction and communication with the audience, so as to provide a communication platform for the public to participate in the discussion of news content, effectively understand and grasp the public demands, and timely respond to the public concerns. They can also set up offline physical activities requiring public participation to further enhance positive interaction with the public, integrate with public life and attract public attention. Both online and offline, so as to lay a solid audience foundation for the future development of traditional media.

## 2. Based on the development perspective of audience groups

### (1) Traditional media should provide audiences with more diversified and personalized content choices

The traditional media are in the algorithmic communication pattern, so they need to carry out partial transformation in content. According to different ways of classification, news can be divided into political news, entertainment news and other types. Different types of news have different weights and different communication purposes and effects. Traditional media need to take more account of the proportion of content push of different types of news, try to meet the personalized needs of audiences, produce diversified content, give audiences a variety of content types to choose, and gradually transform from "leader" to "service provider". However, information cocoon has indeed caused the Balkanization of the network, so the separation and collision between heterogeneous groups need more benign guidance from traditional media. Although there are cocoons of information in the era of traditional media, the prevalence of personalized recommendation information intensifies the selective psychology of audiences. How to break the cocoon of audiences is a problem that traditional media needs to think about. Moreover, the information cocoon room not only appears in the audience, even may appear in the traditional media itself. Sunstein argues that companies cannot thrive if they build information cocoons because their own decisions are not adequately challenged internally, which means that cocoons can become terrifying nightmares for both private and public institutions. Traditional media need to be wary of falling into pure personalized production, or it will be too difficult for the two sides controlled by technology to realize reconnection.

### (2) Traditional media should guide the audience to jump out of the circle of anxiety, to avoid the domination of algorithms

The information cocoons may even manipulate the audience's consciousness, which will continuously intensify the post-truth effect, and provide a hotbed for the development of all kinds of "We Media" accounts that rely on selling

anxiety for a living, making them rapidly popular in all parts of the country, and their commercial liquidity is amazing. This reflects from the side that the media literacy of users still needs to be improved, and the self-improvement awareness is not strong. These anxiety-peddling We Media draw more and more people into the circle of anxiety, and the algorithm will label different groups, which will form a closed loop over time. At this point, traditional media need to guide and supervise the public opinion of the audience, which is its bounden responsibility. It should stimulate the individual awareness and learning awareness of the audience, help them out of the circle of anxiety and cultivate the basic media literacy, so as to achieve a virtuous circle of communication and interaction.

## VI. SUMMARY

Traditional media based on the pattern of algorithmic communication are trying to locate the audience. One-to-many single propagation mode has already been eliminated, and the relationship between traditional media and the audience ushered in the reconstruction. Whether it is traditional media's rethinking of content selection and production, or adapting to the current craze of social transformation, all reflect the determination and action of traditional media to change and cater. However, the reconstruction of the relationship between traditional media and audiences is not plain sailing. As the technology empowers, the audience is at the core of the relationship between them. In order to reconnect with it, traditional media should not only innovate in content and channels, but also build a solid bridge based on the audience's perspective. In fact, traditional media is backed by powerful political and economic forces, so it has inherent advantages to cater to the platform and matrix of algorithmic communication. It is urgent to adapt and use intelligent technology. Traditional media should gradually evolve from content media to "new" mainstream media integrating content, service and social interaction as soon as possible, and finally reconstruct new transmission and reception relations and create a new communication pattern.

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