

A Study on the Role Reconstruction and Practical Pathways for Newspaper Presenters in the Era of Converged Media

Chenyi He

Communication University of China, Nanjing, Nanjing, Jiangsu, 211100, China

ABSTRACT

With the rapid advancement of media technology and profound transformations in the communication ecosystem, traditional newspaper media are undergoing a shift from impersonal to personalised communication. This has given rise to the new professional role of newspaper presenter. This paper, grounded in media contextualism and communication rights theory, examines the evolution of newspaper presenters' roles in the era of integrated media. By analysing their innovative practices in professional positioning, competency frameworks, and communication strategies, it explores the identity crises and developmental pathways confronting this professional group. Research indicates that newspaper presenters have transcended the traditional media role of mere 'mouthpiece', evolving into a triple identity framework comprising 'information intermediary, ecosystem co-builder, and value transmitter'. This transformation fundamentally represents an adaptive evolution of professional functions within the context of reconfigured communication authority.

KEYWORDS

Newspaper presenter; converzedia; Character reconstruction; Career transition; Communication strategy

1 Introduction

In the era of traditional media, newspapers as a quintessential print medium exhibited a distinctly impersonal mode of communication. The personal profiles of editors and journalists typically remained concealed behind the scenes, with information transmission relying chiefly upon the objective presentation of textual symbols. With the proliferation of mobile internet technology and the advent of the converged media era, information dissemination has shifted from a unidirectional broadcasting model to a multifaceted networked structure. Timeliness has undergone a revolutionary leap, and the monopoly over traditional media content production has been thoroughly dismantled. Against this backdrop, newspaper media began exploring personified communication strategies to address survival challenges, giving rise to newspaper presenters as the personified interface connecting media and audiences.

2 The Evolution of Newspaper Presenters' Roles and the Reconstruction of Their Positioning

2.1 The "Invisible Communicators" of the Traditional Media Era

During the golden age of traditional media (1983–2011), newspapers served as the primary vehicle for information dissemination. Their communication model centred on textual narrative, with the personal identities of editors and journalists entirely concealed behind the scenes, thereby establishing a quintessential "depersonalised" mode of communication.

During this period, the authority of newspapers was primarily established through the quality of their content and the accumulation of brand prestige, rather than relying on specific personified symbols. Unlike broadcast presenters who serve as the personified interface and symbol of authority within the state propaganda apparatus, newspaper journalists possess virtually no channels or need for personal image cultivation.

The dissemination characteristics of newspapers determine the role positioning of its practitioners: editors and journalists primarily function as gatekeepers and content producers, with their professional value manifested in stages such as topic planning, reporting and writing, and editorial processing, rather than in the direct audience-facing communication stages. This role positioning, while ensuring the objectivity and authority of information dissemination, also limits the emotional connection and interactive engagement between newspapers and their readers. Consequently, newspapers struggle to fulfil their role in prompting immediate emotional mobilisation during sudden public incidents.

2.2 The "Identity Crisis" and Transformation Opportunities in the New Media Era

Following 2010, the proliferation of 3G/4G mobile networks precipitated a seismic shift in the media ecosystem. The timeliness of information dissemination accelerated from "one to two days" to near real-time, significantly eroding the traditional newspaper's advantages in content production and distribution channels. A Chinese online audio-visual research report indicates that short video users now spend an average of 156 minutes daily on such platforms, whilst traditional television viewing rates have fallen below 30%. This shift in audience attention has delivered a significant blow

to the entire traditional media sector ^[1].

Faced with the landscape where 'everyone is a media outlet' and the erosion of audience attention, newspaper media have begun exploring paths to transformation. One key direction involves adopting a personification communication strategy. Merowitz's "Media Context Theory" contends that "electronic media have shattered traditional contextual boundaries, blurring the distinction between foreground and background domains." This provides both theoretical justification and practical feasibility for newspapers to transcend their conventional impersonal nature." Changes in media inevitably lead to shifts in the social environment, and changes in the social environment inevitably lead to changes in human behaviour. ^[2] It is against this backdrop that newspaper hosts have emerged, becoming a new type of communicator that connects newspapers with their audience and rebuilds trust.

2.3 The Triple Role Positioning in the Era of Converged Media

In the era of converged media, newspaper presenters have evolved into multifaceted roles, transcending the traditional media's singular function of information dissemination. They now embody a triple identity framework: information intermediary, ecosystem co-builder, and value transmitter.

As information intermediaries, newspaper presenters inherit the professional expertise of traditional editors and journalists while undertaking the functions of information filtering, interpretation and translation. Compared to broadcast presenters, those with a background in print journalism typically possess stronger expertise in news reporting and deeper analytical capabilities, enabling them to provide more professional insights during coverage of major conferences and significant events. The video presenters deployed by the People's Daily in its coverage of major conferences serve precisely to bridge the gap between policy and the public through professional interpretation of information.

As co-creators of an ecological ecosystem, newspaper hosts have broken away from the traditional one-way dissemination model of print media. Through interactive engagement, they stimulate user participation and foster an open communication ecosystem.

As conveyors of values, newspaper presenters prioritise emotional resonance and value guidance while maintaining journalistic professionalism. China Daily's Xiao Peng Vlog effectively conveys Chinese values in international communication by crafting Central District scenes, integrating diverse characters, and employing symbolic agency strategies, demonstrating the unique strengths of newspaper presenters in cross-cultural communication. This role transcends mere information dissemination, ascending to the level of cultural transmission and value construction.

3 Building the Core Competency Framework for Newspaper Presenters

3.1 The Transition from "Single Skills" to "Composite Competencies"

The communication landscape in the era of integrated media has imposed entirely new competency requirements upon newspaper presenters. Within the traditional newspaper sector, practitioners' core competencies centre on textual processing skills such as interviewing, writing and editing; whereas becoming a presenter requires developing a multifaceted skill set encompassing verbal expression, on-camera presence and interactive communication.

The essence of this shift in capability lies in adapting to the evolution of communication mediums—the transition from textual to audiovisual carriers. The written medium of newspapers permits deep reflection and repeated revisions, whereas video broadcasting demands immediate responses and on-the-spot control. This fundamental difference poses a significant challenge to practitioners' ways of thinking and behavioural habits.

Successful newspaper presenters who have transitioned to broadcasting often combine the logical thinking and in-depth analytical skills honed through written work with the expressive abilities and on-the-spot adaptability required in audiovisual communication, thereby forging a distinctive professional advantage.

3.2 Analysis of Core Competency Dimensions

In the era of converged media, newspaper presenters must possess four core competency dimensions, forming a "four-dimensional competency model": content planning capability, cross-platform operational capability, technological application proficiency, and value conversion ability.

Content planning ability is the cornerstone of a newspaper presenter's profession. Compared to traditional broadcast presenters, newspaper presenters are often more adept at crafting content that is both insightful and engaging from a journalistic perspective. This content planning capability is grounded in the professional expertise cultivated within traditional journalism while demonstrating a profound grasp of the principles governing new media dissemination, thereby significantly enhancing the communicative efficacy of individual news items.

Cross-platform operational capabilities have become a key skill for newspaper presenters to adapt to the converged media environment. In this era of fragmented attention, presenters must be well-versed in the dissemination characteristics of multiple platforms such as Douyin, Bilibili, and Xiaohongshu, thereby "establishing a new positioning of

'strong interaction, weak relationships.'^[3] Understand the communication style of each platform and the competencies required of presenters.

Technical application skills form the fundamental basis for newspaper presenters to achieve autonomous dissemination. The converged media environment demands presenters who are capable of planning, understand filming, are proficient in editing, and excel at audience interaction. They must master fundamental photography and videography techniques alongside video editing software, enabling them to independently handle both on-site filming and post-production processing for programmes. This technological capability enables newspaper presenters to break free from reliance on specialist technical teams, achieving streamlined and rapid content production that better adapts to the instantaneous dissemination demands of new media.

The capacity for value transformation embodies the social value of newspaper presenters. An accomplished broadcast journalist can transform professional news value into accessible communication value for the public, convert policy discourse into popular language, and turn specialised knowledge into practical wisdom for everyday life.

3.3 Pathways for Capacity Development

The development of newspaper presenters' capabilities necessitates the establishment of a systematic training framework, integrating three dimensions: theoretical study, practical experience, and self-improvement. Media organisations should establish comprehensive training mechanisms to assist traditional editors and journalists in transitioning into competent presenters; presenters themselves must embrace the concept of lifelong learning, continually expanding their knowledge base and skill set.

The practice of county-level integrated media centres offers valuable insights. Through a training model centred on "reconfiguring professional competencies: from specialisation to all-round development", presenters progressively acquire comprehensive skills encompassing planning, filming, editing, and audience engagement. This training model emphasises a practice-oriented approach, developing comprehensive skills through real-world projects while prioritising personalised development. It encourages presenters to cultivate distinctive hosting styles.

In terms of theoretical study, systematic learning should be strengthened in areas such as media convergence theory, communication psychology, and new media technology. Practical training requires gaining experience through multi-platform broadcasting practice, accumulating hosting expertise across diverse scenarios. Self-improvement requires presenters to continually reflect and summarise, thereby forging a personal pathway for professional development. Only through the organic integration of these three elements can we cultivate versatile newspaper presenters who meet the demands of the converged media era.

4 Innovation in Communication Strategies for Newspaper Presenters

4.1 Personified Communication: From "Content is King" to "The Integration of Person and Medium"

Personified communication represents the defining characteristic that distinguishes newspaper hosts from traditional print journalism, embodying a shift in communication philosophy from "content is king" to "the integration of person and medium". Traditional newspapers rely on textual content as their core competitive advantage, whereas newspaper presenters transform their personal image and charisma into communicative strengths, achieving the dual value of being both the 'medium' through which information is conveyed and the 'content' presented by the media.

Successful personification communication hinges upon three key elements: authenticity, personalisation, and emotional resonance. Authenticity requires presenters to demonstrate their genuine selves in terms of personality, temperament, interests, hobbies, and emotional attitudes, "including all aspects of authenticity, such as flaws and imperfections"; Personalisation emphasises that presenters should adopt a segmented approach, showcasing distinctive individuality rather than seeking universal approval; Emotionalisation requires presenters to enhance their empathy and compassion, genuinely feeling and conveying the joys and sorrows of those they report on.

China Daily's Xiao Peng Vlog has achieved a breakthrough in international communication by crafting a distinctive personal image, demonstrating the efficacy of personified communication. This dissemination strategy renders serious news content more approachable and compelling, helping to capture audience attention in an information-saturated environment while fostering emotional connections and brand recognition.

4.2 Scenario-Based Narrative: From "Flat Presentation" to "Three-Dimensional Construction"

In the era of converged media, audience demands have shifted from "accessing information" to "gaining experiences", prompting newspaper presenters to adopt scenario-based narrative strategies. This facilitates a transition from "two-dimensional presentation" to "three-dimensional construction". Scenario-based storytelling emphasises embedding information within specific life scenarios or event contexts, enhancing communication effectiveness through a sense of immediacy, immersion and interactivity.

The contextualised narrative employed by newspaper presenters is primarily achieved through three approaches: the expansion of spatial settings, the extension of temporal settings, and the creation of emotional settings. The expansion of spatial settings manifests in presenters increasingly moving beyond the studio, relocating recording locations to settings within the public's daily lives and workplaces, with a focus on on-site interviews, live video streaming, and experiential reporting. The extension of temporal scenarios is achieved through follow-up reports and behind-the-scenes features, transcending the temporal constraints of conventional news coverage; the cultivation of emotional scenarios is realised by exploring the personal narratives of subjects, thereby eliciting audience resonance.

In pandemic coverage, the study "Innovative Narrative Pathways of 'Vlog + News' from a Dramaturgical Perspective: The Case of 'Wuhan Observation'" notes that when COVID-19 erupted in Wuhan early in 2020, CCTV journalist Zhang Jun's team produced the series "Wuhan Observation"—a blend of vlogs and news reports. With over 100 million online views, it played a constructive role in guiding public discourse during the outbreak. This demonstrated the powerful impact of contextualised storytelling^[4].

4.3 Interactive Communication: From "Unidirectional Output" to "Multifaceted Participation"

The advancement of new media technology has made interactive communication possible. Newspaper presenters should adeptly utilise interactive methods to achieve a shift from "one-way output" to "multiple participation". This interaction is not confined to the dissemination process alone, but extends to every stage—from content production to the evaluation of communication outcomes—thus forming a complete interactive communication loop.

Interactive communication strategies include interactive content production—presenters solicit topics and gather material via social media, enabling audiences to participate in content planning; Interactive communication process—engaging with audiences in real time through online exchanges; Interactive communication outcomes—analysing data to understand audience feedback and refine subsequent communication strategies.

Interactive communication requires newspaper hosts to shift their role perception, transforming from "information disseminators" into "topic facilitators" and "discussion organisers", adept at constructing communication spaces and stimulating user engagement. Through effective interactive design, newspaper presenters can combine the professional strengths of the media with the collective wisdom of their audience, thereby enhancing the social value of communication.

5 Challenges and Optimisation Pathways for the Development of Newspaper Presenters

5.1 The Principal Challenges Currently Faced

Despite having made significant strides in the convergence transformation, newspaper presenters continue to face numerous challenges, primarily manifesting in three areas: identity recognition, professional evaluation, and skills updating. The identity crisis manifests as follows: The professional evaluation dilemma stems from the mismatch between traditional newspaper assessment systems and the principles governing new media dissemination, coupled with a lack of scientifically sound evaluation criteria. The capability renewal dilemma arises from the rapid pace of technological advancement and shifts in the media landscape, rendering presenters' knowledge structures and skill sets difficult to update in tandem.

In terms of professional identity, newspaper presenters oscillate between the dual roles of 'journalist' and 'presenter', struggling to establish a clear occupational positioning. Traditional newspaper journalists who transition into presenting roles often face questions about their 'professional integrity', finding it difficult to strike a balance between journalistic professionalism and the public's demand for entertainment. The designation of presenters as 'cultural intermediaries' within broadcasting and television does not fully apply to newspaper presenters, who require greater journalistic expertise and analytical depth. This disparity leads to ambiguity in their professional positioning.

The absence of a professional evaluation system is another significant factor hindering the development of newspaper presenters. The traditional newspaper industry's evaluation framework is incompatible with the principles governing new media dissemination. While conventional newspapers prioritise metrics such as publication volume and editorial quality, new media communication places greater emphasis on dissemination effectiveness, engagement metrics, and brand influence. This divergence between the two evaluation systems has left newspaper executives grappling with an assessment dilemma. Certain media outlets have simplistically adopted traffic metrics as their sole evaluation criterion, leading presenters to excessively pander to vulgar tastes and deviate from the principles of journalistic professionalism.

The gap between the pace of technological iteration and the rhythm of capability renewal constitutes the capability renewal dilemma. In the era of converged media, communication technologies are advancing at a rapid pace. From short videos to live streaming, and from virtual reality to artificial intelligence, the constant emergence of new technologies demands that presenters continually acquire fresh skills. Traditional newspaper professionals, however, often lack technological acumen and motivation to learn, making it difficult for them to adapt to the rapidly changing technological

landscape.

5.2 Optimised Pathways for Future Development

To address the challenges facing the development of newspaper presenters, an optimised pathway must be established across three levels: individual enhancement, institutional support, and industry regulation. This will foster the healthy growth of this emerging professional group.

At the individual development level, newspaper presenters should embrace the concept of lifelong learning and proactively enhance their professional expertise and overall capabilities. We must strengthen three key mindsets: a commitment to professionalism, upholding journalistic integrity and ethical standards; an innovative mindset, actively exploring new forms of communication and expression; and a user-centric approach, gaining deep insights into audience needs to deliver tailored communication services. Concurrently, presenters should focus on cultivating their personal brand, developing a distinctive presenting style and specialised field of expertise to enhance their professional recognition and core competitiveness.

At the institutional support level, newspaper media should establish and improve support systems to provide institutional safeguards for the development of presenters. Media organisations must refine their staffing mechanisms, dismantle traditional role boundaries and departmental silos, and establish pathways for editors and journalists to transition into presenting roles; Refine the training system, regularly organise professional training and exchange activities to enhance presenters' professional capabilities; Innovate evaluation mechanisms by establishing a comprehensive assessment system that balances professional standards with dissemination effectiveness, thereby avoiding a singular focus on traffic metrics; Establish a technical platform to provide presenters with advanced technological tools and support, thereby lowering the threshold for technical application.

At the level of industry regulation, it is necessary to establish and improve industry standards and self-regulatory mechanisms to guide the standardised development of the newspaper presenter profession. Industry associations should play an organisational and coordinating role in formulating professional standards and codes of conduct for newspaper presenters: Establish an industry exchange platform to facilitate the sharing of experience and resources; Conduct vocational training and qualification certification to enhance the overall calibre of the industry; Strengthen industry self-regulation and oversight, standardise the professional conduct of presenters, and uphold the industry's positive image.

6 Conclusion

The advent of the converged media era has spurred traditional newspaper outlets to explore personalised communication pathways, giving rise to the new professional role of newspaper presenters. The evolution of their function reflects the underlying logic of transformation within the communication ecosystem. Research indicates that the transformation of newspaper presenters fundamentally constitutes an adaptive evolution of professional functions within the context of communication power restructuring. Its core lies in transcending the traditional aura of authority, achieving this through personalised reinvention, cross-platform operations, precise content adaptation, and discourse system innovation, thereby redefining professional value coordinates within a decentralised communication ecosystem. This transformation process presents challenges such as identity recognition, professional evaluation and capability renewal, while also offering significant opportunities for traditional media to reshape their influence.

In the future, with the advancement of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, newspaper presenters will also face new transformations and challenges. How to strike a balance between technological empowerment and humanistic care, how to maintain tension between algorithmic recommendations and value-driven guidance, and how to build bridges between globalisation and localisation will remain crucial challenges for newspaper editors to continually explore. Only by proactively embracing change and continuously innovating and breaking new ground can newspaper presenters achieve sustainable development amid the tide of media convergence, thereby contributing to high-quality news dissemination and effective social governance.

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