

# *Chinese Journalist Professional Identity in Newspapers Transition*

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**Abstract**—This article summarizes the basic situation and main advantages of newspaper media development. By analyzing newspaper transformation practice, this paper tries to discuss the future direction. Maybe the feasible framework of future newspaper industry is mainly newspaper-oriented, leaving media as a platform for influence and public opinion. Therefore, journalists' professional identity in transition deserves attention and discussion. It pays particular attention to the feelings and changes of journalists as communication subject. Trough analyzing on journalists' professional identity in transition, it tries to explain what is professional identity and how to intensify it. Based on surveys and interviews about satisfaction and loyalty, it tries to provide countermeasure in exerting initiative and creativity.

**Keywords**—*newspaper transformation, media convergence, internet thinking, profit model, new media technology*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Chinese newspaper industry has entered into a new historical period, the prospect of newspaper is becoming an important topic of academic and industrial. Also, with the increase of social identities and the maintenance of social fairness and justice, the complex relations and social psychological problems brought by the group communication have increasingly challenged the professional dominance of journalists as the main body of information production. This research starts with Chinese newspaper transformation, then focus on journalists' professional identity in transition. Journalists' identity crisis is related to the future of journalism. Journalists need to re-establish professionalism and reshape professional ideals and identities.

## II. BASIC SITUATION OF NEWSPAPER TRANSFORMATION

In recent years, newspaper recession trend deepens in the face of new media environment and communication pattern, with circulation and advertising "bluff type" sliding, suspension of publication increasing year by year. It is predicted that more than two-thirds of newspaper will be "shut down or turning" in 2018.

The change of information production mode driven by new media technology has dispelled the monopoly power of information production and release. Traditional newspapers should meet the "new normal" of newspaper industry by transforming actively, inspecting old problems with new eyes.

### *A. Deep Reform of Newspaper Industry and Exploration of Effective Profit Model*

Deep reform has provided an internal impetus for a new round of newspaper industry prosperity and a strong guarantee for the newspaper smooth development. On the one hand, newspaper industry reform follows the survival of the fittest, untenable newspaper withdraw from the market, reducing homogenous and vicious competition.

On the other hand, newspaper promotes cross-border integration and structural adjustment to enlarge scale effect, cultivating several new media group with powerful strength. Some newspapers have established special new media centers leveraging new media companies' commercial operation. Take People's Daily for example, it has far beyond the scope of a newspaper, but a collection site of microblog, wechat, app, mobile news, network television etc, which basically covers all kinds of existing communication form.[1]

With the increasing dominance of mobile communication and mobile terminals, newspapers' traditional business model "content + advertising" is unsustainable. Newspaper industry needs to explore mature profit model.

New business model based on print media is expanding. Newspaper actively participated in the construction of database engineering, and gradually found the connection point of the Internet and related industries by means of exploiting big data resource. This year, Henan Daily Newspaper Group effectively responded to newspaper profit dilemma by launching diversified operation with 65% non-newspaper revenue of finance, advertising, hotel and education.[2]

Also, Newspapers are innovating in release services and reading forms, exploring newspaper space of the second and third-tier cities that have not yet penetrated into new media.

### *B. Reinvention of New Technology for Providing Quality and Irreplaceable Content*

News content has been presented in endless ways driven by technology innovation, since text, picture, visual data, H5(HTML5.0) news, video, even immersive reporting like VR(Virtual Reality) or AR(Augmented Reality). Xinhua news agency's Data News received sought after, while Action News from Beijing News changed the style of traditional two sessions reports. In 2016, 12 newspapers in China jointly set up VR news laboratory to explore new forms of information. Particularly, China's media convergence cloud realized one-stop solution to media technology problems. Big data operation,

artificial intelligence application and new content production are no longer conundrum.

Facing the change of information acquisition terminals and consumption habits, newspaper media must spare no effort to create mobile media products and to update ideas and technologies. Leveraging big data and cloud computing technology, users' needs can be precisely analyzed, which improves the pertinence of news reporting and service.

In the future, newspaper media need to identify themselves and differentiate in content and communication.

### C. Promoting Media Convergence with Internet Thinking

As early as 2014, the first year of media convergence in China, integration of traditional media and emerging media has become a national strategy.[3] Newspaper media gradually embraced new media to explore new form of expression suitable for the Internet. Nowadays, microblog, wechat and App have become a standard of traditional media.

Media convergence is no longer the shift between traditional media and new media, but the share of advantage resource and cooperation of reconstituted regulation under New Barrel Theory. Anyhow, the evolution of media form will not change the value of news. Media convergence centers on exploring new forms of expression suitable for the Internet. [4]Professor Chen Lidan (2014) pointed out that "Internet thinking" needs to use communication features of the Internet to think deeply about media convergence.[5]

Newspaper media should strive to build a series of self-controlled new media platforms and integrate superiorities. Meanwhile newspaper should provide a mingled space for traditional business and new media, ascending discourse power and influence in the field of new media public opinion.

### III. JOURNALISTS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN TRANSITION

With the vigorous development of China's media industry, Chinese journalists have increasingly expanded to a very large occupational group with sharp differentiation. Faced with the media environment changes, diversity of social values, as well as various pressure and temptation in news production practice, a batch of journalists who have the temperament of idealism go out of press active or passive. Journalists' professional identity presents a complex and diverse picture.

Journalists' professional identity study reference to relevant theory from journalism and communication, sociology, management, psychology and other disciplines. We can interpret the construction logic of professional identity from three aspects: the historical tradition of scholar's political commentary and news production, the balance between self-evaluation and social evaluation, macro, meso and micro.

Journalists' occupational identity is about how journalists' cognition of news, what news career (journalists) should be (ideal) and whether to have become such practitioners. The professional identity starts with journalists as action subjects, exploring the history, current situation and influencing factors of professional identity, so as to build a favorable concept of professional identity. Even more important, this paper gets rid

of the commonly used binary analysis framework of country and market in news production process, focusing on specific group identity of journalists and the changes of their professional identity to explore the connection with the macro context in transitional China, social environment, media scene and personal emotion.

Volkman M.J.& Anderson M.A(1998:293)claimed that professional identity is a complex process, embodied in the dynamic balance between personal image and professional role. Wei Shu hua & Song Guang wen [6] deem that professional identity is not only a positive evaluation of career, but also the importance of professional role in self-identification. [7]According to Fan Ya ping(2011:20), professional identity is one of the results of professional socialization process, containing both processes and results.[8]

In the field of Internet, with the increase of social identities and the maintenance of social fairness and justice, the complex relations and social psychological problems brought by the group communication have increasingly challenged the professional dominance of journalists as the main body of information production.

Actually, journalists generally believe that professional identity problem is of great importance. The ideal of professional keeps firm whatever real dilemmas are. Journalists' professional identity is a complex about the positive cognition of internalized professional role, experience and behavior tendency. Professional identity directly affects the bottom line, professional values and motivation.

### IV. EXERTING JOURNALIST INITIATIVE AND CREATIVITY

Satisfaction and loyalty directly reflect identity and emotion of the attitude level. According to survey in Shanghai [9] and survey in [10], more than 70 percent would like to continue doing journalism five years from now.

Actually, satisfaction will directly affect the behavior of journalists. From the Table I, we can see that the majority of journalists are satisfied with their work in general, accounting for 71.1%, with less satisfactory aspects mainly reflected in salary and welfare, future development space, accounting for 40.0% and 37.2% respectively.

TABLE I. SATISFACTION OF CHINESE JOURNALISTS: A NATIONAL SURVEY DIRECTED BY CHINA ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS IN 2015-2017

Degree of satisfaction(percentage)	quite satisfied	satisfied	not very satisfied	Very dissatisfied
salary and welfare	5.4	41.7	40	12.9
working stability	15.3	69	13.9	1.7
Time freedom	11.5	60.8	22.6	5.1
Is it in your interest	23.1	65.2	10.3	1.3
future development space	8.3	46.8	37.2	7.6
Interpersonal relationship	18.8	70.4	9.3	1.6
Contribution to society	14.8	63.5	19.4	2.3
self-satisfaction	12.3	59.7	24.6	3.3
Overall satisfaction	10.4	71.1	17	1.5

Fan Yaping & Xia Yinyin (2012:1195) pointed out that professional attitude and devotion, professional emotion and loyalty are the most important and intuitive factors to investigate professional identity. [11]Institute of public opinion from Renmin university of China made a survey of national news workers in 1997, finding that Chinese journalists work for an average of 12 years, among them, those senior journalists who has worked for more than 11 years, accounting for 48.4% of the total number of active journalists.[12]

Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the professional emotions of journalists and strive to improve their satisfaction and loyalty, thus ensuring professional identity.

As subject of communication, journalists are the key to the success of newspaper transformation. The current talent competition needs high-level management personnel, high-quality business backbone and new media technology talents, as well as a group of editors and journalists with team awareness and loyalty.

In conclusion, newspaper media is supposed to establish modern enterprise system to attract and retain talents, making good use of talents.

However, journalist subjective initiative muse not surpass or violate news reality. The authenticity of news has always been emphasized as the life of news. The collusion of technology and capital has brought simulation and fiction, eliminating the real, which has become the great challenge of cognition and identification. As the logical basis for modern human cognitive structures, real system is facing the challenges of the new media. Nowadays, the transformation of media technology and media competition put forward higher requirements for journalists' scientific literacy, which has expanded from citizen groups to other industries. Journalists should defend the real and promote literacy.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

Through investigation and interview, as well as literature review and empirical data mentioned above, we can see that Journalists' identity crisis is related to the future of journalism.

How journalists respond to the changes of the professional identity will provide a better understanding of journalists and media circumstance, also a new perspective for understanding Chinese news reform. We just provide a certain reference for reinforcing newspaper transformation, promoting sustainable development and professional level of journalism, which will benefit healthy news production to accommodate the media change.

Journalists need to re-establish professionalism, restore professional values and glory, and reshape professional ideals and identities.

Future study can focus on influencing factors of journalists' professional identity, which will be affected by external environment and evaluations as well as internal cognitive and emotions, and always in constant compromise and nervous. The construction and even reinforcement of journalists' professional identity needs professional community's support

from the social structure level, at the same time, needs professional ideal's motivation from the value level.

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