From one-way message to dialogue. The impact of transformations in media communication in the digital age

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ABSTRACT

Television in its classical form was a one-way mass medium, which meant that information was delivered from a single entity (television) to a number of viewers. There were few feedback mechanisms; at most, people could call newsrooms and send letters and, later, emails and messages through which they could interact with journalists. Audiences were passive on shows and news except for interactive shows where moderators could interact via live phone calls. All this changed with the advent of social media and mobile devices. Viewers were able to interact via the stations' social networks. In addition, social platforms allow anyone to produce media content daily, and all these key points have turned passive audiences into active participants. However, there is also a significant challenge: the risk of fake news. With this article, we have conducted a theoretical and empirical analysis of how the flow of information on TV channels has evolved. The article could be helpful for researchers as well as media specialists

KEYWORDS: classic television, social media, audience, unidirectional message, media content

Introduction

"Building upon the foundational concept that 'Any kind of communication includes a message' (Vlăduțescu & Voinea, 2016), it is noteworthy to observe how television has transitioned beyond being solely an entertainment medium. It has transformed into an indispensable source of information and education in contemporary society. This evolution underscores the multifaceted role of television, as it not only entertains but also serves as a conduit for essential knowledge and learning experiences." Ten years ago, journalists could make people's schedules based on how they arranged shows, films, or news in the program grid. From historical moments to current affairs, television has played a crucial role in the lives of the public. Even in the current media environment, despite the challenges and changes brought by new streaming and internet platforms (Dominick. J. R, 2004), traditional television remains relevant because it is more strictly regulated than social media platforms or websites, and deviations in the transmission of information are sanctioned. With technological development has come a paradigm shift in audiovisual communication. In the past, the flow of information was unidirectional, in the sense that journalists transmitted information without interacting with viewers. Audiences were passive, both for broadcasts and news, except for interactive programs where moderators could interact via live phone calls.

This model was often described as "the voice of God" (Ardonato, A., 2020, p.6), where one authoritative voice spoke to many, and there was a concentration of power in shaping and disseminating information. All these aspects have changed with the advent of social networks and mobile devices. Social platforms allow everyone to produce media content every day, and these key points have transformed passive audiences into active participants. Viewers who used only to receive information can now provide information themselves, actively contribute to the process, and become an essential source for journalists. **Presenters, moderators, reporters, and editors have social pages, both personal and of the shows they produce, moderate, and there, they communicate intensively with the audience and receive feedback**. So, we are talking about interactive communication. Users can interact, they can respond to the message being delivered, and they can even create and distribute their content. This has transformed the traditional one-way flow of information into a two-way conversation, and the dynamic nature has become defining (Rodriguez et al., 2018). Thus, the rise of social platforms has disrupted the traditional model of mass communication, promoting a dynamic and interactive information ecosystem. It has enabled individuals to actively engage, share their perspectives, and participate in creating and disseminating information.

Audience as a source of news

In the digital age we live in, access to information has changed significantly, and audiences have become an essential source of news. Countless social platforms, blogs, and other online media have emerged, and audiences now consume information and contribute to its formation and distribution. Anyone can become a real-time reporter through mobile phones and other digital devices. The concept of the audience as a source of news has been introduced previously. Since the advent of TV news, people have been calling into newsrooms and providing information, some of which have become news stories. As technology has advanced, obviously, the way viewers could provide information to newsrooms has been eased significantly. Through messaging platforms such as WhatsApp or Telegram, people can send photos, images, and even explanations of events that could be news stories. Regular users can share events and insights, and these posts can reach a global audience in record time. Through platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, or Instagram, information becomes more democratic without relying exclusively on traditional news organizations. Not infrequently, journalists themselves take information, photos, or images from various users and become the primary source of news.

Television audiences, from one-way messages to dialogue

The changes brought about by the digital revolution have had a significant impact on the way people receive and transmit information. (Silva et al., 2018) From the advent of the internet and mobile devices to the explosion of social media, media communication has rapidly evolved from a traditional one-way model to a more complex and interactive one. Thus, in order to offer audience interaction similar to the online environment, they have approached a new strategy in terms of audience engagement. As a natural evolution, many moderators started inviting viewers to express their opinions in real-time and actively participate in the content broadcast. Moreover, audiences are called upon to contribute by voting on decisions made in specific programs. For example, in best voice competitions, viewers can cast their votes, and based on the result, contestants are accepted or eliminated. Also, in the case of news programs or news bulletins, viewers are motivated to express their opinions on the main topics of the day. They are encouraged to post on social media or send messages on WhatsApp, and at the end, to present their results or opinions.

This new paradigm has led to the inclusion of direct invitations within the broadcasts, encouraging viewers to express their opinions, send questions or complete polls in real-time. Through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, or other popular networks, viewers can interact directly with the show, contributing to a two-way dialogue between producers and audience. This new approach brings essential benefits to the media industry, as content providers (TV broadcasters) can adapt their messages according to real-time feedback and build stronger relationships with audiences. The dialogue between the message channel and the receiver has become essential in maintaining audience relevance and interest in an increasingly dynamic and actively engaged media world.

The risk of fake news

"Social networks are attractive to users because of the rapid dissemination of information, low cost, and easy access" (Shou et al., 2020). One of the biggest challenges associated with gathering information from social networks is verifying and validating news provided by citizen reporters. Content from users or social media groups must be passed through the journalist's filter. Information manipulation and spreading fake news is a significant risk in the current legislative environment. Journalists need to be aware of the source of information and develop critical skills to filter credible content from manipulative content. The Covid-19 pandemic was the most concrete example of the global spread of fake news. Dozens of stories (Stănescu, 2021) on this topic were spread globally to the extent that a term associated with this phenomenon "infodemia," even emerged (Roitero et al., 2020). To avoid the proliferation of fake news collected from social media, journalists should strive to confirm information from multiple sources and present it from multiple perspectives. It is also essential to verify information from official sources. At the same time, when taking images from viewers or their social media accounts or groups, they should verify the authenticity of the images in the context that in recent years, deepfakes allow the creation of fake multimedia content that can be difficult to distinguish from authentic content. This approach contributes to objectivity and balance in the presentation of news. By adhering to these principles, journalists can help maintain the profession's high standards and counter problems such as misinformation and news manipulation. Credibility and independence are fundamental in ensuring that journalism remains a source of truthful and balanced information in the community.

Conclusions

Television channels have changed their message due to the emergence of social networking and online interaction. Thus, from traditional television characterized by a one-way flow to a passive audience, in the current media environment, TV journalists have transformed the message into a two-way one by engaging viewers through interactive broadcasts, inviting them to provide feedback on social networks, and by consulting audience opinion in news logs. The paradigm shift occurred because of the need to retain audiences and build loyalty as people increasingly turned to more interactive online media. However, this evolution comes with challenges. The risk of fake news had become a significant threat, and the democratization of media production has increased the volume of unvalidated and potentially dangerous information. It is essential to address this challenge by promoting media literacy, developing practical fake news detection algorithms, and promoting greater accountability among users and content creators.

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