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Research on the Structural Reshaping and Interaction of Generative Artificial Intelligence on News Production from the Perspective of Media Ecology

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Abstract:

In the era of new media, generative artificial intelligence (AI) has gradually integrated into news production. Led by mainstream media, some small media enterprises and journalists have also begun to actively incorporate AI technology into their news works. From the perspective of media ecology and from the viewpoint of media and journalists, this paper conducts research and analysis on the symbiosis and growth of generative AI in news production through in-depth interviews and ethnographic research methods. Through the research, this paper concludes that generative AI has been integrated into and influenced the news production process in aspects such as news leads, news gathering, content production, and channel dissemination; under the human-machine collaboration mechanism, journalists can make good use of generative AI to enhance the quality of news works; the integration of generative AI into news production can bring positive impacts to the development of the news industry; and generative AI can positively affect the core functions of journalists in the news industry. This paper analyzes and summarizes the structural reshaping and current interactive status of generative AI in news production by studying the adaptation of mainstream media and some media industry workers to the introduction of generative AI into news production.

Keywords:

generative AI,news production,media workers,media,human-machine collaboration

1 Introduction

With the popularity of generative AI (such as DeepSeek/Sora), news organizations both domestically and internationally (such as Reuters, Xinhua News Agency, The Paper, etc.) have begun to apply AI tools to the entire process of news production, including topic selection and planning, information gathering, manuscript writing, data visualization, and other aspects. We have observed that journalists using AI tools are gradually shifting from being “content producers” to “content reviewers” or “human-machine collaboration managers” in news production. The efficiency and low error rate of AI-generated content (such as data reporting) have impacted the traditional news production process. However, at the same time, we also see that traditional

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media, based on their mouthpiece attribute, are cautious about the use of generative AI. Therefore, we cannot help but wonder: Is generative AI reshaping the core functions of journalists in the news industry? How does the technical logic of generative AI affect the role positioning of journalists through the human-machine collaboration mechanism? Specifically, how can editors and reporters prevent technical errors during use? This article explores a series of questions related to the above issues.

2 Literature Review

2.1 The application of generative AI in news production

The application of generative AI in news production has sparked multi-perspective research in academia, primarily focusing on the perspective of news consumption. In their article *The Role of Generative AI in Enhancing Audience Participation in Journalism: A Scoping Review*, foreign scholars Eleni Chalikiopoulou, Theodora Saridou, and Andreas Veglis conducted an overall analysis of the role of generative AI in enhancing audience participation in journalism from the perspective of the audience. They pointed out that the emergence of generative AI has reshaped the workflow of media organizations, facilitated new forms of news participation, and emphasized the potential of generative AI in increasing audience engagement in journalism. In their article *Consumer Trust in AI–Human News Collaborative Continuum: Preferences and Influencing Factors by News Production Phases*, foreign scholars Steffen Heim and Sylvia Chan Olmsted focused on analyzing the preference level of news consumers for AI integration, trust in AI news, and intention to use AI news from the perspective of consumers, showing consumers' reactions to the integration of AI into the news production process. The research indicated that although participants generally prefer a lower degree of AI integration into the two stages of production, as long as humans remain in the leading position, news trust and willingness to use can even increase with the entry of AI into the production process. Domestic scholar Ma Li, in her article *The Application and Impact of AI Technology in News Production*, outlined strategies for using AI technology to screen and integrate news materials, innovate news production content and models, and reshape the news production process.

2.2 The impact of generative AI on journalists

Currently, academic research on the impact of generative AI on journalists primarily focuses on how journalists can utilize this technology to understand user needs, as well as how journalists navigate the tension between user demands and journalistic professionalism. Foreign scholars Emeka Umejei, Aurelia Ayisi, Millie Phiri, and Edwin Tallam, in their article *Artificial Intelligence and Journalism in Four African Countries: Optimists, Pessimists, and Pragmatists*, examined how journalists in four African countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa) perceive and use AI tools in news production. The research findings indicate that African journalists perceive the use of AI tools in news production through the lenses of optimism, pessimism, and pragmatism, and compromise these views in the actual news production processes of the four countries. Foreign scholars Shi Liping and Manual Selvaraj Bexci, in their article *AI Application and Audience Demand Satisfaction in Guangdong TV News*, focused on Guangdong TV news to explore the application of AI technology in the news industry to meet audience demands. Domestic scholar Hu Zhifu, in his article *From 'Light and Electricity' to 'Data and Intelligence': On News Production in the Age of Generative*

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AI", reviewed the application scenarios of AI throughout the entire news production process, pointing out that AI intervention has reshaped news practice models and posed ethical challenges to news authenticity, fairness, attribution of responsibility, and public trust. Finally, it revealed the evolution of media forms from centralization and homogenization in the "light and electricity" era to decentralization, networking, and diversification in the "data and intelligence" era, calling for embracing technological innovation while adhering to journalistic professionalism values, and achieving a benign integration of technology and the public mission of journalism through ethical norms and governance mechanisms. However, these studies did not specifically address the question of how generative AI affects the functions of journalists in news production.

2.3 Problem statement

Therefore, this article attempt to answer the following questions from the perspective of media ecology: Is generative AI reshaping the core functions of journalists in the news industry? Is the process smooth sailing? How do political and economic forces co-opt it during technological intervention? Specifically, how do editors and reporters prevent technical errors during use? How does the technical logic of generative AI influence the role positioning of journalists through human- machine collaboration mechanisms? Does this type of reconstruction result in the dissolution or transition of journalistic professionalism?

3 Research Methodology

Based on the aforementioned issues, we propose the following corresponding hypothesis:

Q1:Generative AI has integrated into and influenced the news production process in various aspects such as news leads, news gathering, content production, and channel dissemination.

Q2:In the process of technological intervention, through the human-machine collaboration mechanism, journalists can make good use of generative AI to enhance the quality of news works.

Q3:The integration of generative AI into news production can bring positive impacts to the development of the news industry.

Q4:Generative AI can positively impact the core functions of journalists in the news industry.

This article employs in-depth interviews and ethnographic research methods to attempt to answer the aforementioned questions.

3.1 In-depth interview method

This study conducts interviews with traditional media industry workers such as editors and publicity planners, as well as other users of generative AI, to understand how they gradually adopted the new technology of generative AI and how their work content underwent transformation.

3.1.1 Selection of interviewees

In this study, we carry out 30-minute semi-structured in-depth interviews with 15 participants who are exploring the integration of generative AI into news production processes. The interview period spans from

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November 2025 to January 2026. The initial cohort of interviewees consists of media professionals, including journalists, copy editors, self-media account authors, and corporate publicity clerks. Subsequently, additional research participants are recruited through methods such as gathering information from online literature. In accordance with the maximum variation sampling principle inherent in qualitative research methodologies, by the time the 15th interviewee is included, the accumulated interview data are deemed sufficient to address the research questions, thereby concluding the sample collection phase. The interviewees exhibit diversity in terms of age, occupation, educational attainment, and geographical location, reflecting a low degree of homogeneity.

The interviews are conducted either by telephone or through one-on-one in-person sessions. The interview outcomes are meticulously transcribed verbatim, resulting in a total of 3 200 words. The entire process of handling the interview content is undertaken by the researcher. The fundamental details of the interviewees are presented in the accompanying table.

Table 1 Basic Information of Interviewees

Serial number	Gender	Age	Occupation	Whether have you ever tried to integrate generative AI into work production
1	Female	40	News Editor	Yes
2	Male	35	Journalist	Yes
3	Female	32	Journalist	Yes
4	Female	26	Text editor	Yes
5	Male	26	Corporate Publicity Specialist	Yes
6	Male	30	Self-media worker	Yes
7	Female	28	We-Media worker	Yes
8	Male	25	We-Media worker	No
9	Female	21	Student	Yes
10	Female	22	Student	Yes
11	Female	26	Advertising Planning	No
12	Male	26	Advertising Planning	Yes
13	Female	17	Student	No
14	Male	24	We-Media worker	Yes
15	Male	32	Photographer	Yes

3.1.2 Interview outline

The questions in this interview are mainly divided into two parts.

The first part primarily involves the basic information of the interviewees, including their age, gender, occupation, basic job duties, media usage, whether they use generative AI in their daily life or work, and how often or for how long they use it.

The second part involves posing questions related to the research topic as interview questions, including:

Q1:Have you ever tried using generative AI to produce news articles in your daily life and work?

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Q2: What are your personal views on the emergence and popularization of generative AI?

Q3: Could you share your views on the integration of AI into news production?

Q4:Does generative AI bring convenience or provide inspiration to you in the process of news production?

Q5: Will integrating generative AI into news production have an impact on your personal thinking and judgment abilities?

Q6:In which aspect of news production do you usually apply generative AI more?

Q7:Has your company introduced relevant regulations and requirements regarding the use of "generative AI" in news production? (This question is only for internal staff)

Q8:Do you think generative AI will affect the role of journalists in the news industry?

Q9:In the process of using generative AI, how do you avoid technical errors?

Q10:Do you think the emergence and use of generative AI will have an impact on your career development?

Q11:As a media worker, how do you coordinate the relationship between generative AI and news works in your work?

During the process of interviews and research, the researcher strives to avoid the four ethical issues and transgressions highlighted by scholar Alan Bryman: (1) causing harm to research participants; (2) not using informed consent documents or materials; (3) infringing on the privacy of research participants; (4) deceiving research participants. Furthermore, if the interviewee has any questions they do not wish to answer or any grievances during the interview process, they can remain silent or withdraw halfway. Interview materials that the interviewee declares they do not wish to make public are not included or cited in this study.

3.2 Ethnographic research method

To prove the hypothesis, this study adopts an ethnographic research method, utilizing observation, recording, and interviewing techniques to study Henan Radio and Television Station's Elephant News. The study observes the content of news works related to or involving AI, how staff members use AI, and explores the process of introducing new technologies, as well as the methods to overcome obstacles. The research explores the current status and impact of generative AI in reshaping production processes in areas such as news leads, news gathering, content production, and channel dissemination.

Through ethnographic research methods, I observe and record the process of introducing new technologies at Henan TV's Elephant News, a provincial media outlet in China, as well as the obstacles encountered and ways to overcome them. Through observation, it is found that Henan TV and its subsidiary "Elephant News" not only make innovative attempts in integrating AI into news production but also establish an intelligent system that spans the entire process of news "planning, gathering, editing, publishing, reviewing, and feedback". This system not only enhances the efficiency of news production and expands the boundaries of news expression but also achieves tangible results in reducing operating costs, enhancing user interaction, and strengthen-

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ing security defenses.

When we conduct in-depth interviews on issues such as the impact of generative AI on media workers and try to obtain answers from them, we are pleasantly surprised to find that most media workers and some journalism-related college students have already attempted to apply AI technology to news production, creating some good works. Moreover, regarding issues such as the integration of generative AI into news production and the coexistence of journalists, we receive mostly positive responses. The interviewees hold a positive attitude towards the introduction of generative AI into the news industry, and their answers support my thoughts:

"In news production, we may sometimes utilize AI technology to assist in determining the authenticity and accuracy of certain events. Furthermore, the application of AI technology can also help us match more appropriate written language by taking into account the context."

"By utilizing AI technology, I can input instructions into the program to design the desired visual output. This approach saves me more time compared to shooting and editing on my own. Furthermore, when creating intricate video visuals, the quality of work assisted by AI often surpasses what I could achieve on my own."

"As a college student, my classmates and I also experiment with using AI to process images and create short videos. Sometimes, I can also gain more inspiration from works generated with the assistance of AI technology, which helps me improve my own creations."

"Works generated with the assistance of AI technology often possess a stronger online appeal and are more aligned with current popular aesthetics and value pursuits. Among the news articles we produce and upload, those generated with the assistance of AI technology tend to be more eye-catching."

4 Generative AI has integrated into and influenced the news production process in various aspects such as news leads, news gathering, content production, and channel dissemination

Firstly, in the process of discovering news leads, journalists can utilize public opinion monitoring systems based on big data to obtain various types of news leads. Media outlets such as *People's Daily* and *Xinhua News Agency* can conduct public opinion monitoring through big data, keep abreast of public opinion trends, and intervene in public opinion guidance in a timely manner. The "Fat Cat" incident was discovered by mainstream media through a public opinion monitoring system. Elephant News has collaborated with domestic technology companies to deeply customize and develop its own media AI platform, "Hebao AI," serving as the "intelligent hub" for all-media content production.

Next comes the news gathering stage, where AI devices have already been able to automatically obtain sensor news and capture abnormal dynamics, thereby obtaining potential news. *Xinhua News Agency*'s "Media Brain" has also developed intelligent hardware such as camera news robots, "on-site cloud" mobile gathering systems, AR smart glasses, and smart voice recorders, which can assist reporters in initiating "on-site news" holographic live broadcasts at any time and simultaneously collecting text, images, short videos, and other omnimedia news materials.

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At the content production level, Elephant News utilizes large model technology to assist reporters in quickly generating initial news drafts, summaries, and headlines, especially for news with strong structured information such as data, financial reports, and meteorological news, significantly improving writing efficiency. For example, when reporting on provincial economic data, AI can quickly extract core indicators and generate an analysis framework. In terms of video generation and editing, on programs such as "Henan News", Elephant News uses AI to generate surreal visual scenes. For instance, when reporting on cultural themes such as the Longmen Grottoes and Shaolin Temple, AI can quickly generate historical scene restoration animations and dynamic displays of cultural relic details, bringing static culture to life. At the same time, AI editing tools can automatically identify highlight clips from the material, perform rough cuts, and package them.

Meanwhile, within the Elephant News client, an intelligent interactive robot named "Hebao" has been integrated. It not only recommends news based on user interests but also answers users' questions about news events through chat conversations, provides "news archive" query services, and meets users' precise needs, achieving a shift from "people seeking information" to "information seeking people".

At the level of news dissemination channels, the news industry has evolved from a single account to an account matrix, and through intelligent editing systems, it can automatically generate graphic and video news. Editors only need to perform simple operations to upload and present them, greatly improving the efficiency of public opinion guidance. The AI-based precision push mechanism further enhances the reach of information by accurately delivering news to interested users through big data user personas.

In terms of news presentation, Elephant News has launched AI-driven virtual digital avatars such as "He Xiaohui" and "He Xiaoyu". They are capable of broadcasting news 24/7, providing multilingual and sign language broadcasts, and quickly generating voiceover videos for breaking news, greatly enhancing the timeliness and coverage of news. At the same time, this also allows journalists to have more rest time, maintaining their energy and better engaging in news work.

Currently, generative AI is undergoing rapid updates and iterations. We have seen that many journalists use DeepSeek to quickly draft news reports or even news commentaries after interviews, and then rely on their own professionalism to refine and modify the text, greatly speeding up the writing process of the manuscript.

5 Barriers to the use of generative AI: The conflict between press and publication security and the efficiency of new technology application

In the process of reshaping the news production workflow, generative AI can often assist journalists in enhancing work efficiency and elevating the innovativeness and salience of their work. However, whether at the management or executive level, a common challenge encountered when introducing new technologies is the conflict between press and publication safety and the efficiency of new technology application. According to findings by institutions such as Reuters, some AI-generated news articles are directly adapted and integrated from original reports by niche media outlets, without specifying the sources of information. This indicates that during the production and publication of news articles, it is difficult for media outlets to ensure that content generated with the assistance of generative AI does not infringe upon the rights of third parties. Therefore, the adoption of new technologies often does not proceed directly but rather undergoes a continuous pro-

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cess of adaptation and refinement.

Using generative AI for creation may lead to the appearance of seemingly reasonable content in the text that is prone to containing actual errors. Taking DeepSeek as an example, new media editors often use DeepSeek to quickly generate a large number of comments on hot-button issues, and then use these materials to inspire creation. However, generative AI cannot detect and ensure the authenticity and logic of information through cross-validation, field investigations, and other forms like human journalists do. Nevertheless, news has extremely high requirements for the accuracy of reported facts, and the virtuality and unreliability of generative AI may lead to the spread of false information, mislead audiences, and damage the credibility of the media, posing significant risks to the production and dissemination of news content.

Meanwhile, generative AI lacks the logical thinking and judgment abilities of human journalists, preferring to integrate and generate content using existing data materials. In the process of producing news, it is more prone to logical errors or incomplete thinking, and the generated content lacks originality, easily leading to the formation of information silos, thereby weakening the public's ability to think and judge. Therefore, some media have proposed banning the use of DeepSeek for writing comments, indicating that publishing safety often hinders the direct implementation of new technologies in the production field.

For this reason, editors and reporters still need to conduct three rounds of review and proofreading for content generated by generative AI to avoid fundamental errors that could have negative impacts. Moreover, since AI is not the responsible party for news articles, reporters need to review more carefully when integrating AI into their work. This has led to the limited use of generative AI in styles such as art editing, commentary, and video editing, while it is difficult to use in writing styles like news and communication, thus failing to leverage the positive effects of AI.

6 Breaking down barriers to AI usage: Enhancing news quality through a human-machine collaboration mechanism

To break this situation, the media adopted the "studio" model, in which senior leaders such as editorial board members led teams, recruiting personnel from different departments to form studios and temporarily adopting various technologies to cope with official prescribed actions. For example, during the Two Sessions, *People's Daily* specially set up a studio to create temporary AI news to ensure the timeliness of news. This approach breaks the shackles of traditional norms, introduces new technologies into news production, and achieves a win-win cooperation between human journalists and AI producers. Relying on such innovations, news media can gradually change the thinking of traditional editors and introduce new technologies to develop traditional media.

Under an effective human-machine collaboration mechanism, the subjectivity of journalists can also be enhanced. In fact, the use of AI can assist journalists in completing some repetitive tasks, allowing them to focus more on the parts of journalism that require the most human touch, empathy, and humanistic care. Through deep thinking, field investigations, on-site recording, and other processes, combined with personal experience and value judgments, journalists can refine and present their final works. The use of the "hotspot discovery system" by Southern Metropolis Daily demonstrates the harmonious coexistence between journal-

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ists and AI technology. The staff of Southern Metropolis Daily use AI to scan information across the entire network daily, identifying the rapidly rising topic of "pre-prepared meals entering schools". Journalists, relying on educational connections and personal networks, obtained policy documents from 12 cities and interviewed 34 parents and nutrition experts within a week, ultimately launching an in-depth investigation titled "Pre-prepared Meals in Schools: A tug-of-war between efficiency and safety", achieving the optimal effect of human-machine collaboration.

In the process of news production, journalists can still act as the main force, with generative AI playing a supporting role, thereby simultaneously enhancing both the quality and quantity of news output. During the Rio Olympics, The Washington Post's Heliograf system generated nearly 400 short messages, such as competition results and updates to the medal tally. Journalists were thus liberated from mechanical reporting of match outcomes, allowing them to focus on writing in-depth features, such as "The Psychological Battle of Gymnasts" and "The Story Behind the Refugee Delegation". The division of labor between humans and machines has endowed the reports with both breadth and depth, significantly enhancing the overall quality of reporting.

7 Generative AI can empower journalists' core functions

With the emergence of more and more news works incorporating AI technology, more media workers are actively engaging in news production, focusing on enhancing their innovation capabilities and improving the quality of their works. Through interviews with media workers, we have gained a deeper understanding of how they gradually adopt new technologies and how their work content undergoes transformation.

"The company encourages us to incorporate AI technology in our news production, fostering and enhancing our innovation capabilities. Many of our video works are co-created by AI characters engaging in dialogues with human journalists." This interviewee is primarily responsible for corporate culture promotion. He is mainly in charge of script design and shooting for the company's corporate promotional videos. Integrating AI technology into news production has enriched the content of his works, enhanced the visual appeal, and provided a better viewing experience for the audience, while also better shaping the corporate image.

Generative AI not only plays a predominantly positive role in news production, but also, under the human-machine collaboration mechanism, most journalists tend to actively utilize generative AI technology to refine and verify their works. "I usually apply AI technology to the polishing and review parts of news production. AI can better assist me in improving the deficiencies of my works and provide better suggestions for selection, thereby enhancing the quality of the content." This interviewee is a news editor who usually goes out for interviews in the morning and returns to the company in the afternoon to write articles and edit videos. After completing the manuscript, she usually uses software such as DeepSeek and Doubao AI for review and polishing, gaining a more suitable and richer vocabulary accumulation.

The integration of generative AI has provided unprecedented empowerment for journalists, presenting both challenges and opportunities. AI can greatly expand journalists' perceptual boundaries and processing capabilities in information collection and processing, helping them broaden their perspectives and providing more opportunities for in-depth thinking. This enables journalists to make more comprehensive and detailed value

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judgments, producing works that are more targeted and significant, enhancing the penetration and influence of their works. This also requires journalists to adhere to their individual subjectivity and professionalism, maintain their ability to judge and think, and strictly guard against the erosion of credibility by technology.

8 Summary and reflection

In the era of new media, AI technology has been widely applied in the news industry. From the practical exploration of Elephant News on Henan TV to the analysis of the reconstruction of journalists' core functions and news production processes, we clearly see that the application of generative AI is effectively promoting the optimization and transformation of the news industry. This change often brings both advantages and disadvantages. Faced with opportunities and challenges, the professional competence and professional ethics of journalists are more subject to supervision than before. Rational use of AI technology can add to the development of the news industry, but it is necessary to balance the relationship between the subject and the tool.

Firstly, the practice represented by Henan TV's Elephant News demonstrates that generative AI has been fully integrated into the entire process of news production. The use of AI technology is no longer limited to information collection and integration, but has even penetrated into aspects such as review, processing, and dissemination in news production. Through algorithmic mechanisms, workers can also utilize AI technology to enhance the quality, dissemination power, and influence of news works. The integration of AI into news production not only improves the work efficiency of practitioners but also facilitates the industry in reconstructing the news production process, accelerating the vigorous development of the news industry.

Secondly, under the human-machine collaboration mechanism, generative AI mostly has a positive impact on the core functions and role positioning of journalists. Through in-depth interviews with multiple media workers, we learned that there is a harmonious coexistence between generative AI and media workers. Furthermore, people are more proactive in using AI for creation, drawing inspiration from AI, continuously innovating, and presenting more diversified and personalized works, accelerating the prosperity and development of culture.

Importantly, with the introduction of AI technology, the structural reshaping and interaction of news production have both seen considerable development. The process of news production has become more standardized and efficient, resulting in works of higher quality and greater popularity among the public. Journalists can also free themselves from repetitive labor tasks and devote their energy to deep thinking and innovation in their works, producing high-value and high-quality output for society. In summary, the integration of AI into news production presents a valuable growth opportunity for both media workers and the industry's development.

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