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The aggregation effect of mainstream media news curation from the perspective of liquid Journalism theory

Chengze Du*
School of Communication, Communication University of China, China
***Corresponding author E-mail:buxiaoyaozi@126.com**

Abstract:
The empowerment of social media audience, rise of platform media make news production shift towards short videos, the transformation of information and meaning production paths has also led to the decentralization and continuous fluidity of social concepts. However, if we focus on the specific news practices of mainstream media in China, in most cases, we can still see the guiding discourse, spontaneous identification and positive interaction of audiences with the issue framework. While highlighting the successful digital transformation of China's mainstream media, this paper also observes the tension between theory and practice in rebuilding centrality and discourse power in the general context of decentralization. In the era of digital journalism, mainstream media can still tap into the potential of user-generated content through news curation, generating a converging effect and establishing user loyalty to the media itself within the limitations of platform tone. This paper conducts content analysis and multimodal discourse analysis on selected popular news curation from People's Daily and Xinhua News Agency, using liquid journalism as a theoretical lens to explore the converging effect of mainstream media news curation in the new media era.

Keywords:
Liquid Journalism, Research of communication effect, News curation, Content analysis, Multimodal discourse analysis

1 Introduction

With the profound integration of the Internet into individuals' daily lives and macro-social organizations, short video platforms, serving as hubs for information dissemination, meaning construction, and ideological exchange, have evolved into digital infrastructures. The elevation of platform data flow and algorithmic prominence has underscored the significance of content distribution in the realm of journalism, leading algorithms and traffic logic to pre-shape the news production process in terms of both rhetoric and form. Concurrently, the ascent of audience editorial authority aligns with the heightened frequency of information and meaning exchanges, collectively accelerating the pace of social contextual shifts and establishing a practical foundation for liquid journalism. Nevertheless, amidst the challenges to consensus formation posed by the decentralized nature of liquid journalism and the perpetual flux of event significance, certain mainstream media outlets have adeptly captured and aggregated fragmented and dynamic social events. They achieve this by

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aligning with user preferences and the platform's content ecosystem, strategizing topic selection, gathering and filtering information from online sources, and imbuing it with meaning. Ultimately, with the assistance and engagement of platform audiences, they effectively project discourse images, fostering a stable issue framework and cognitive paradigm, thereby surmounting the theoretical constraints of liquid journalism in practice. This disparity between theoretical expectations and practical realities motivates this study to adopt liquid journalism as its theoretical lens, examining selected videos from *Xinhua News Agency* and *People's Daily* on *TikTok* and other hot news platforms to analyze the types of news aggregation and their influence on public opinion regarding social hotspots.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Liquid news theory research

The concept of "liquid theory" was initially introduced by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2013) to describe the transition of social forms from a stable, continuous solid state to a more fluid and dynamic liquid state. Mark Deuze (2007) systematically incorporated the concept of "liquidity" into journalism and communication studies. By analyzing the transformation of news production processes and dissemination mechanisms driven by advancements in digital media technologies such as the Internet, big data, and cloud computing, he illustrated the decentralization of the news industry in terms of organizational structure, production processes, cultural forms, and professional identity, as well as the continuous flow of meaning in the digital age. The application of liquid news theory in journalism and communication studies primarily focuses on the "liquefaction" of news production methods, content forms, and news distribution. With the profound integration of digital media into the construction of China's online society, liquid journalism theory has emerged as a burgeoning research focus in the field of journalism and communication studies. Chinese scholars Lu Ye and Zhou Ruiming (2016) were among the first to apply this theory, demonstrating that the Internet's transformation towards collaborative news curation is blurring the identity and independence of journalistic professionalism. Subsequently, Li Hongjiang and Yang Baojun (2019) conducted a comprehensive examination of the theoretical transformation and loss during the migration from sociology to journalism by scrutinizing the liquid theory itself. They noted that liquid journalism theory tends to lose some of its original profound critique of the consequences of modernity when focusing on phenomena related to professional transformation and subject adaptation. Furthermore, within the realm of journalism, liquid journalism theory may inadvertently overlook certain everyday phenomena due to its emphasis on empirical research and normative characteristics.

Nowadays, in addition to studies that validate and elucidate the specific effectiveness of liquid journalism theory through selected cases, scholars such as Hu Kang (2022) and Zhao Hongxun (2022) have shifted their focus from merely confirming specific phenomena to abstracting and macroscopically understanding the field of news production by connecting it to changes in the macro-level meaning production field. This approach enables liquid journalism theory to transcend a single news format and internalize the research findings of journalism, offering a compelling perspective for re-examining the social meaning environment.

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2.2 The phenomenon of "New journalistic truth"

The concept of "New Journalistic Truth" has been distilled from extensive research on the connotation and ethical reconstruction of journalistic authenticity conducted by domestic and international journalism and communication scholars amidst the backdrop of digital technology development and the maturation of liquid journalism. In the new media era, traditional news media's competition for timeliness is amplified by algorithms and traffic, leading media outlets to prioritize news timeliness as their foremost objective. As Chang Jiang and Wang Hongkun (2025) observe, the profound empowerment of audiences, the full participation of multiple subjects in news production and distribution, the multimodal presentation of news content, and the information overload-induced information disorder and individual burnout collectively impact and redefine the practical connotation of journalistic authenticity. In essence, audiences and media inevitably only grasp fragments of the truth in any given report, and journalistic truth often merely serves as material for different individuals to select their own versions of the truth, gradually reaching a tacit understanding in a diversified game. Initially, the refinement of the concept of "New Journalistic Truth" originated from reflections on the news mechanism itself. In 1995, Vanderwicken, P (1995) directly asserted that news does not equate to truth, and objectivity and timeliness are not synonymous. Eldridge, J (2003) argued that the reflective nature of news production is narrative, emphasizing that news production is constantly embroiled in a dynamic power struggle. With the in-depth development of internet technology, the widespread occurrence of meaning production and transformation phenomena has provided researchers with the argumentative foundation to propose a more mature perspective on "New Journalistic Truth". Waisbord, S. (2018) transcended the singular link of news production and adopted a more macroscopic perspective of the entire industry process, proposing that truth is not conveyed by news but emerges after news is disseminated. Compared to the long history of theoretical speculation and the abundance of empirical research cases abroad, the understanding of the concept of "New Journalistic Truth" in domestic academia is still in its developmental stages. Zhang Ping (2020) critiqued the paradox of new journalism, arguing that traditional journalism, in the context of the full development of social media, loses its characteristics of objectivity, seriousness, and authenticity in practice due to the relentless pursuit of timeliness. Therefore, it is imperative to construct positive subjective intervention rules to replace false grand objectivity with partial objectivity. More specifically, as Chang Jiang and Wang Yayun (2023) point out, news production must accurately position itself by forging closer ties with the audience, developing a sophisticated literary methodology for storytelling news, and viewing its own practice as an intervening professional culture.

Although the academic community, both domestically and internationally, has engaged in extensive discussions on the connotation of new journalism, compared to refining a more explicit perspective on new journalistic truth, domestic academia tends to be more deeply rooted in the broader theoretical context of the post-truth era. It is anchored in the local public opinion ecology and practical aspects such as news production, social governance, and public opinion response, focusing on providing strategies for effective governance and professional adjustments. For instance, Li Yun and Wang Renjie (2026) offer fresh insights into post-truth theory through the transformation of the public foundation in the field of online public opinion. Jiang Xiwei and Liu Fei (2025) speculate on the path for mainstream media to guide public opinion in the post-truth era. Compared to detailed discussions on the emergence of concepts and phenomena, domestic academia is more inclined to place them in a broader context, providing qualitative explanations and macro suggestions. In

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contrast, foreign research more precisely targets the phenomena within the definition of the "new journalistic truth perspective" and integrates it with broader political and technological critiques. While conducting qualitative phenomenological analysis and theoretical tracing, it also emphasizes quantitative research. The latest research also endeavors to integrate across disciplines in its scope, with notable examples such as Khalil, M. and Azzeh, M. (2024) studying false information on the platform giant Twitter, focusing on establishing a comprehensive approach for detecting fake news before it spreads. In this quantitative analysis of phenomena, some foreign scholars have also used this as a starting point to construct a comparative perspective across disciplines, such as Pawlicka, A. et al. (2024), who provide a list of linguistic features that may contain false information based on the combination of artificial intelligence and language as the cognitive foundation of human cognition.

2.3 Review of related research on news curation

News curation refers to the activity in which news professionals plan topics, gather and fil- ter information from online platforms, and assign meanings, ultimately integrating and presenting relevant news information to users. As Su Hongyuan and Shu Peiyu (2017) point out, after the concept of curation was borrowed by the news communication academic community, it became a process describing the organic integration and value-added of information through the fusion of multiple communication carriers, linking multiple information sources and platform channels. Foreign academia has conducted extensive case studies on how curation is applied to news and combined with the empowerment of audiences in the era of social media for content production. For example, Stanoevska Slabeva, Y. K., Sacco, V., and Giardina, M. (2012) conducted a content analysis of curated news stories about the Middle East revolution randomly selected from the platform Storify, studying the authorship, original contributors, and digital sources, and serving as an example of how social media curation is gradually breaking through the gatekeeping role of traditional news websites. Park, C. S., & Kaye, B. K. (2019) found in a nationwide survey of 1 135 Korean adults that in-depth processing and curation of news are positively correlated with political knowledge, and play a mediating role in the relationship between social media news usage and political knowledge. In terms of the relationship between information aggregation and consensus- building effects of news curation and social media usage, foreign scholars also tend to conduct quantitative research based on case-integrated data. For example, Merten, L. (2021) conducted an online survey on the representative usage of social media among users in 36 countries, demonstrating that promoting the effectiveness of news curation requires a willingness to participate in other news-related activities on social media, as well as the correlation between news restriction behaviors on social media and news avoidance and political extremism.

Unlike foreign scholars who focus on the cases themselves, domestic academia tends to seek the theoretical construction and creative methods behind curated news as a genre, and grasp the development patterns of news curation from a macro perspective. For example, Xia Xiaofei (2022) in China, from the perspective of symbolic narratology, takes curated news from the United States and the United Kingdom as a paradigm, analyzing curated news as a genre of news texts. Yang Zhipeng and Ding Hanqing (2024) concisely summarize the triple approaches of media-centered, user-centered, and technology-centered in news curation. In terms of the overall expectations generated by research on news curation, foreign studies often view the effects of news curation as an opportunity to deconstruct platform power, examine democratic crises, and observe

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the power changes of news within a broader information and meaning production environment, with a more critical and political philosophical perspective.Domestic research, on the other hand, sees it more as a practical tool to serve national strategies, guide public opinion, empower media transformation, coordinate social governance, and soften opinion conflicts, highlighting functionality and countermeasures. Furthermore, both domestic and foreign research approaches focus on refining and analyzing phenomena, and rethinking the mechanisms and effectiveness empowerment of news curation and news aggregation.

In summary, this paper adopts a liquid news perspective, selecting some hot news cases with curatorial characteristics from *Xinhua News Agency* and *People's Daily* on *TikTok* and *Bilibili*, to explore the aggregation effect of mainstream media news curation in the new media era, and attempts to analyze the audience's experience and cognitive approach to news reporting. The questions are listed as follows:

H1: What types of news curation exist in hot topics and public opinions that are of social concern?

H2: What kind of aggregation effect will this kind of news curation produce?

3 Method

3.1 Explanation of case and text selection criteria

This paper selects the popular news from the video accounts established by *Xinhua News Agency* and *People's Daily* on *Bilibili* and *TikTok* as the research object for content analysis and multimodal discourse analysis.This is not only because, before the rise of social media, these two news media represented the most institutionalized and systematized image of Chinese journalism, emphasizing stability in pursuing truth in reporting, but also because they actively adapted to and to some extent resisted the traffic-oriented logic of content production on short video platforms during the transition to social media and platformization. Choosing the social accounts of *Xinhua News Agency* and *People's Daily* further reflects the tension between compromise and resistance in the way authoritative media present the truth during the transition period. In selecting *Bilibili* and *TikTok* this paper also refers to previous studies that have presented significant differences in the information and meaning environments of the two platforms.

For example, Chen Jidong(2025) studied the differences in cross-platform editing of news documentaries, while Huang Bingyi (2024) used content analysis to study the emotional tendencies and frequencies induced by pan-knowledge short videos on *Bilibili* and *TikTok*. This paper synthesizes these studies to summarize the platform differences between *Bilibili* and *TikTok*: *Bilibili* has a strong community attribute, bullet culture, and interest in reflecting and indexing longer, deeper, and older content. It has a stronger youth attribute and a higher tolerance for diversity of meaning. *TikTok*, on the other hand, focuses more on instant impact, driven by the switching between music and images. High-frequency emotional words add an emotional and immersive foundation to the operation of information and meaning fields. Considering the differences in content strategy, narrative rhythm, and interaction mode between the two platforms within the same media, it is also necessary to incorporate these into the consideration and interpretation of the construction process of new journalistic truth concepts under the perspective of liquid news.

Based on the aforementioned scope, this paper ultimately selects the top ten news videos from *Xinhua*

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News Agency and *People's Daily* that have high viewership, high likes, and high comments on the two major platforms. These videos will serve as case studies for content analysis and as the subject of multimodal discourse analysis, focusing on both textual and multimodal aspects.

3.2 Content analysis

The content analysis method employed in this paper is based on the selected case study, incorporating three core processes of liquid news production: the liquefaction of content forms and the liquefaction of content distribution. In processing the case, the thematic content of the video was initially subjected to open coding. Subsequently, it was categorized according to the usage of personal pronouns, the configuration of audiovisual signs, and the orientation of emotional expression within the video. For the comment section, it counts high-frequency words and phrases in highly upvoted and replied comments, and perform open semantic and emotional coding.

Finally, based on the intertextual relationship between high-relevance replies in the comment section and the video content, it encodes them into four categories: story sharing, opinion discussion, information integration, and emotional resonance. In the liquefaction processes of content forms and distribution, it records the duration of each viral video, the relationship between video publishing time and high-relevance comment section publishing time, and whether there are recent and controversial high-relevance comments after reversing the opening time. The latter relationship is regarded as an indicator to measure whether the audience follows up on the trend during the content distribution process.

3.3 Multimodal discourse analysis

Multimodal discourse analysis focuses on how different modalities are organized together to construct meaning and convey information in a liquid environment. Firstly, this paper examines how visual, auditory, and textual modalities are combined within a video to produce different types of rhetorical effects. Secondly, by comparing the differences between *Bilibili* and *TikTok*, this paper analyzes the content construction process, types, and the differences in interaction methods and results with platform audiences for hot news videos on the same media platform.

4 Results

This study takes forty high-popularity news-type short videos posted by *Xinhua News Agency* and *People's Daily* on *TikTok* and *Bilibili* platforms as sample sources, focusing on the content analysis of public sentiment expression and interaction logic in the comment sections. On the one hand, *Xinhua News Agency* and *People's Daily* still carry the professionalism and stability framework formed by traditional media in the news production process. On the other hand, after entering the short video ecosystem, their content expression, title style, and interaction methods are inevitably influenced by strong emotions, high pace, rapid immersion, and dissemination logic. Therefore, they can present the tension between authoritative narratives and platform algorithm logic. Before content analysis and data crawling, the comment texts were systematically cleaned. Firstly, all emoticons in square brackets, such as *[Rose] [Tears]*, were removed to eliminate interference from platform-specific emoticons on subsequent analysis. Secondly, user mentions starting with @, including per-

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sonal and institutional accounts, were removed to avoid semantic judgment being influenced by the @ chain. Subsequently, text blank characters were uniformly processed, with excess spaces merged and leading and trailing blanks removed to maintain text format consistency. Further, comments that were cleaned and only contained numbers were excluded to remove noise texts with obvious semantic information. Meanwhile, comments in the original con- tent consisting only of @usernames were also deleted as a whole to ensure that the final corpus contained actual language expressions. Through this cleaning process, the original corpus was ultimately compressed from 3 432 to 2 473 valid texts. After cleaning, *People's Daily* retained 1 144 valid texts, and *Xinhua News Agency* retained 1 329 valid texts. This cleaning process not only preserved the real language style of the comment section but also ensured the stability and effectiveness of subsequent sentiment and topic analysis.

4.1 Content analysis

4.1.1 The presentation of word clouds in the comment sections of People's Daily and Xinhua News Agency: Emotional guidance, value stratification, event conception, and experiential integration

The word cloud of the comment section of *People's Daily* presents a clear structure dominated by positive emotions. The high-frequency words are concentrated in expressions of support, encouragement, and positive emotions, such as "Come on", "Good", "Safe", "Victory", "Chinese team", "Kind", "Gentle", "Sister", "Child", etc. These types of words occupy the most prominent position in the overall word cloud, indicating that users tend to interact with related videos in a commendatory, expectant, and empathetic manner. At the level of word cloud properties, firstly, the word cloud shows a significant tendency towards positive emotions. Secondly, commenters clearly focus on character traits and moral evaluations. Additionally, the word cloud presents a large number of words related to daily life and social scenarios. Finally, as a part of the mainstream media, *People's Daily*'s words are highly correlated with national narratives and collective identity.

Overall, the word cloud of the *People's Daily* presents a content pattern consisting of four levels: positive sentiment expression, character trait evaluation, focus on life scenarios, and national narrative resonance. Commentators not only cheer for characters and events and give them thumbs up, but also strengthen value recognition through discussing keywords such as kindness, gentleness, spirit, and role models. At the same time, they incorporate their real perception of life and social order, forming a typical positive public opinion and value reinforcement structure under the news content of the People Daily. The word cloud of the comment section of *Xinhua News Agency* presents obvious structural characteristics of life orientation, traffic scenario orientation, and family emotion dominance. This also indirectly indicates that the New Year, as a combination of festivals and social customs, always occupies a core position in news topics. High-frequency words such as "child," "apple," "going home," "high-speed rail,' "railway," "subway," "mute," "service," "childhood," "country," and *Xinhua News Agency* jointly constitute the semantic core of the comment content and reflect the audience's concentrated attention to public services, family emotions, and life experiences.

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Figure 1 World cloud of the People's Daily

Overall, the word cloud of the comment section of the hot news selected by *Xinhua News Agency* in this paper presents a multi-layered thematic structure consisting of transportation scenarios and public services-family emotions-national narrative extension-life experience expression. Commentators, when interacting with the news content, not only pay attention to the actual experience of specific technologies such as transportation, but also express emotions around returning home, children, and family routines. At the same time, they combine national and contemporary contexts to form broader associations, reflecting the public opinion characteristics of Xinhua News Agency's news content, which is more life-oriented and coexists with complete narrative and emotional resonance compared to *People's Daily*.



Figure 2 World cloud of the Xinhua News

4.1.2 Analysis of media style and audience sentiment differences presented in selected news based on LDA topic analysis : From normative consideration of emotionality

Based on the comment corpus LDA model derived from 20 news short videos on Xinhua News Agency's *TikTok* and *Bilibili* accounts, seven themes were extracted from the text. These themes do not correspond one-to-one with specific news events, but rather represent typical ways in which commentators process mainstream media official reports. Overall, the comment text exhibits two significant characteristics. Firstly, it forms highly stable discussion clusters around public issues such as railway construction, travel order,

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local economy, living costs, and transportation experience, reflecting the structural ability of Xinhua News Agency's reports to guide public attention towards livelihood issues and infrastructure narratives within the platform's public opinion sphere. Secondly, commentators use emotional expressions such as "children-home-parents-life is not easy", "happiness-safety-worth it", etc., to transform news events into experiential expressions close to daily life, enabling originally macro-level policy and construction news to be reinterpreted as relatable daily narratives in the comment section. Thus, the *Xinhua News Agency* comment section not only undertakes the public interpretation function of news events but also carries psychological functions such as emotional regulation, social identity recognition, and value judgment, making news content present a dual structure between policy information and life experience in a platform-based environment.

Table1 LDA modle of the Xinhua News Agency

Topic ID	Short Label	Topic Name	Focus Keywords (More Specific)
1	Quiet Order	Subway Order and Urban Public-Space Experience	quiet, carriage, subway/metro, attendant, noisy, talking, boarding, cheap price
2	County-Town Life	County-Town Memories and Perceived Everyday Living Costs	Farmers' market, county town, cheap, salary, childhood, muddy roads, market
3	Local Identity	Local Communication, Media Coverage, and Regional Image	Ziyang, Xinhua News Agency, interview, reporter,special,well-known, calling card, hometown
4	Rail-Travel Experience	Railway Development, Travel Experience, and Public Services	high-speed rail, train, service, resolve, creativity, Spring Festival travel rush, smoking, moved/ touched
5	Emotional Expression	"Going Home" Narratives, Emotional Release, and Life Circumstances	child, go back, grandpa/old man, cigarette, heartbreaking, cute, friends, Tianfu
6	Homecoming Mobilization	Going Home, Work, National Vision, and Life Motivation	going home, state, tasty food, living, safe, money, double-headed, domineering
7	Good-Deed Order	Affirming Good Deeds, Rail Order, and Public Services	good people, the people, peeling (fruit), railway, train station, project, business, free

Based on the comment corpus LDA model of 20 news short videos from the *People's Daily* and *Bilibili* accounts, seven themes were extracted from the text. These themes do not directly correspond to the specific content of individual videos, but rather present common meaning processing methods of commentators when facing mainstream media news videos. Overall, the text exhibits two structural characteristics. Firstly, commentators form theme clusters with stable clustering structures around high-frequency topics such as children's education, family interaction, social kindness, public order, and national narratives, reflecting the issue-targeting ability of authoritative media communication on the *TikTok*. Secondly, commentators transform news events into relatable moral experiences through emotional expressions such as "child-family-growth" and "goodness-good person-worthiness", demonstrating the value projection and emotional resonance functions of the comment section beyond news consumption. Thus, it can be seen that in the platform context, the *People's Daily* comment section not only undertakes the normative definition function of public events but also carries the social psychological functions of emotion regulation, identity recognition, and value judgment.

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Table2 LDA model of the People Daily

Topic ID	Short Label	Topic Name	Focus Keywords (More Specific)
1	Growth Role Models	Growth Narratives and Role-Model Identification	life, hope, school, role model, students, tuition, independence, courage, resilience, awesome
2	Emotional Resilience	Emotional Resilience and Perceived Livelihood Conditions	emotional stability, life, complaints, squeezed, desperation, ordinary people, parents, doctors, staff, tenacity
3	Family Memories	Emotional Interweaving of Family Interaction and Risk Warnings	older sister, younger brother, sister-brother, memories, companionship, gentle, can't go back, drugs, execution, stability
4	Everyday Kindness	Everyday Kindness and Evaluations of Public-Space Scenes	kind, kind-hearted, considerate, salute, suggestions, bus, service, afraid, scenes, success
5	Justice and Order	Imagined Social Justice and Punitive Narratives of Order	fairness, list, execution by shooting, gunshots, torture, state, society, righteousness, good people, warmth
6	Motivational Mobilization	Motivational Mobilization and Collective Emotions in National Narratives	keep going, must win, Team China, motherland, propaganda, championship, win/lose, inspiration, adversity, miracle
7	Light and Recovery	Affirming Good Deeds and Emotional Recovery of "Getting Out of the Dark"	good people, safe, light, happiness, proof, get through, dark night, worth it, affirmation, rise

4.1.3 Comparing People's Daily and Xinhua News Agency: Differences in Emotional Event Reception and Public Issue Discussion Zones

Based on the aforementioned themes and word cloud results, it can be observed that two mainstream media outlets, which have formed two distinctly different ways of organizing emotions.The sample from *People's Daily* presents an overall structure dominated by strong positivity, with the overall sentiment label predominantly positive. At the thematic level, the positive sentiment is primarily contributed by themes such as "Guang ming Restoration" and "Inspirational Mobilization," which are focused on value affirmation and collective mobilization. This paper also integrates news events into the narrative template of "Good Deeds-Affirmation-Hope, Adversity-Struggle-Victory."Commentators tend to directly express their attitudes, thus forming a positive aggregation of emotions and a stable positive guidance effect on public opinion. In contrast, the emotional distribution of the *Xinhua News Agency* sample presents a three- part pattern of slightly higher neutrality and close proximity to positive and negative emotions. Overall, the comment section of *Xinhua News Agency* is more like a discussion forum driven by public issues, with a large number of comments primarily supplementing facts, contextualizing experiences, and expressing opinions. Compared to purely emotional expression and normative definition, it emphasizes problem-oriented expression centered around specific public service and order experiences.

Under the high-paced interactive mechanism of *TikTok*, the emotional loop of "instant attitude expression" generated by *People's Daily* is more dominant in terms of dissemination power. In the nurturing environment of *Bilibili* developed community culture and public discussion, the discussion loop of "experience-evaluation-controversy" coexistence in *Xinhua News Agency* has more successfully proactively grasped the promotion of liquid news practice and the gestation process of new journalistic truth concepts.

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4.2 Multimodal discourse analysis

In the context of deep media integration, *Xinhua News Agency* and *People's Daily* are actively constructing a communication ecosystem that adapts to digitalization and visualization. As the official organ of the *CPC Central Committee*, the core mission of *People's Daily* News is to effectively set the agenda and build social consensus through content output in the public opinion field. By establishing typical images and providing narrative fragments to convey official discourse, it has become a good case of liquid news practice on social media platforms. Xinhua News Agency, on the other hand, has a global perspective and authoritative sources, focusing on the depth of content output and able to consolidate the solidity of discourse construction through stable information increment. This paper cuts into the four core dimensions of multimodal dis-course analysis: linguistic modality, visual modality, auditory modality, and interactive modality, combining platform tone. Based on the commonality of the two media's news practice adaptation to platforms, and combining the differences in modal combination, information production, and meaning construction between the two media, this paper uses this material to understand the news curation of mainstream media in the process of platform transformation. In this paper, it is believed that *Xinhua News Agency* has significant differences in curation modality on *Bilibili* and *TikTok*, while *People's Daily* is more similar. Here, we discuss *Xinhua News Agency* separately and focus on *People's Daily*.

4.2.1 Visual modal analysis

4.2.1.1 Xinhua News Agency: Striving for meaning recognition, polishing visual harmony

Xinhua News Agency's news curation on *Bilibili* extensively utilizes aerial photography, time- lapse photography, first-person long shots, and beat editing with rapid scene changes to present the macro space and micro details within the same visual modal framework. This allows the depth of historical topics to be transformed into visible visual communication through slicing and medium-to-long video content output. Some scenes also reveal the behind-the-scenes of the news production process, shifting the visual focus from grand achievements narratives to everyday life scenes. By using individual details to convey collective emotions, the visual modal analysis plays an auxiliary narrative role in Xinhua News Agency's news curation on Bilibi.

In *TikTok*, Xinhua News Agency's visual grammar has shifted towards emotional close-ups. In vertical frames, panoramic scenes are cropped. In various types of curated content, the single symbol with the highest emotional intensity is retained-close-ups of leaders operating equipment, female nurses rescuing passersby, and the posture of working people, etc. Visual modalities have been compressed from spatial presentation to emotional highlights. Shot durations have been shortened, and editing frequencies have been increased, forming a high- frequency stimulating visual rhythm.

4.2.1.2 People's Daily: Presents direct truthfulness and coupled narrative framework

People's Daily adopts a similar visual modality strategy on two major platforms, similar to the style which is unified. It primarily utilizes situational frames, with reports on public emergencies mainly featuring collages of surveillance footage, on-site photos, and ID photos. It rarely undergoes artistic transformation, and the visual modality serves to construct a framework of authenticity. Through direct images without filters

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or music, it establishes credible visual anchors for authoritative sources. Reports on daily life, social rituals, personal stories, etc., all require the visual modality to serve as an anchor for authenticity. The images do not need to be processed for beauty, but rather for a sense of confirmation. It pursues an authoritative and credible degree of trust in the visual modality without intermediation.

4.2.2 Auditory modality analysis

4.2.2.1 Xinhua News Agency: On-site atmosphere immersion and mixing of original

Xinhua News Agency's curated auditory modality on *Bilibili* reflects the characteristics of mixing on-site original sound with post-production processing. For example, in reporting on foreign social events, Xinhua mixes the original sound of the event with environmental sounds and drum beats with a sense of urgency, creating a narrative atmosphere. The auditory modality is utilized by Xinhua to characterize the severity of the event and leave a positive or negative impression on the audience.

On the *TikTok*, the auditory modality usage of *Xinhua News Agency* exhibits accelerated characteristics with fragmented narratives. Limited by the conventional short video duration of 15-30 seconds, environmental sounds are significantly compressed and replaced with strong rhythmic beats or emotional short phrases at the beginning. Human voice monologues alternate with exciting music, and the three-part auditory structure ends with a chorus. The auditory modality has shifted from being a builder of implicit atmosphere in news curation to a trigger of emotions.

4.2.2.2 People's Daily: restrain in serious reporting, relax in daily reporting

The auditory curation mode of *People's Daily* on the two major platforms exhibits distinctly different strategies: restraint in serious reporting relaxation in daily reporting. For instance, in reports on public events and sudden disasters, the proportion of human voices in *People's Daily* news curation is relatively high and sometimes deliberately avoids overly emotional background music, forming a sharp contrast with its adaptation to the strong rhythmic beats of commercial short videos in daily news reporting. In serious reporting, *People's Daily* emphasizes restraint in commercial factors of news reporting through the withdrawal of music and the enhancement of human voices in the auditory mode, maintaining the objectivity of the reporting content and declaring its official status. In the curation of daily news types, it chooses light and pleasant accompaniments with distinct rhythms and relatively weakens the use of human voices to enhance the atmosphere of fragmented events.

4.2.3 Textual modal analysis

4.2.3.1 Xinhua News Agency: Depicts specific moments and connects to the overall direction

Xinhua News Agency's curated textual modality on *Bilibili* station adopts a minimalist approach by specifically depicting content to reduce the cognitive burden and empathy threshold of the audience breaking down major issues and transforming them into a collection of events directly related to users. The commentary carries the overall value through specific imagery and adheres to a straightforward style in its usage. The text

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on the *Bilibili* video cover draws inspiration from creative posters and becomes a focal point through bright color design. The video cover enhanced by text design transcends the confines of the video and also serves as an independent dissemination unit, circulating on *Bilibili* dynamic and other social platforms.

Xinhua News Agency's curated textual modality on *TikTok* has shifted from emphasizing independent design to presenting auxiliary functions for visual information, such as subtitles and cover text, which usually do not exceed two lines. The tone has shifted from written to spoken language, with exclamation and question marks being frequently used. The subject is largely ignored. News curation achieves emotional closure through the combination of imperative sentences and musical rhythm, enhancing the fluency of users scrolling through video content after viewing.

4.2.3.2 People Daily: Emphasizing both fragment and structure, emotional and events

The textual modality of *People's Daily* presents a pursuit of structural integrity based on adapting to platformization, fragmentation, and streamlining. The text production of *People's Daily* generally follows two approaches: narrating facts and connecting emotions to conclude, or connecting emotions first and supplementing with facts. When reporting content, it achieves the output and balance of information and meaning with the shortest amount of text. Additionally, the cover title guides users to be led into a cognitive cycle where they first consider what emotion should be adopted when viewing the matter. Furthermore, the use of emotional words in the copy is very direct, without offering complex emotions or intermediate zones. It completes the mutual presupposition and mutual confirmation of emotions and events within the narrative framework. In terms of text processing in video content, *People's Daily* amplifies and emphasizes texts with highly condensed information. These processed texts are usually data, emotional slogans, and policy keywords, and become the first impression grabber for the audience to form an overall cognition of news curation. News curation involving character story reports will incorporate popular internet phrases such as "must like", "heartbreaking" and "admirable" in the copy, and interact with the audience to deepen their engagement with the content.

4.2.4 Interactive modal analysis

4.2.4.1 Xinhua News Agency: Transforms from guidance to companionship personalizes media image

Xinhua News Agency adapts to *Bilibili*'s synchronous interactive culture centered around bullet comments, with convenient comment sorting and browsing functions, as well as a developed community culture. It understands its audience as a group of young people who are simultaneously concerned with individual life and social events. Xinhua proactively aligns its curatorial material selection and news reporting language towards the youth audience, and cultivates personal images such as *Zhang Yang Studio* that use individual reporter accounts as a means of interaction and a platform for meaning exchange. Through in-depth interaction in the comment section, *Xinhua News Agency* narrows the psychological distance between itself and its audience. This interactive mode serves the idea of news curation. By creating reporter accounts, *Xinhua* transforms news reporting into a kind of updated drama series to some extent, and condenses the audience's single consumption of news content into periodic emotional experiences. Through youth-oriented and companionable

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news curation, *Xinhua* transforms *Bilibili*'s audience into participants in an interactive ritual that they mutually recognize.

On the *TikTok*, *Xinhua News Agency,* in its practice of genre-specific news curation, has created participatory collective topics as hashtags, forming an entry point for the broad audience to collectively engage with specific events. Moreover, the interactive discourse has been transformed to some extent into a report on national achievements and social concepts. Accounts like Yang Studio, which represent the individualized transformation of *Xinhua News Agency*'s media image, exhibit a different interactive discourse model on the *TikTok* compared to *Bilibili*'s high stickiness and deep relationships. Instead, they feature low thresholds, high frequency, and wide coverage.

4.2.4.2 People Daily: adheres to interaction within the framework and connects with audiences within the boundaries

The interactive mode of news curation by *People's Daily* is primarily manifested at the textual level through the frequent use of behavioral call-to-action vocabulary.These directives not only present information but also shape the narrative framework and serve to soften authoritative discourse. For instance, in the linguistic mode, the use of popular and easy-to-understand youth internet slang, such as "counter-kill" "finishing move" and "feeding", when producing folk news segments, triggers story sharing and opinion discussion in the comment section. In the auditory mode, the selection of well-known internet songs or music with strong beat and rhythm enhances the attention-grabbing effect of fragmented narratives. In the visual mode, text itself is used as part of the image composition, significantly reducing the need for oral narration and allowing events to "speak for themselves." In the interactive presentation of these modes, *People's Daily* tends to play the role of an informer, interrogator, and guide in the news curation process across various platforms, transforming rigid authority into trustworthy soft authority through boundary-conscious interaction. The core of its interaction lies in enhancing audience trust in the official side by maintaining seriousness and limited openness.

4.3 Explanation of the aggregative effect of mainstream media news curation: sticking to the position, respecting the event, and seeing the audience

Firstly, the analysis of news videos from *Xinhua News Agency* and People Daily on the *TikTok* reflects the limitations of the platform's tone on media news styles. The platform is not only a dissemination channel, but also a specific interactive condition set by gathering common audiences, shaping the differences in communication logic and discourse expression. Although the aggregation effect of mainstream media news curation remains strong, it is sometimes not actively grasped by the media. In this paper, the analysis and interpretation of all selected news materials reflect the mutual confrontation between different opinions, emotions, and experiences, indicating that liquid news practice is not a process that can be fully anticipated and utilized by the media. For example, the daily news image construction of *People's Daily*, which attempts to achieve emotional guidance, frequently becomes a site of public discussion and controversy on *Bilibili*. Serious news, however, becomes material for emotional resonance due to the discourse confrontation among different youth groups on the Internet. In some materials selected by *People's Daily* to guide public sentiment and opinion, the reactions in the comment section are more cautious and neutral, and more sentiments based on personal experiences are integrated into the discussion of viewpoints. In contrast, *Xinhua News Agency* has a certain

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volume of medium-to-long video output, which is more in line with young people's focus on current affairs and social issues in terms of topics and presentation methods. Therefore, it breaks down the framework boundaries between daily and serious news reporting, enhances the acceptance of topic settings by the audiences of the two platforms, and strengthens the stability of news curation in the context of liquid news.

Furthermore, when this article evaluates the effectiveness of news curation aggregation in mainstream media from the perspective of liquid news, it is found that the construction of a good community culture plays a crucial role in leveraging the advantages of liquid news mechanisms. The perspectives and discourse systems provided by a good community culture determine whether the audience can detach themselves from specific video content and reflect on themselves. The decision-making power to cultivate diverse and mature opinion communities is largely in the hands of platforms due to algorithms and traffic push mechanisms, but fully empowered audiences still possess relatively sound judgment abilities. This is also the key for mainstream media to win over audiences through news curation. In the era of new media, the effectiveness of news curation aggregation must be established together with the spontaneity of audiences, so as to surpass the intermediate position pre-occupied by platforms in the aggregation process.

Finally, in assessing the effectiveness of news curation aggregation, this article argues that to achieve effective and lasting aggregation in news curation, mainstream media still needs to adhere to its own subjectivity. On the one hand, it should deeply understand the underlying logic behind the formation of liquid news and the audience's new perception of news truth, conduct vertical deep cultivation within the platform, launch in-depth reports for different specialized areas, firmly grasp the initiative in information increment, integrate reporting and narrative, and establish a solid foundation for news curation in the new media era. On the other hand, it should explore the use of new interactive technologies such as interactive videos, AR, and AI videos to enhance user immersion and engagement in certain areas such as science popularization and history, and use this as a growth point to drive user trust in the media and increase attention to media news content.

5 Discussion

Under the profound involvement of platform media in meaning construction and information dissemination, the boundaries of news production are becoming increasingly blurred. Mainstream media have shifted from their traditional role as news publishers to that of news curators, striving to counteract the intervention of platform media in discourse power.

This study employs liquid news theory as its analytical framework to assess the aggregation effects of mainstream media's news curation and to delineate the limits of their capacity to foster audience trust and engagement in the context of public issue setting through news curation. Confronted with the intense competition for audience attention from platform algorithm-driven distribution and social media, mainstream media must select social issues based on a nuanced understanding of audience commonalities, integrate fragmented information, and alleviate public cognitive anxiety stemming from information overload and the rampant spread of false news.

This paper also acknowledges the limitations of the research. Firstly, news curation remains somewhat ambiguous in mainstream media practice, rendering it challenging to quantify using entirely objective and

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fixed criteria. Secondly, by examining series of reports and hot topics, this study interprets the formation of discourse commonalities as indicative of news curation practices and utilizes audience feedback as a sample to evaluate aggregation effects. Nevertheless, there are still certain gaps in attributing these effects to the accomplishments of specific curation projects or the overall curation capabilities of the media. Furthermore, while this study has elucidated audience cognitive pathways towards news media reports through interactive responses, there remains scope for enhancing research precision.

Future research could incorporate in-depth analyses of multiple cases alongside grounded research in digital domains such as comment sections to define the intensity and types of curation within specific contexts. Concurrently, the inherent instability of news curation practices should be factored into research variables. By tracking diachronic changes in meaning and information, a more nuanced explanation can be offered regarding the relationship between news curation practices and liquid news theory. Recognizing these limitations does not undermine the validity of the research; rather, it highlights the evolving trend in news curation research from static measurement to dynamic process tracking, and from reliance on singular standards and concepts to embracing specific contextual interpretations. This paper endeavors to contribute to future research endeavors by presenting both its accomplishments and areas requiring further exploration.

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