Breakthrough and Integration: Exploring the Path for Traditional Hosts in the Era of Intelligent Media

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Abstract: *In the era of intelligent media, where artificial intelligence technology is continuously advancing and breaking through, traditional human hosts face the crisis of their hosting and communication work being challenged and their job positions being replaced. This research aims to explore the path for human hosts in the era of intelligent media, by examining the diversity of contemporary hosting and communication development, analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of digital anchors, and addressing the challenges faced by the traditional hosting industry. The study further investigates how human hosts can break through and utilize technology to achieve human-machine integration, thereby promoting the continuous development of the hosting and communication industry.*

Keywords: *era of intelligent media; traditional hosts; digital anchors; hosting and communication; path exploration*

1. Introduction

Currently, some scholars have pointed out the need for comprehensive strengthening of the all-media communication system, implementation of the national cultural digitization strategy, and accelerated construction of the "Digital China" initiative. National radio and television media should leverage their advantages in content, cultural creativity, and scientific innovation, firmly adhere to the direction of media, culture, and technology integration, and promote the high-quality development of integrated media in the broadcasting industry.

The year 2021 has been referred to as the "first year of the metaverse", and in the process of mainstreaming the concept of the metaverse, virtual digital anchors have once again boarded the "metaverse" express, attracting attention from mainstream markets, including traditional media.[1] With the advent of the artificial intelligence era, traditional human hosts face a crisis in their hosting and communication work due to the challenges brought about by "intelligent", "mechanized", and "efficient" demands. Therefore, it is urgent to seek a breakthrough path.

2. Development Status: The Diversity of Hosting and Communication in the Era of Intelligent Media

To date, digital anchors have been widely used in the communication market, demonstrating a rich diversity of hosting and communication in the era of intelligent media. Digital anchors can be found in programs broadcasted by major television stations such as the Central Radio and Television Station, Beijing TV, and Hunan TV. This presence has, to a certain extent, saved labor and resources while enriching the form and content of programs, thereby exerting a positive influence on the development of China's media industry.

In October 2021, the National Radio and Television Administration of China released the "14th Five-Year Plan for Technological Development in Radio, Television, and Online Audiovisuals", which stated the intention to use virtual engine construction, voice-driven technology, motion capture, and other techniques to synthesize digital anchors for use in television programs such as news, variety shows, finance, and weather forecasts. The aim is to innovate program formats, enhance production efficiency and quality. According to the "2023 China Virtual Anchor Industry Research Report" by iMedia Consulting, in 2022, the virtual human-driven market size and core market size in China were 183.31 billion yuan and 12.08 billion yuan, respectively. It is projected that by 2025, these figures will reach 640.27 billion yuan and 48.06 billion yuan, respectively, indicating a strong growth trend. Digital

anchors are an important branch of virtual humans and are defined as a new type of internet communication entity engaged in online media or live broadcasting through virtual images, utilizing full-body motion capture technology. They can be categorized into media-oriented virtual anchors engaged in news media and broadcasting hosting work, entertainment-oriented virtual anchors involved in social networking platforms and entertainment activities, and e-commerce-oriented virtual anchors engaged in live streaming and sales activities on e-commerce platforms.

At present, various platforms and institutions are incubating digital anchors with "IP images". However, the main incubation and operation institutions in China are predominantly within the broadcasting and television system. They have launched series of digitally created hosts, cultivating "idol IP" virtual hosts, and exploring new forms of integrating traditional media with digital technology in the era of intelligent media, thus sustaining the vitality of media in the digital age. Since 2018, the Central Radio and Television Station has introduced "Xiaoxiao Sa", "Zhu Xiaoxun", "Long Xiaoyang", and other digitally created hosts, who participate in program recording alongside human hosts, with the aim of enriching program content. In 2021, Beijing Radio and Television Station unveiled "Time Xiao Ni", China's first broadcast-level intelligent interactive real-person digital anchor. Time Xiao Ni imitates the appearance, temperament, vocal tone, and body movements of a real hostess.[2] Apart from performing tasks such as news reporting on new media, she also provides user services on the "Beijing Time" mobile app. Hunan TV has created "Xiao Yang", a virtual host representing "youthful vitality", who participates in programs and events such as "Hello, Saturday", embodying the idol functions and hosting responsibilities of virtual hosts in the digital era.

Amid the trend of the influx of digital anchors into the media market, traditional human hosts have undergone a shift in their hosting and communication work. Some aspects of their work, such as news delivery and advertising voice-overs, exhibit characteristics of "replacability". On the other hand, hosting and communication work has shifted towards interview programs that emphasize emotional interaction and on-site reporting that requires improvisation, combining it with the involvement of digital technology to present a diverse and rich program experience.

3. Dilemma: Challenges Brought by the Application of Digital Anchors

3.1. Analysis of the Advantages and Disadvantages of Digital Anchors

According to McLuhan, technology is an "extension of man". As a new phenomenon emerging in the era of the metaverse, digital anchors have distinct advantages and disadvantages. From the perspective of the domestic market for digital anchor applications, digital anchors have advantages such as round-the-clock broadcasting, high efficiency, and versatile image customization. However, in terms of actual application effects, they face issues such as a lack of emotions, poor improvisational skills, and rigid body expressions.

Compared to traditional human hosts, digital anchors have the following advantages. On the one hand, they improve the efficiency of broadcasting and hosting work, fulfilling the mission of liberating productivity and increasing work efficiency. With the help of algorithmic technology standardized settings, digital anchors can efficiently deliver a large amount of pre-set information with almost zero errors in accuracy. They can easily and accurately complete communication tasks. In terms of broadcasting volume, digital anchors can work 24 hours without rest, continuously hosting and broadcasting, which not only enhances the speed of dissemination but also saves manpower. Regarding voice pronunciation, with the continuous advancement of artificial intelligence technology, digital anchors can imitate the voices and language expressions of human hosts, providing viewers with a better audiovisual experience. On the other hand, digital anchors meet the diverse aesthetic needs of viewers for the appearance, voice tone, and character design of hosts. The promotion of digital anchors on major provincial and municipal TV stations and media platforms has become an inevitable trend, indicating that the broadcasting and hosting industry is developing towards diversification, technological advancement, and virtualization. By adjusting and changing digital characters through technical production means, digital anchors have the advantage of strong versatility and diverse styles, satisfying the different aesthetic demands of various audiences. Since 2019, various digital anchors such as "Guoguo", the virtual anchor of the People's Daily, and Shen Ya from Shanghai Radio and Television Station, have stepped into the public's view, winning recognition and favor from the audience, and sparking waves of discussions. It can be seen that digital anchors have significant advantages in the broadcasting and hosting market, empowered by technology. The extensive use of digital anchors in various reporting scenes and major thematic presentations improves media

production and broadcasting rates. It also allows more human hosts to participate in programs that require emotional understanding and artistic creation, optimizing the operational and creative structure within the media to some extent.

However, compared to human hosts, virtual anchors have prominent shortcomings due to their non-human characteristics. Firstly, digital anchors cannot fully imitate human emotions and expressions. Broadcasting and hosting work is an artistic creation, and emotional expression is an important element of artistic creation. Broadcasting and hosting work requires understanding and judgment of scripts, followed by personal language skills to create unique, vivid, and rich language expressions. The "judgment" of digital anchors is based on all programmed algorithmic technologies, lacking the ability to handle emotional variations. Although digital anchors can deliver language with "emotions", they often appear rigid due to their programmed nature and lack of flexibility. Secondly, digital anchors lack comprehensive improvisational skills. "The spontaneous expression of a host is an organic combination of mass communication, interpersonal communication, and verbal communication. The absence of any of these elements cannot effectively achieve the effect of spontaneous verbal communication by a host". Since digital anchors can only host and broadcast based on pre-set settings, they may not handle many unforeseen situations that are not within their programmed parameters. In contrast, excellent human hosts can effectively resolve crises and ensure the normal recording and broadcasting of programs by judging the on-site unexpected situations, combining their own understanding and feelings, and utilizing their experience and skills. Thirdly, the language and body language processing technology of domestic virtual anchors still needs improvement. Most digital anchors still have traces of being "robots", particularly in terms of language expression and body language. This indicates that the ability to create and improve digital characters still needs enhancement. While some digital anchors can already demonstrate language processing techniques such as emphasis, pauses, and rhythm when reading scripts, many others exhibit mechanical language expressions and lack fluent and coherent body language, which prevents viewers from truly accepting them as hosts on a psychological level.

3.2. Challenges Faced by Traditional Human Hosts

In the era of intelligent media, the birth and promotion of digital anchors undoubtedly bring significant anxiety to media practitioners. Although the application of digital anchors in the domestic market is still in its early stages due to the immaturity of artificial intelligence technology, the challenges and threats brought by technological advancements in the intelligent media era will become increasingly prominent.

Firstly, traditional human hosts face the crisis of job reduction in the industry. More and more programs are showing a trend of weakening the "host concept", and the participation of digital anchors in various types of programs has greatly reduced the demand for hosting positions in the broadcasting and hosting industry. For instance, low-end simple broadcasting tasks such as weather forecasts and ordinary short video dubbing can already be competently performed by digital anchors. Even some hosting roles involving interviews and conversations can be taken up by numerous digital anchors. This implies that broadcasting and hosting positions with replaceable human hosts will no longer require real human hosts. Consequently, job positions will be reduced to some extent, leading to increased competition within the industry. Secondly, the future media industry will demand more rigorous assessments of individual professional abilities. Hosts represent the image of the media. They are by no means robotic figures reciting scripts. Instead, they should integrate their own understanding and insights into the handling of scripts, balance artistic elements and media communication rules, and disseminate to audiences in a manner that suits their own style.[3] The emergence of digital anchors implies that hosts who can only read scripts, lack adaptability, and cannot create communication value will inevitably be eliminated by the era. Therefore, the development of science and technology is more like a catalyst that urges media practitioners to demand higher standards of themselves. Lastly, traditional human hosts need to face and embrace the changes in the field of work communication. As mentioned earlier, in the future, an increasing number of digital anchors will join various work positions that require information delivery, such as news broadcasting, weather forecasts, and video dubbing. As part of the broadcasting process in radio and television, human hosts possessing human emotions and wisdom will step into communication positions that require artistic creation, warmth, and intelligence. They will continue to delve deeper into their work.

While technology empowers media communication, the accompanying challenges and threats should not be underestimated. With the continuous improvement and breakthroughs in technology, new questions arise: Will virtual anchors surpass real humans, and will human hosts ultimately be replaced?

Ultimately, it is worth contemplating how to uphold human values and the power of wisdom in the era of "human-machine competition".

4. Breakthrough and Integration: The Development Path of Traditional Human Hosts

4.1. Personalized Communication: Creating the Value of Human Host IP

In the development of their professional careers, traditional human hosts should continuously emphasize the distinction between "humans" and "digital beings", specifically emotional expression. Through self-exploration, they should develop unique language expressions and personal communication charm, creating their own exclusive label and image.

In the current era of rapid development of scientific intelligent technology and the metaverse, traditional human hosts undoubtedly need to adopt a strong mindset to accept the challenges and assessments brought by the times. This requires professionals in broadcasting and hosting to enhance their individual professional skills, continually improve their comprehensive qualities and cultural literacy. In addition to basic voice training and language expression training, extensive reading and expanding knowledge reservoirs are essential to cultivate cultural depth, broad perspectives, and broad thinking. They should communicate effectively, have logical and meaningful discussions, and focus on the artistic aspects of hosting. By presenting their hosting work in programs that align with their own style, temperament, and expression, they can demonstrate their personal charisma and create a unique host image. Furthermore, digital hosts are unable to establish emotional connections with the audience. As hosts with emotions and sensibilities, it is essential for human hosts to leverage this advantage.[4] They should always remember who they are speaking for and why, engage with the audience on a deep emotional level, and develop their own unique language style through continuous practice to establish a personal brand image as a host. For example, well-known host and producer Dong Qing has a distinct hosting style and image characterized by "being well-read and cultured". In the series of interviews in the program "The Reader", she served as both the producer responsible for topic selection and planning and the interviewer engaging in conversations with guests. This combination created a unique IP image of a "composite host and producer", showcasing the creativity, empathy, and expressive abilities of an outstanding human host.

4.2. Innovative Communication: Harnessing the Proactiveness of Human Hosts

Looking at the virtual host market in the domestic traditional media industry, as mentioned earlier, most digital hosts lack real-time interaction and independent thinking abilities. They are unable to handle hosting communication tasks that require immediacy, unpredictability, and adaptability. Therefore, traditional human hosts still possess strong market competitiveness in programs that involve important scene reporting and emphasize emotional expression and conceptual communication.

Intelligent technology is both an accelerator and a shackle for digital hosts. It relies on pre-designed and well-programmed algorithms and relies on extensive database analysis to accomplish predetermined hosting communication tasks. While digital hosts have advantages in data processing and breadth of information collection, they fall behind human hosts in improvisation and creative output. The ability to adapt and control the situation is one of the fundamental skills that hosts need to possess. In the event of unexpected situations during live broadcasts of large-scale programs, hosts must quickly observe and assess the on-site conditions, make verbal adjustments based on past experiences and capabilities to ensure the smooth progress of the program. For example, on World Book Day, April 23, 2023, host Li Yangwei improvised a rescue on the National Library's stage, providing ample time for the adjustment of the LED screen and incorporating interactive segments with the audience of different age groups, becoming the highlight of the evening's hosting. Deeply mining and extending guest information to provide viewers with multi-level and multi-perspective interpretations is also an important ability that hosts need to possess. During emotional interviews and on-site reporting, interviewees may provide information beyond the prepared script, and hosts need to capture this information in a timely manner. By utilizing their own understanding and sensitivity, hosts can use their personalized language expressions to convey the underlying emotions behind the dialogue. For example, in interview programs such as "Yang Lan Interviews" and "Thirteen Invitations", human hosts not only conduct interviews based on the script but also adjust their language according to the interviewees' expressions and changes in the situation. They create a conversational environment that establishes emotional connections, enabling interviewees to deliver more comprehensive, diverse, and

profound content in a comfortable interview space. This is something that virtual hosts are currently unable to match. Virtual hosts lack the "autonomy" of human beings and are unable to achieve the innovative expression established on human "autonomous communication". Therefore, leveraging individual initiative in expression is an important path for human hosts to excel over virtual hosts.

4.3. Intelligent Communication: Advancing the Development of Human-Machine Collaboration

Although the development of digital hosts is still in its early stages, under the powerful driving force of scientific and technological advancements, artificial intelligence technology will continue to penetrate various stages and aspects of media development more comprehensively. Traditional human hosts should adapt to the changing trends of the times and make better use of artificial intelligence technology to achieve a symbiotic relationship between humans and machines, promoting the development of the broadcasting and hosting industry.[5]

Digital hosts and human hosts should not be seen as opposing entities but rather as harmoniously developing in a collaborative and mutually supportive relationship. Challenges should be transformed into advantages, turning "competitors" into "helpers". In terms of program design, the emergence of digital hosts has expanded the ways of broadcasting and hosting, extending the scope of communication. The fusion model of "human host + virtual host + interactive scenes" has appeared in communication and presentation. Human hosts should consider how to engage in dialogue, interaction, and collaboration with virtual hosts to enrich the format of programs. In terms of role division, digital hosts enhance the efficiency of information filtering, output, and dissemination, while human hosts grasp the ability to control real data and emotions, achieving a comprehensive integration of human and artificial intelligence and promoting the development of the media industry and society as a whole. Regarding the human-machine relationship, a balance should be sought, utilizing the coupling of humans and machines to make intelligent media technology serve humanity. Therefore, traditional human hosts should keep pace with the times, continuously improve their application capabilities of intelligent media technology, and ensure that technology serves their own development rather than limiting it.

5. Conclusions

With the continuous innovation of technology, digital hosts are constantly evolving and will be promoted in a more competitive manner on major media platforms and in program production during the rapid development of the metaverse era. Their impact on the broadcasting and hosting industry is two-fold. They bring competitive pressure to human hosts, but they can also enrich program formats and improve communication efficiency through advanced technological applications, providing viewers with better audiovisual effects and driving the development of the broadcasting and hosting industry. Therefore, traditional human hosts should keep pace with the times, break through and enhance their personal hosting competitiveness in the era of intelligent media. They should integrate advanced scientific and technological advancements into their hosting and communication work, allowing human creativity, autonomy, and intelligence to fully manifest in the field of broadcasting and hosting, transforming crises and challenges into opportunities and achievements.

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