

A Study on the Evolution of Commentating Styles for Major Sports Events in the Context of Media Convergence

Yuanyuan Hou

Xi'an Physical Education University, Xi'an 710068, Shaanxi, China

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of rapid development in media technology and diversified communication channels, the dissemination methods of sports events have undergone profound changes. In response to this, commentating styles must also be actively adjusted to better fit the new communication environment. Aiming to effectively reveal the laws of change in commentating styles, this paper is based on the context of media convergence, focuses on the impact of media convergence on sports event commentaries, analyzes the evolution of commentating styles for major sports events from three aspects: commentary content, commentating form, and commentating style, and then proposes effective countermeasures for the evolution of commentating styles, including reshaping the role positioning of commentators, strengthening content review, and enhancing professional training. These measures aim to promote the healthy development of commentating styles and provide strong support for sports journalism communication.

Keywords: Media Convergence; Major Sports Events; Commentating Styles

Online publication: May 26, 2025

1. Preface

Media convergence has reconstructed the communication landscape of sports events, making commentating styles increasingly oriented toward amiability and personalization. In the era of traditional media, commentaries on major sports events were dominated by normativity and authority, leading to relatively formulaic and formal linguistic styles. In the new media era, influenced by factors such as the rise of circle culture and enhanced audience participation, commentaries on major sports events have gradually expanded from “information transmission” to “emotional resonance” and “community connection.” This imposes higher requirements on commentators: they must strike a balance between professionalism and entertainment—capable of explaining major sports events from a professional perspective while making the language more internet-native and relatable to meet audience aesthetic needs. Based on this, this paper systematically studies the evolution of commentating styles for major sports events in the context of media convergence.

2. Overview of the Media Convergence Context

2.1. Definition of Media Convergence

Media convergence refers to the integration of technologies, sharing of content, and interconnection of communication channels across media forms such as broadcasting, television, the internet, and mobile terminals, gradually forming a multifunctional integrated communication ecosystem^[1]. Centered on digital technologies like 5G and artificial intelligence, media convergence has effectively reconstructed the logic of information production and distribution, and to a certain extent, strongly promoted the transition of communication from a “single linear model” to “multi-platform linkage”.

2.2. Impact of Media Convergence on Sports Event Commentaries

2.2.1. Promoting Diversified Development of Commentating Forms

In the era of traditional media, commentaries on major sports events were dominated by “authoritative broadcasting,” thus placing strong emphasis on linguistic norms, including pronunciation, tone, and intonation^[2]. In the new media environment, however, commentaries have shifted toward a “vernacular chat” model, which better caters to the audience’s emotional resonance needs by integrating internet buzzwords, humorous banter, and other elements. Furthermore, supported by technologies like AR (Augmented Reality) and VR (Virtual Reality), commentaries are no longer “dry” explanations but are delivered with visual data and dynamic simulations, enhancing scene immersion. For example, NBA live broadcasts use virtual tactical boards to analyze players’ positioning scientifically.

2.2.2. Expanding Communication Functions

In the context of media convergence, the communication form of major sports events has evolved: commentaries now need to connect with fan communities and use memes, post-match highlights, etc., for secondary creation to strengthen circle identity^[3]. For instance, the Scottish Premiership achieved communication fission through “user-generated content.” Additionally, major sports event communication should have entertainment attributes, meaning new media platforms require commentaries to balance professional analysis and entertainment, ensuring both seriousness and fun.

2.2.3. Reconstructing Commentators’ Professional Competencies

Media convergence imposes higher requirements on commentators, who must possess strong information integration and cross-platform adaptability^[4]. In information integration, commentators should synthesize event-related information, advancing from “single-event description” to “multidimensional narration” through pre-match prediction, in-match interpretation, and post-match review to provide immersive commentaries. For cross-platform adaptability, commentators need social media interaction skills and short-video editing capabilities—e.g., editing and publishing high-light moments with colloquial comments to meet audiences’ fragmented viewing needs.

2.2.4. Transforming the Commentating Industry Ecosystem

The rise of new media and grassroots commentators has disrupted the dominance of traditional media, forcing professional commentators to enhance personal brand value and professional capabilities^[5]. Meanwhile, in media convergence, ratings are no longer the sole indicator; interaction volume and topic heat on new media platforms have become new standards for measuring commentary effectiveness.

3. Analysis of the Evolution of Commentating Styles for Major Sports Events in the Media Convergence Context

3.1. Changes in Commentary Content

In the context of media convergence, the commentary content of major sports events has undergone remarkable changes, evolving from a “single dimension” to “multidimensional integration”. This transformation is primarily reflected in two

aspects: the expansion of information depth and breadth, and the balance between professionalism and entertainment: (1) Expansion of Information Depth and Breadth. Traditional commentaries mainly focused on real-time event descriptions such as scoring and tactical execution, placing greater emphasis on professionalism. However, under the context of media convergence, different requirements are put forward for the commentary styles of major sports events: when commenting on events, content such as data analysis, background stories, and cultural interpretations should be organically integrated. For example, in NBA commentaries, it is appropriate to combine players' growth experiences, team historical data, etc. Additionally, commentaries can also incorporate current social hot topics, which not only enriches the commentary content but also effectively constructs a composite narrative of "event + humanities". Furthermore, influenced by User-generated Content (UGC), commentary content is no longer one-way output; instead, it needs to effectively integrate audiences' secondary creation clips such as "highlight moment" memes, gradually forming a complementary ecosystem of "official commentary + civilian interpretation". (2) Balance between Professionalism and Entertainment. New media platforms advocate "cross-circle communication", so when commenting on major sports events, commentators must not only use professional terms for precise expression but also adopt simple and understandable language for popular expression, thus balancing professionalism and entertainment. For instance, when Gu Ailing won the championship at the Winter Olympics, the commentator analyzed the technical details of her aerial movements and cleverly cited the "chive box" interview clip, effectively narrowing the gap between major sports events and young audiences. Meanwhile, under the context of media convergence, commentators are also required to organically integrate internet meme cultures such as "Wuhu take off" and "YYDS" (eternal god) to further enhance the communication stickiness and emotional resonance of commentary content.

3.2. Innovations in Commentating Forms

Against the backdrop of continuous technological empowerment, commentating forms have been undergoing constant innovation, which is mainly reflected in two aspects: multimodal interactive design, and cross-platform adaptation with fragmented communication: (1) Multimodal Interactive Design. To enable audiences to immerse themselves in the game and achieve a better experience, the application of technologies such as AR (Augmented Reality) and VR (Virtual Reality) has been strengthened in current commentaries. For example, in football matches, virtual images are appropriately added, and scientific overlays of players' running heat maps are conducted. This allows commentators to analyze players' tactics and other aspects scientifically and reasonably. Additionally, with the integration of functions like danmaku (comment barrage) and real-time voting into sports live broadcasts, commentators should possess strong response capabilities—namely, they should be able to scientifically adjust commentary content based on audiences' real-time feedback to better meet audience needs, thereby enhancing the attractiveness and stickiness of sports event commentaries. For instance, during the Tokyo Olympics, CCTV Video launched a "danmaku song request" function, through which commentators could play background music according to netizens' choices, effectively enhancing the sense of ritual and further narrowing the distance with audiences. (2) Cross-platform Adaptation and Fragmented Communication. With the gradual development of new media platforms, a collaborative communication ecosystem of "long-form videos + short-form videos" has emerged, imposing higher requirements on commentaries: commentaries for TV live broadcasts should primarily adopt panoramic narration, while on Douyin and other platforms, commentators need to learn to extract "iconic moments" and effectively pair them with entertaining colloquial commentary, such as "This move is absolutely amazing!" Meanwhile, with the gradual popularization of AI technology, its application in commentaries can be strengthened—using AI to assist in generating commentary content, thus supporting the practical improvement of targeted communication efficiency.

3.3. Development of Commentating Styles

3.3.1. Diversification Trend of Commentating Styles

In the context of media convergence, commentating styles are evolving toward diversification: in the traditional media era, styles were dominated by the "authoritative broadcasting style," while in the new media era, they primarily feature

“personalized expression.” For example, during the Beijing Winter Olympics, the commentary style adopted a “chit-chat” approach, with Wang Meng’s iconic line “My eyes are the ruler!” effectively breaking professional barriers and triggering emotional resonance through humor. Currently, there are three main commentating styles: (1) Professional style: Retaining rigorous analysis, such as the “rational play theory”; (2) Entertainment style: Integrating fun elements (e.g., talk show humor) into professional analysis through witty jokes; (3) Emotional style: Focusing on strengthening emotional resonance.

3.3.2. Changes in the Interaction Between Commentating Styles and Audiences

Against the backdrop of the growing popularity of danmaku (commentary barrage) culture, commentators need to adjust their commentating styles based on real-time danmaku and further strengthen the use of “internet-savvy language.” For example, incorporating internet buzzwords such as “pofang” (overwhelmed with emotion) and “leimu” (moved to tears) in commentaries helps effectively establish emotional connections with Generation Z. Moreover, influenced by real-time interactions on social media platforms like Weibo topic discussions, commentators are compelled to change their styles: they must transition from “one-way transmitters” to “community guides.” For instance, after major sports events, commentators can initiate discussions on topics like “Best Player Selection” on platforms such as Weibo and Douyin to sustain the event’s popularity. In addition, audiences’ secondary creations, such as memes and spoof videos, also impact commentators’ styles to a certain extent. Commentators are expected to organically integrate these user-generated contents, gradually forming a pattern of “official + user” style resonance.

4. Effective Strategies for Adapting to the Evolution of Commentating Styles for Major Sports Events in the Context of Media Convergence

4.1. Strengthening Audience Orientation and Reshaping Commentators’ Role Positioning

In the context of media convergence, the audience base for major sports events has expanded, and their demands for commentating styles have become more diverse. To address this, commentators must take initiative to reshape their role positioning: they should recognize that they are not only effective transmitters of event information but also key guides of audience emotions. Therefore, they need to fully understand audience preferences and needs to precisely tailor commentary content and styles, enhance viewing experiences, and achieve synchronized development between commentating styles and evolving audience demands. In-depth Audience Research: Commentators should proactively employ questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and big data analysis to understand the preferences and viewing habits (including preferred commentating styles, linguistic features, and interaction needs) of audiences across different age groups, genders, and regions. This lays a solid foundation for strengthening audience orientation. Continuous Tracking of Audience Needs: Regular collection and analysis of audience feedback are essential to make targeted, real-time adjustments and optimizations to commentary strategies, ensuring that content remains aligned with audience demands.

4.2. Enhancing Content Review and Professional Training to Improve Commentary Quality

In the context of media convergence, sports event commentary information spreads rapidly and reaches a broad audience, while also facing challenges such as false news and information overload. To address these issues, it is crucial to improve commentary quality and credibility. Commentators should therefore take initiative to strengthen content review and actively participate in professional training to continuously enhance their commentary skills and expertise. Content Review: Commentators must conduct preliminary reviews of scripts to ensure accuracy and authenticity. During live commentary, they should leverage new media technologies for real-time monitoring to identify and correct errors or inappropriate remarks, thereby optimizing content effectively. Professional Training: Commentators should receive training in commentary techniques, sports rules, and athletes’ background knowledge to enhance their professionalism. Additionally, participation in simulated commentary drills is vital to develop practical adaptability and commentary skills through hands-on experience.

5. Conclusion

In the era of media convergence, shaping commentating styles for major sports events presents both challenges and opportunities. The evolution of these styles is closely tied to media technology development. In the future, we should continue to focus on the impact of media technology on commentating styles and actively respond to promote the sustainable development of the sports communication ecosystem.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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