TAIWANESE ANIMATED NEWS AND ITS VIEWERS

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of animated news in the Taiwanese tabloid Apple Daily's online version is the result of the revenue competition and the changes in the contemporary media environment. This study has compared the young viewers' attention, memory, comprehension, and attitude towards the selected news items after watching the differing presentation models of the television news and animated news. The results showed that the animated news captured the audience's attention by dramatizing the specific sensational news events with accented narration, visually stimulating images, mocking tones, and special sound effects. However, viewers, after watching the animated news, only remembered trivial details or shocking images. The results also indicated that the usage of technology by the animated news was fascinating, but excessive sensationalism led to alienation or indifference by the audience. In Taiwan, with concern towards the recent news media that operates in a tabloid news style, substantial deliberation must be given to determine the line between news and entertainment.

Keywords: animated news; viewers' attitudes; new media; news reporting style; sensationalism;

INTRODUCTION

Taiwanese tabloid Apple Daily did not gain fame until it turned the unusual celebrity news into a cartoon-like slice of animation. It all started on November 27, 2009, when the golf celebrity Tiger Woods was reported to have had an argument with his wife that led to a car crash outside the couple's Florida home. This breaking news soon captured the world's attention. Since no one had witnessed what had actually happened, millions of people followed the news from Western medias like CNN or FOX which broadcasted file footage of the golfer and his wife, until the Apple Daily's online version uploaded a 1.5-min-long digitally animated reenactment just hours after the incident. The news clip vividly created and simulated the possible details of the incident with cartoon-like animations showing Woods' wife smashing his car window with a golf club and ending with his collision with a tree. The tabloid's animated news quickly found a huge local and global audience but sent an unprecedented shock wave through the media industry.

A. *Background and Motivation*

Most communication scholars and the media industry do not welcome this fascinating type of news service and have asserted that simulated animated news severely blurred the lines between reporting and fiction (Beato, 2010). The Chairperson of the National Communications Commission (NCC) of Taiwan, Yun Peng, stated that "Animated news, by my definition, is not news" (Chen, 2009). The former NBC political correspondent Ken A. Bode commented that the Woods's animation news was not a reenactment, but an imagined creation. The Washington Post media critic Howard Kurtz claimed, "It did not look like journalism. It did not smell like journalism. It did not feel like journalism." Kurtz urged the Apple Daily not to use animation to create confusion between cartoons and actual news (Beato, 2010).

Animated news also provoked criticism from several local civic groups, regarding the sensationalism of the animated news which features the news in a cartoon-like and unserious way. They also accused the detailed simulations of criminal cases would incite crimes among the youth. The groups maintained that the news is not a drama and should not violate the human rights of the involved parties (Citizen Media Watch, 2009). After receiving continuous and strong protests from various communities, the Taipei City Government cited the Children and Youth Welfare Act, Article 30, Paragraph 12, which prohibits actions that "violate the provisions of media classification and provide or broadcast the children or youth with any publications, pictures, videotapes, films, compact discs, disks, electronic signals, games, software, Internet or other products that are harmful to physical or mental health," thereby fining the Apple Daily twice for a total of NT$1 million (US$33000). The government further mandated the censorship of the Apply Daily in school and public libraries (Lin, 2011).

Although the news presentation style created a strong backlash in Taiwan, the animated news production, which incorporated the use of 3D animation, narration, dubbed dialog, and sound effects, had attracted positive attention from some Western media sources and the public, and English subtitles had been added to several animated videos. Apple Daily began customizing animated news videos because of public demand. For example, Reuters requested a video depicting how environmental changes caused a reduction in the number of tuna, and the BBC Newsnight program requested a video that presented a caricature of the 2010 British election (Kaplan, 2010).

There are also assertions that animated news is a product of the technological revolution and will become a trend in news presentation. The year before Apple Daily introduced the animated news, a U.S. multimedia producer stated that in the current competitive environment, the media industry must address the changing consumer habits of news reading that has been effectuated by mobile phones. Thus, newspapers must be able to apply mobile phone features and provide newspaper videos to survive (Malvaney, 2009). Some scholars also pointed out that because of user demands for mobile phones and Internet TV, future news presentation should consider developing and adopting animations (Huang, 2003; Tsu, 2005).

B. *Research Questions*

Although the animated news has raised intense debates from the news media on journalistic ethics, press freedom, and social responsibility, public viewership has increased sharply. In the first few days,

the animated news clip of "Tiger Woods fought with his wife" on YouTube attracted over two million viewers. The Apple Daily produces about 20 animated news clips daily, and on average, each attracts several thousand views. Certain issues and topics have attracted over hundreds of thousands of viewers. Current debate on animated news is focused on the explicit content, unethical reporting practices, or concerns involving creating news for entertainment. This study has therefore investigated this phenomenon to understand the features of animated news that captivates the public, based on the perspective of viewing audiences. When compared to the traditional TV news, how are the memory and comprehension of the viewing audience affected when animation is used to present news events? In addition, what are the perceptions and attitudes of the viewers regarding this presentation style?

The research subjects of this study were 250 college students, who were raised in an era dominated by visual imagery subsequent to the technological revolution. They were asked to share and compare their experiences and attitudes after watching traditional television and animated news. In this study, the research subjects were shown news media employing different modes of presentation to explore the following research questions: (1) What presentation medium attracts increased attention: TV news or animated news? What qualities of each medium are captivating? (2) Which medium, TV news or animated news, provides audiences with an enhanced understanding of the news? What methods are used in each medium that improves the audience's understanding? (3) Which medium and presentation style enables the audience to remember the news events? Which parts of the broadcasted news did the audiences remember? (4) What are the younger people's perceptions and evaluations of the presentation style and practices of animated news, particularly regarding journalistic ethics and morality?

LITERATURE REVIEWS

A. *Shifts in Journalism Standards*

Nowadays, increasing commercial pressure and competition has impacted the news media industry by creating tension between information and entertainment (Faircloug, 1995); in other words, the media began placing more emphasis on the market and operating as a leisure industry, which resulted in the tabloidization of the news. Tabloid and entertainment news accommodating the general public preferences were not only limited to the print media, but extended to additional forms of media, including radio, television, and other broadcasting technology. This has now become a global trend, indicating that this type of news has been accepted worldwide and is now considered as part of the mainstream. However, researchers have strongly criticized the tabloidization of the news (Bagdikian, 2000; Bourdieu, 1998; Underwood & Stamm, 1992). British communications scholar McNair (1999) indicated that when the media, including newspapers and television, adopt commercialization and tabloidization to increase profits, news information is transformed into a commodity and results in a lack of professionalism, rigor, and depth in journalism. In addition, Bek (2004) contended that tabloidization ignores public interest and journalism ethics.

However, certain scholars have asserted that information and entertainment requirements can be satisfied through a compromise. Because delineating the complex boundary between information and entertainment is difficult, journalists do not always present news with the required gravity. Dahlgren

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(1995) stated that differing issues regarding news can be resolved from various viewpoints. The definition can be broadened to consider audience expectations and the metaphorical environment of news-related operations. Similar to numerous other types of products, news is the result of continuous selection during the production process, and is a part of an institutionalized environment regardless of whether its aim is to provide a public or commercial service (Su, 1995).

Moreover, contemporary news standards, such as objectivity, were based on the logic of written text (Shen, 2005). Consequently, television news based on visual images is often criticized for tabloidization (Huang, 2008; Niu, 2005). Costera Meijer (2003) and Ekstrom (2002) argued that previous standards for evaluating text-based news are unsuitable for image-based news such as television, and that a new set of logic and standards should be developed. With the advent of the Internet and mobile phones and a thriving visually oriented media environment, examining and assessing the role of animated news in contemporary media is necessary.

The Apple Daily launched an animated news service after acknowledging the technology integration trend and examining the news viewing habits of younger consumers. Websites and mobile phones, to which the younger generation is accustomed, were employed as platforms where news is reenacted through 3D animation that is complemented by photographs, interviews, and other reporting modes. Animated news differs from traditional audio-visual news (e.g., the TV) because it is not reported by a news anchor, but is presented using narration and dramatic background sound effects that vary according to the transitions and climax in the news scenario, which then increases the tension and watch-ability of an item. Animated news has survived in Taiwan's strongly competitive market, indicating that the viewing habits of the public have significantly changed, and by proving that the traditional standards and definition are rapidly shifting.

B. *Media Digitalization and News Production*

With the rise of animated news, the boundary between news and entertainment has become further blurred. The development of information as entertainment (i.e., infotainment) causes the adoption of soft topics as news content and highlights the importance of news presentation (Lilleker, 2006). The computer technological revolution and the digitalization and convergence of the media has continuously restructured and transformed the news products, which are then presented in different forms to attract viewer attention (Caldwell, 1995; Cottle & Ashton, 1999; Gester, 2003). News media must evolve with social development; apart from the active promotion of media digitalization, communication between user interfaces and the viewers is critical (Peddie, 2001).

With the development of media digitalization, the role of computer graphics (CGs) has become increasingly critical. To provide viewers with the latest, instantaneous, and most easily comprehensible news information, 2D graphic design and 3D computer animation for simulating characters or postures are integrated using editing techniques and post-production special effects, which are then practically portrayed throughout the presentation process (Lapham, 1995). Previous CGs were typically used to facilitate the viewer's comprehension, particularly news that did not contain visuals (video) or could not be realistically broadcast, such as disaster reports requiring simulation of a plane crash and traffic accidents, or complex issues including professional information, such as statistical charts, correlational diagrams, typhoon movement charts, and medical and

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engineering cross-sectional diagrams. However, recent intense competition in the news industry and a younger generation accustomed to using new technology has shifted the usage of computer technology in the news media from merely assisting the viewer's comprehension to emphasizing the enhancement of the imagery in their presentation through visual effects (Thussu, 2007).

Animated news has caused controversies because it employs animation to reenact the news scenes and to simulate the characters and scenarios, which renders it drastically different from the static, visually assistive news of the past.

C. *Sensationalistic News and Its Viewers*

With an evolving media environment, tabloid-like broadcasting styles have gradually appeared; for example, tabloid television refers to the transformation in electronic news presentation. This type of news broadcasting style usually emphasizes abundant and stimulating visuals, and sensationalism is viewed as the main ingredient in gossip-style news reporting. Media companies tend to focus on content that can easily induce physiological and psychological excitement in viewers (e.g., celebrity gossip and scandals), which is then produced using sensationalistic methods to stimulate viewer emotions and excitement and enhance viewer interest in the news report (Graber, 1994; Newhagen & Reeves, 1992; Shoemaker, 1996).

Sensationalism in the electronic media emphasizes the presentation of visual and audio cues. Colorful, large fonts or headlines that facilitate value assessment are two sensationalistic techniques employed in tabloid journalism (Schonbach, 2000). Brookes (2000) indicated that in sensationalistic news reports, visual stimulation is enhanced through the theatrical reconstruction of crime situations or the incorporation of pictures and animation during the broadcast. Grabe, Zhou and Barnett (2001) found that the sensationalistic techniques applied included the following: (1) using witness viewpoints to increase the viewers' sense of participation; (2) splitting the screen vertically to present at least two different views to enhance comparisons; and (3) employing substantial post-production, including audio (e.g., background music and sound effects) and visual (e.g., the integration of real and virtual scenarios and flashes) cues that draw the viewer's attention and establishes an intimacy with the viewers (Ekstrom, 2000).

When comparing the influence on viewers exerted by the tabloid news that extensively applies production techniques and that by traditional television news, the results showed that the tabloid news is more stimulating and draws more attention (Grabe et al., 2000). Previous research has also shown that sensationalistic news production not only elicits the viewer's engagement, but also more effectively reinforces the viewer's short-term memory and recall of the news content. Detenber, Simons, and Bennett (1998) used an animated and structural presentation of information for TV news and found that this presentation mode enhances viewer empathy, which in turn increases the comprehension of the content. Sensationalistic news topics with a coverage scope of crimes and conflicts, accidents and disasters, sex and scandals, or celebrities and entertainment, can more easily stimulate viewers and increase their levels of attention, news recognition, and recall (Gunter, 1987). Lang (2000) found that while watching TV, the audio (volume, tone, and music) and visual (shots, scene switching, editing, and lighting) cues enhance the short-term memory of viewers. Various studies have indicated that when watching TV, information production techniques (e.g., scene

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switching and editing) stimulate the auto-processing mechanism of the brain; consequently, the viewers allocate more consideration for the content, resulting in better memorization (Lang, Potter & Grabe, 2003).

However, numerous scholars contend that news using tabloid television techniques has an adverse effect. The stimulating images presented using sensationalistic techniques might have a deeper impact on the memory of the viewers but negatively affect the level of recall for the facts (Brosius, 1993; Newhagen & Reeves, 1992). Newhagen and Nass (1989) discovered that viewer assessments at the professionalism level of tabloid news are lower than those for non-sensationalistic news on politics, economy, and the military; education and culture, or medicine and lifestyle. In addition, Yeh (2008) stated that although viewers are intrigued by temporary visual effects, their reflections on news content and authenticity are reduced.

RESEARCH METHOD

Television and animated news are both a multimedia combination of speech, text, pictures and/or images, videos, and music. Apart from the differing proportions of media used, the main content of television news comprises of actual footage, with CGs used as an aid for text. By contrast, in animated news, animation plays the main role and 3D animation is used to simulate the characters and reenact the news scenarios. Transforming from a supporting role to the main character, animated news not only differs in presentation, but also directly impacts the logic of narration and the standard of the original news (Jiang, 2010). This study assessed viewer attention, comprehension, memory, and evaluation to analyze the differences in the participant's viewing experiences and related behaviors regarding the presentation methods of realistic reporting and animated simulation. Subsequently, the participants' perceptions toward animated news and their relevant implications were explored.

This study adopted the qualitative and quantitative methods and investigated four dimensions, including attention, memory, comprehension, and the attitudes of the young news viewers to compare their experiences after watching traditional television and animated news. Four news events, each with two different reporting forms, were selected for the participants to watch. The news items were: (1) a crime involving a con artist/seducer, (2) a train accident featuring a plumber as a hero, (3) a medical news item regarding how fish bones can become stuck in people's throats, and (4) a finance issue regarding the military, government employees, and teachers receiving a 3% raise in income, with the playing time being approximately 21 minutes.

Overall, 250 participants were recruited: 148 men and 102 women. Questionnaires were sent out and completed between May and October 2012. First, the participants completed the initial section of the questionnaire. Second, we randomly selected a feature presentation order for the four news items. In two of these items, animated news was used to present the two items first; subsequently, television news was used to present the two items. Conversely, the other two items were first presented by television news before showing the animated news items. After viewing the news items, the participants completed the second and third parts of the questionnaire. The number of valid questionnaires was 224.

A. *Quantitative Research Design*

The first part of the questionnaire contained items regarding the participant's demographic data and basic viewing behaviors, including viewing tools, frequency, types of news typically watched, and viewing motivations. The study also asked participants to provide their gender to understand how gender affected attitude differences toward news presentation styles. Items on the second part of the questionnaire are as follows.

(1) Compared with television news, the presentation style of animated news attracted my attention more.

(2) Compared with television news, the presentation style of animated news provided me with an increased understanding of the news content.

(3) Compared with television news, the presentation style of animated news enhanced my memory of the news; I remembered the content of the event.

(4) Compared with television news, the presentation style of animated news easily evoked an emotional response (e.g., laughter, disgust, nausea, or fear).

(5) I think that compared with television news, the presentation style of animated news violated news-reporting ethics.

The study adopted a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, to measure the attitudes of the participants regarding the differing news presentation styles. Lin (2011) asserted that in gendered experiences, because men frequently have contact with restricted content, they frequently did not notice the inappropriateness of sensationalism in the news presentation style. Conversely, because of the socialization criteria, women typically paid careful attention as to whether the content had violated any news-reporting ethics. Thus, this study assumed that compared with TV news, the women expressed increased emotional responses than the men toward the presentation style of animated news. Women believed that compared with TV news, animated news could easily violate the news-reporting ethics. This study adopted the Student t test to determine whether differences existed between the two groups.

B. *Qualitative Research Design*

This study selected one of the four news items and requested that the participants specifically compare the differences in the presentation styles. The third part of the questionnaire contained open-ended items and the items are as follows:

(1) Which presentation style attracted your attention more when reporting this news item? Please explain why.

(2) Which presentation style of this news item enhanced your memory of the content? Please recall the reported news content and identify the parts that you remember most clearly.

(3) Which presentation style of this item evoked a greater emotional response? Please explain precisely what actions caused this specific response (e.g., you liked it because it was funny, or resented it because it was obscene)

(4) Which presentation style of this item could easily violate news-reporting ethics? Please specifically explain the parts that violate the journalistic reporting ethics.

RESULTS

A. *Quantitative Research Results*

Regarding the viewing frequency of animated news, 9% of the participants had never watched animated news before this study. "Table I" showed approximately 38.8% watched animated news 1-2 days per week; this was considered a low-frequency viewing rate. 44.6% watched animated news 3-5 days per week; this was considered a medium-frequency viewing rate. Approximately 7% watched animated news 6-7 days a week; this was considered a high-frequency viewing rate. Only 12% indicated that they primarily used their mobile phones to watch animated news. Approximately 90% used computers to watch animated news.

Table I. Animated News Viewing Frequencies

Viewing Frequencies (days / per week)	Never Watched	Low Frequency (1-2)	Medium Frequency (3-5)	High Frequency (6-7)
Number of participants	21	87	100	16
Percentage	9.4%	38.8%	44.6%	7.1%

N=224

Excluding the participants who had never watched animated news, "Table II" showed more than half (52.7%) indicated that their most watched category was local news. Approximately 30% stated that they primarily watched entertainment news. Approximately 11% remarked they primarily watched daily life/health care news. Nine (3.49%) participants watched primarily domestic politics, military affairs, and finance-related news. However, no participants watched the international news.

Table II. Most Watched Animated News Categories

Most Watched News	Criminal	Entertain-ment	Life style / Health care	Political / Finance	Sports
Number of participants	107	58	22	9	7
Percentage	52.7%	28.6%	10.8%	4.4%	3.4%

N = 203

Regarding viewing motivations, approximately half (48%) of the participants reported that they watched animated news for entertainment and to occupy their time. Approximately 23% watched animated news to learn about events occurring in society. Less than 10% watched animated news because of their course work or job requirements.

When comparing the presentation styles of the animated news with that of the television news, 63% of the participants agreed that animated news easily attracted their attention, and the animation form also impressed them more. By contrast, less than half agreed that the presentation style of animated news improved their comprehension of the news item. More than 74% specified that viewing animated news evoked emotional responses, and 58.1% asserted that animated news could easily violate the news-reporting ethics.

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Table III. Attitudes toward TV News and Animated News

Attitudes of the Viewers toward Differing News Presentation Styles	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Total (%)
Animated news attracted my attention more than TV news	25 (11.2%)	116 (51.8%)	63.0%
Animated news improved my comprehension of the news item better than TV news	15 (6.7%)	90 (40.2%)	46.9%
Animated news impressed the participants more than TV news	28 (12.5%)	115 (51.3%)	63.8%
Animated news evoked emotional responses more than TV news.	38 (17.0%)	128 (57.1%)	74.1%
Animated news violated news ethics more than TV news	29 (13.0%)	101(45.1%)	58.1%

N =224

The original assumption of this study was that the male and female participant responses and attitudes on viewing animated news would coincide with socially constructed gender differences. The original assumption was that men primarily viewed animated news as entertainment and rarely noticed morality concerns. By contrast, female participants were assumed to frequently become concerned about the subsequent problems that animated simulations might cause society. However, the results showed that in regard as to whether animated news could easily evoke emotional responses from both genders, the average score of their attitudes was 3.7 for men and 3.86 for women. Concerning whether animated news can easily violate the news reporting ethics, the average scores were 3.67 for men and 3.52 for women. These numbers indicated that no significant differences were found between the male and female viewers. Standard deviation results showed that when men responded to these two variables, the result indicated a higher discrete degree than that responded by women.

Furthermore, the study used a t test to examine the differences between the male and female groups. Based on the t test and a .05 level of significance (alpha value), the statistical value t 1.68 must be greater than 165. The results indicated that concerning whether animated news can easily evoke emotional responses and violate the news reporting ethics, the t 168 value was -.97 for men and .86 for women. These values demonstrated that the no significant differences existed between the two groups.

Table IV. Differences of Male and Female Attitudes towards Animated News

Attitudes	Animated news easily evoked emotional responses		Animated news easily violated news reporting ethics	
Gender	Average score	Standard deviation (SD)	Average score	Standard deviation (SD)
Male	3.72	0.91	3.67	0.76
Female	3.86	0.92	3.54	0.83

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B. *Results of Qualitative Analysis*

1) *Receiving a Vicarious Pleasure Out of Watching*

The results showed that animated news employs various computer post-production techniques, both animated and static, to elicit the viewer's interest through exaggerated headlines, colorful photographs, theatrical simulated scenarios, confrontational dialogue between characters, and sudden and tension-building sound effects. Most importantly, it switches different angles of view along with the news scenario to produce perceptions of immersion, and often incorporates the first-person perspective to offer audiences such vicarious pleasure. Consequently, the younger viewers' immediate attractions are satisfied. Because the average visual focus time of younger viewers when reading online news is half a minute, the fascinating effects of animated news also achieve a longer period of viewing focus, when compared to TV news. The results also showed that although some participants noticed that the hyper-realistic simulated details might be inappropriate; however, accustomed to a high level of sensory stimulation, the younger generation find animated news appealing and are unable to break free from this mode of viewing.

2) *Using Computer Graphics to Simplify Content and Facilitate Comprehension*

With the development of media digitalization, tables, charts, or statistical diagrams are often used to facilitate the viewers' understanding of the news items. But when computer animation is employed in the reporting, such as to reenact an unseen news scene or to simulate characters sometimes in an offensive way, it has raised serious debate. However, the participants' responses showed that the often story-like scenario allowed them to easily follow the storyline and obtain a clearer understanding of the content, particularly for more professional issues in science, medicine, or technology. In the professional-related animated news, simple schematic diagrams, flow charts, or a simulated explanation of actual situations are presented to simplify the complex data and technical jargon, which greatly improves the viewers' understanding and cognition of the item. Also, for issues that people do not have any immediate interests in, such as legislation, financial, or policy making topics, animated news uses humorous and vivid animation, cartoon-like simulation, and accented narration, as well as special sound effects to attract the viewers' attention. Not only do these methods induce viewer empathy, but also create a sense of intimacy with the public; consequently, they are more willing to watch the report to completion.

3) *Memorize Only Trivial Details through Frivolity and Parody*

For crime and entertainment news, animated news emphasizes explicit imagery and employs dramatic, confrontational, and entertaining techniques to highlight selected sensational details. When asked to recall the most impressive news content in the presented animated news, the participants stated the first picture or frame that occurred were a stimulating picture or a hilarious simulation scene; for example, the scene mocking the accent of a suspect, or a wolf howling at the moon when the criminal committed rape and sexual assault at night. However, these comical methods of expression caused the viewers to only remember trivialities of the case reported. In other words, the excessive visual or audio stimulating techniques used by animated news could mislead the viewers and reduce their overall awareness and memory of the content.

4) The Loss of Journalistic Ethics through Sensationalism

Animated news driven by sensationalism uses bright colors and provocative images to provide visual stimulation. Even though attracting the younger generation and receiving increased viewer ratings, animated news continues to undergo criticisms for violating journalistic ethics according to the mainstream ideology of journalistic professionalism. In the case of specific news involving tragedies or desperate situations (e.g., murders, sexual assault, and death), animated news portrays through a fixed mode (e.g., simulated accents and special sound effects) and employs gore, eroticism, confrontations, grief, and other clichéd details. This method of excessive sensory stimulation not only diverts the focus of the news content, but also lacks journalistic professionalism and ethicality. Simply stated, the viewers could become traumatized from the viewing experience or form antipathy, leading to a desensitized society.

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to understand the viewing experiences, attitudes, and responses of the younger generation toward news reporting using computer animation. Most research participants stated that the animated news provided a more relaxed and light-hearted way of viewing the news. This influence was especially evident for dull topics or specialized news; in this case, to gain the viewers' attention and to improve their comprehension are more likely compared to the standardized broadcasting methods applied in traditional television. It was also found that animated news often includes public opinions and presents data by conducting public surveys, thereby creating resonance with the viewers and enabling them to identify with the issue reported.

Animated news is presented through computer animation, which is a product of the technological innovation and societal trends. In this competitive media environment, the development of a new type of media technology is inevitable, and its quality will depend on the ability to attract viewers and elicit their full engagement. When considering that Apple Daily's animated news deploys a behind-the-scenes team of over 300 people, and whether it attracts viewers through animated simulation or possesses high production efficiency, the brand new innovation is indeed considered as a breakthrough in news media development. Nevertheless, because animated news employs frivolities and parodies, the over-stimulating images or sometimes offensive and crude ways of simulation and narration of the news events, resulted in the viewers only remembering trivialities or images with shock value; consequently, the overall awareness and memory is thereby reduced.

Close to two thirds of the research participants also stated that watching animated news resulted in emotional discomfort caused by the excessive realism, gore, and violence in the simulation. A number of viewers expressed concerns that animated news violates the ethics of journalistic professionalism and might cause additional harm to the involved parties of the events. Although being recognized that animated news inappropriately presents specific topics, it still possesses a certain degree of fascination for younger viewers. Scholars have expressed concerns that the overly explicit techniques employed do not require viewers to think or react; therefore, although viewing is effortless, viewers lack genuine involvement in the actual issues and no longer have empathy for human tragedies.

Baudrillard (2003) indicated that through the aid of technology, the media are able to satisfy the viewer's desires by exaggerating the elements of violence and human suffering; however, more of these elements generate a weaker impact on the viewers, and the focus is shifted towards visual details and sound effects. The results of this study supported this point of view: Animated news employs technology and animated simulation to impress the viewers; nonetheless, if violent and sexually explicit images become the focus, viewers are unable to understand the authenticity. Thus, viewers become distanced from and desensitized to the facts.

The influence of animated news should not rely on its unique presentation methods but in the content presented. In other words, although animation draws the viewer's attention towards the news, this fascinated news production requires an issue or viewpoint, like the humor must have a theme. Animated news should increase the editorial level of the news; and indeed, these techniques should serve to make people think, not to make people laugh. In conclusion, the novel presentation mode of animated news is highly appealing; nevertheless, with the increasing tabloidization of Taiwan's news media, how to appropriately apply new technology methods and modes to portray the news, and how the news media should define the boundary between the news and entertainment, are issues requiring strong consideration and introspection.

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Table I. Animated News Viewing Frequencies

Viewing Frequencies (days / per week)	Never Watched	Low Frequency (1-2)	Medium Frequency (3-5)	High Frequency (6-7)
Number of participants	21	87	100	16
Percentage	9.4%	38.8%	44.6%	7.1%

N=224

Table II. Most Watched Animated News Categories

Most Watched News	Criminal	Entertain-ment	Life style / Health care	Political / Finance	Sports
Number of participants	107	58	22	9	7
Percentage	52.7%	28.6%	10.8%	4.4%	3.4%

N = 203

Table III. Attitudes toward TV News and Animated News

Attitudes of the Viewers toward Differing News Presentation Styles	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Total (%)
Animated news attracted my attention more than TV news	25 (11.2%)	116 (51.8%)	63.0%
Animated news improved my comprehension of the news item better than TV news	15 (6.7%)	90 (40.2%)	46.9%
Animated news impressed the participants more than TV news	28 (12.5%)	115 (51.3%)	63.8%
Animated news evoked emotional responses more than TV news.	38 (17.0%)	128 (57.1%)	74.1%
Animated news violated news ethics more than TV news	29 (13.0%)	101(45.1%)	58.1%

N = 224

Table IV. Differences of Male and Female Attitudes towards Animated News

Attitudes	Animated news easily evoked emotional responses		Animated news easily violated news reporting ethics	
Gender	Average score	Standard deviation (SD)	Average score	Standard deviation (SD)
Male	3.72	0.91	3.67	0.76
Female	3.86	0.92	3.54	0.83