

Origin and Misunderstanding of the Concept of “VR News”

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Keywords: VR news, virtual, authenticity, misreading

Abstract. The emergence of VR news has received great attention from the news industry and academic circles. As a hot topic of concern to the industry and academia, "VR News" has not yet been defined. Many users have misused of its concepts. This paper explores the origin of “VR News”, analyzes the earliest VR reports, finally discusses the misuse the concept of "VR News" and explained the misunderstanding phenomenon.

1. Analysis of VR News and Its Concept

1.1 What is "VR News"?

VR is the abbreviation of Virtual Reality, which was first proposed by American VPL company founder Jaron Lanier. He believes that virtual reality is " It artificially creates a sensory experience for the audience, such as sight, touch, hearing, smell, etc., so that the audience has a place to feel, feel the same experience, and create a sense of immersion." ^[1]Currently we talk The VR news that comes to it mainly refers to the new form of news presented by the combination of VR technology and news reports. It can restore the field of the event, break through the limitations of time and space, and reproduce the news event itself in a complete and vivid way, providing the experience of the audience with a sense of presence, bringing tremendous changes to the rigid news reporting model.

Wittgenstein believes that "the boundary of language is the boundary of the world", ^[2] and the clear definition of the concept of "VR News" can more fully understand the scope and boundaries of VR news research. At present, the production of VR news is still in its infancy, and the concept expression and deduction are more than substantive content. Therefore, the concept of VR news has been widely used and misused in the course of use. For example, in news reports, most of the news reports named after “VR News” are 360° panoramic reports. 360° panoramic reports are three-dimensional and multi-dimensional displays of the event scene, which should belong to the category of multimedia reports, and the nature of VR news is different.

1.2 "VR News" production process

VR News needs to construct a three-dimensional simulation scene to restore and simulate the events at that time. Its essence is to use technology to create and depict "virtual scenes", placing users in an event scene. The production process requires three steps:

Collection of original material: Collect and record real scenes in 360° panoramic mode as much as possible, including event subject characters, event occurrences, surrounding environmental factors, all sounds emitted in the scene, pictures, audio, and video. It is worth noting that the 360° panoramic mode record takes all the material needed to capture the virtual scene from the viewpoint, which ensures that the viewer can move freely while experiencing VR news, while the 360° panoramic report can only be rotated in place.

Scene Reconstruction: Reconstruct the virtual environment using materials, create models to supplement the lack of materials, accurately restore event scenarios, and represent the original state of the event. The scene reappears to create a spatial narrative scene with a strong sense of presence, impact and authenticity.

VR device viewing to get the live experience: Track the user's field of vision through VR devices such as Google Cardboard, HTC Vice, Oculus, etc., and mobilize the whole-body perception function to make people feel on live.

The current VR news is mainly divided into two types. One is that the reporter collects the material on the spot at the same time, and the report is completed through the supplementary processing of the scene and the event in the later stage, such as NTY VR's "The Man on the Tower", which records the process of the explorer, the photographer Jimmy Chin climbing the New World Trade Center in New York. The other is a virtual restore of an event that has occurred, simulating and restoring the event based on a description of the facts that have occurred. NTY VR "Kia" is a virtual restoration of a shooting incident in South Carolina, where a man named Williams shot his ex-girlfriend Kiya.

2. The beginning of "VR News": a case of VR news works

A senior researcher at the University of Southern California School of Journalism and Communication, known as the "virtual reality godmother", Nonny de la Pena, is a pioneer in VR news reporting. She first tried to introduce VR technology into news reports. In 2012, Nonny de la Pena produced the first piece of VR news, *The Hungry Los Angeles*. The work reported an incident in which a diabetic who was faint when waiting in line at the food facility because he failed to get food in time. Based on the pictures and audio materials at the time, she used the virtual person to reconstruct the scene at the time, restore the event process, and make a VR report news.

This work eventually appeared in the 2012 Sundance Film Festival, this is the first piece of VR news. Although through the periphery of the VR device, the audience can see that they are actually in a laboratory, but De La Pena is surprised that all the people watching are kneeling on the ground, trying to comfort the patient, providing some kind of Help, they are frustrated with their incompetence. Although the VR report has resonated with the audience, De la Pena emphasizes that the audience did not forget their true situation when they experienced VR but felt that they were in two scenes at the same time. She calls this feeling "duality of presence." and believes that "double presence" is the reason why the audience integrates feelings into the VR scene.^[3]

3. The Misunderstanding of VR News Concept

3.1 360° panorama report is not "VR News"

When talking about VR news in China, VR news is often confused with 360° panoramic news. The 360° panoramic report means that multiple cameras are bound according to a certain preset manner, videos of various orientations can be recorded, and these videos are connected to the camera's memory card, which are settled into continuous pictures by software, and finally the pictures of various angles are integrated into a panorama for making panoramic videos.

By the end of 2019, CCTV News announced twenty-four reports of VR experience. It is worth noting that all the news is taken in 360° panoramic video mode, which is not VR news. For instance, *VR experience: CCTV reporter takes you back to the post-war Syrian Gail Yatin* (2016.7.1) records of the local scene of Gail Yatin after three months of recovery by the Syrian government. Emilio Garcia Ruiz, director of digital news at the Washington Post, called for a correct understanding of

the difference between 360° panoramic video and VR news. 360° panoramic video news can be completed with a normal camera. Its main function is to capture and automatically compose a panoramic image.

3.2 The essence of "VR News" is "virtual", not truth

The authenticity and objectivity of the news is the ultimate aim pursued by journalists and the public. Every technological innovation makes the audience cheer the news authenticity. They believe that the pictures will not tell lies, the videos will not tell lies, thus creating the illusion of "technical utopia", which believes that the development of technology will inevitably bring an objective, real and democratic world. The VR news is popular because the industry and the audience believe that the essence of VR news is close to the real sense of the scene. It breaks the boundary with the event and gives the audience a sense of immersion, this make the audience cheer this type of news. However, the definition of Virtual Reality itself is the meaning of virtual reality and mimetic reality. The traditional media reports selection and processing of news and information, re-structuring to remind people of the environment and construct a mimetic environment. In contrast, VR news "constructs" rather than "choose" the environment^[4].

3.3 "VR News" needs to be produced and cannot be synchronized.

Numerous news uses the words "VR news, simultaneous reports, major breaking news" as the title, and binds VR news with synchronized reports to give the audience the illusion of immersiveness. Here is a stealing of the VR news concept, they equate it with 360° panorama coverage. For example, on December 22, 2015, the *Xinhua News Agency's Xinhua All-Media Headlines* pushed *Virtual Reality, Bringing You to Visit Shenzhen Night Search and Rescue Scene* to watch conducting search and rescue operations, and commented the news: "The news agency uses VR technology in major breaking reports, which is the first time in China." ^[5] Live news broadcast using 360° panoramic reports and no scene reconstruction which cannot be called VR news, and VR news is paradoxical because constructed attributes and broadcast simultaneously cannot get at same time.

3.4 "VR News" does not apply to most news

The Associated Press pointed out that one of the important lessons they learned from the exploration of VR news was the need to understand when it was not appropriate to use virtual reality technology. ^[6] News is a report of recent facts. VR news has virtual and delayed attributes, so it is not suitable for general city news, social news, political trends, etc. Such news can be quickly communicated to the audience. At the same time, due to the huge cost of VR news production, the unclear profit model and the high demand for viewer equipment leads the popularity of VR news to its bottleneck.

4. Conclusion

In summary, the author believes that VR news actually refers to the combination of VR technology and news reports. It requires the staff to collect the original news material to simulate the scene and reconstruct the virtual environment through the computer. Finally, the audience uses the VR device to obtain the event Experience. So, the 360° panorama is not VR news. At the same time, because the essence of VR news is virtual, VR news can't be live broadcast, it takes time to construct and produce events. These characteristics determine that VR news is not suitable for most news.

Acknowledgements

This article is based on a study first reported in the *Media*.2017 (24):51-53.

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