From Human Anchors to AI Anchors: A Review of Technology, Ethics, and Audience Response in Audiovisual Media Transformation

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Abstract

This review investigates the development and influence of AI anchors in the broadcasting sector, focusing on their significance, theoretical underpinnings, and practical applications. It explores the shift from traditional human presenters to AI-driven systems, with attention to advancements in natural language processing, speech technology, and audience interaction. The findings suggest that while AI anchors improve efficiency and allow for tailored content delivery, they encounter challenges in replicating the emotional resonance of human hosts. The study also highlights existing gaps in research, particularly in areas such as ethical concerns, audience attitudes, and cultural contexts. Recommendations for future studies include deepening the exploration of AI anchors' roles in the media landscape, advocating for an integrated approach that combines the unique advantages of AI and human broadcasters.

1.Introduction

  Broadcasting has already been revolutionized by Artificial intelligence (AI).During the past decade, the rise of AI generated virtual anchors has opened the door to bringing new and innovative ways to deliver news to audiences.AI anchors built with natural language processing, machine learning, and speech synthesis technologies help these anchors appear human like as news presenters.The words used to describe this technological shift span from efficiency to concern over emotional engagement and authenticity in broadcasting as a result of automated systems.

  But so far there is no good integrated research on AI anchors: studies mostly address just one aspect, whether that's progress in technology or audience perceptions.The lack of such a review,

which synthesizes these findings, ascribe the relevant challenges, and propose future research directions, is felt.This paper attempts to fill up this gap by looking at the development, application and effect of AI anchors in the media broadcasting.The review through synthesis of existing literature aims to ascertain critical themes such as the weighing of automated systems with human creativity, and ethical considerations, as well as evolving expectations of audience in the digital info.This paper not only brings current trends into focus but also identifies research gaps towards holistic understanding of AI anchors and how they will reshape the broadcasting landscape.

2. Objectives and Importance of the Study

As we enter the era of AI anchors, the use of AI anchor technology for media broadcasting is a big milestone as it replaces traditional human presenters with innovative AI systems. Rapid development of AI systems, especially natural language processing, machine learning, and speech synthesis (Wang & Zhu, 2021), have propelled this transformation. AI anchors make possible tasks that were traditionally done by human broadcasters.

An AI anchor also made its debut at the 2018 World Internet of Things Conference, represented by Sogou and Xinhua with their 'virtual anchor' ('Sogou, Xinhua virtual anchor heralds AI era,' 30, 2018). Besides, this also marked a first step towards personalizing broadcasting content, engaging with audiences actively and reporting round the clock (Analytics Insight, 2023).

However, the emergence of AI anchors is not solely a technological win as it is a manifestation of similar trends in digital transformation widespread in media industries-led by the need for automated systems to satisfy an exponentially expanding demand for real time, customized content (Xperity, 2023). Combining advanced algorithms and the best in speech and image synthesis, AI anchors are redefining how information is supplied. We argue that their capacity to assimilate a massive amount of data and produce content quickly makes them an attractive tool in high pressure, dynamic environments such as live newsrooms.

This transformation consequently raises questions on how this balance must be struck between efficiency and authenticity, and from a cultural and ethical perspective, replaces human broadcasters with AI systems (AI Reporter, 2023). These innovations deliver unquestionable advantages, but limitations, from emotional expression and contextual adaptability, immediately remind us that the irreplaceable qualities of human broadcasters and anchors are in highest demand when at the helm. In fact, these aspects will be crucial to determining how the integration of future AI anchors into the broadcasting landscape will evolve in the coming years. AI anchors integration is redefining the broadcasting landscape, forcing us to rethink our human anchors roles in the publishing, and delivering the news (Yang, 2021).

AI anchors are not restricted to automated systems — they're a new paradigm for how we pass along and consume news. Human anchors also struggle to manage a 24/7 news cycle, while the systems are able to rapidly process and present information, and to update users in a timely manner and accommodate the needs of a 24/7 news cycle. (China Daily, 2018) Moreover, AI anchors also have the capacity to customize content delivery based on the audience's preferences thus increasing audience engagement and satisfaction (Analytics Insight, 2023). Hu (2021) pointed out that the rising AI anchors brought more pressure on traditional broadcasters to adopt evolved strategies to stay competitive in the ever digital, ever automated environment.

This technological development of AI anchors brings about motivation to compare them to their human counterparts in order to understand the more general implications of this development for the media. While AI anchors have their advantages (consistency, efficiency, no fatigue), they too are tied to limitations (not emotional engagement and understanding of human communication)

(Xperity, 2023). The goal of this research is to strike a balance between AI and human anchors by finding the (relative) strengths and weaknesses of each, in order to explore the ways in which they can (perhaps) work together. And these kinds of approaches are necessary to truly understand how AI can bridge the gap between human ability and also provide something more without doing it all by itself, to act as a supplement, and you know, really to improve the quality of broadcast media. (AI Reporter, 2023)

More broadly, this study aims to lay out the trajectory of AI anchor technology in terms of both present use and future possibilities for the broadcasting arena, in order to offer key insights for media institutions, technologists and researchers alike.

3. Theoretical Framework and Key Concepts

Automated anchor technology has emerged and the call for a deeper examination of its fundamental theories and fundamental lexicon of the media broadcasting is nearly unbeatable. AI aided by machine learning developed these automated anchors which are programmed to do the job human broadcasters would normally do, such as putting out the news and spreading information. In this section, we present a detailed view of the definitions and frameworks that help frame the interplay between automated and human anchors, as well as their respective roles and the potential to work together in a changing media environment.

3.1 Definitions of AI Anchors

AI anchors are automatically 'anchored' systems that deploy natural language processing, voice synthesis and visual rendering technologies to provide news and information in a way analogues to human anchors. In using voice synthesis technology to create news audio from text, and integrating image technology to add 'AI avatar' news broadcasting, while both using a streamlined creative process, these AI anchors solve the central problem of news broadcasting: how to bring trusted news audio to users without the complications of running a news organization. The technological components of this definition are what make AI anchors effective in a broadcasting environment.

Further, Wang and Zhu (2021) argue that AI anchors function as a way to bridge the gap between news production processes speed and quality by enabling fast creation of content while keeping it of consistent quality. According to Xperity (2023), advances in deep learning have empowered AI systems to respond to varied broadcasting styles and are increasingly versatile media organization tools. However, true to the essence of human communication, AI anchors still cannot perfectly replicate emotional depth, and cultural nuances (Hu, 2021).

3.2 Interaction Frameworks

This interaction can be hashed out through various theoretical frameworks between AI anchors and human anchors. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) posits that how well the users accept the technology depends on the users' perceived ease of use (perceived usefulness). More broadly, audience acceptance of AI anchors can be attributed to their effectiveness in doing what human anchors do: deliver news. This is demonstrated in Tsafarakis, Kokotas, and Pantouvakis (2017) that customer satisfaction is a good basis for service quality and can be used to compare audience satisfaction with AI anchors. Additionally, Venkatesh and Davis (2000) extend the TAM model by including the external factors of the technology trust and social influence in them who have a role to play in further influencing adoption of AI anchors and has further value in assessing if and how AI anchors will be adopted.

In addition, Media Richness Theory also provides another appropriate framework for study based on the hypothesis that the richer the medium, the more effective will be the communication (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Possibly, the augments of AI anchors through being capable of conveying the information in a visually engaging format and adapt according to viewer preferences can allow for higher engagement than traditionally. This theory was later further validated by Dennis and Kinney (1998) who further stressed the role feedback and contextual cues can play and are potentially being replicated by interactive and adaptive features of AI anchors. The implications of this framework extend beyond efficient delivery of content to include the potential for AI anchors to bring both creativity and new presentation styles that enable the enrichment of the viewer experience.

3.3 Emotional Engagement and Audience Perception

Human anchors sometimes have a defining feature that props them apart from their automated counterparts — an ability to emotionally engage audiences. Unlike traditional human anchors, which tend to create emotional expressions showing rapport with viewers and have a great impact on audience perception and trust (Wang & Li, 2020), humanoid characters are less human like. On the other hand, automated anchors, while efficient, often lack the fine degree of emotional simplicity that is a key factor in building the spirit of relatability (Hu, 2021). As a result, debates have arisen on whether they are able to really make a connection with their audience.

The good news is that tools are getting better at addressing this challenge, however. To make such automated systems resonate better with viewers, recent developments in speech synthesis have allowed automated systems to produce voices with different tones to mimic emotions (Murf.ai, 2023). Kim, Park, and Lee (2022) provide further research in to how emotion recognition and adaptive response mechanisms could enhance the engagement between these systems and audiences. The innovations that these innovations can carve out a future for automatic anchoring to rendezvous with the emotional depth of the human anchor to enhance viewer satisfaction and confidence.

In this way, the discussion of automated anchor technology presents in general terms, terms that define how they function, models that define the acceptance of the audience, and aspects of emotional engagement that make them unlike human broadcasters. Such frameworks are important as these technologies become more and more technologically advanced, allowing for work as a structure to evaluate them as well to understand the impact they will have across society as a whole.

4. Literature Review

4.1 AI Anchor Technology Development

In recent years, progress towards the development of automated anchor processes has been remarkable for the addition of synthetic and automated processes. As evidenced in broadcasting, ethical challenges and risks with these technologies have received increasing attention, in accordance with growing concern for their societal implications. Text to speech (TTS) technology is one of the most critical advancements however, as these devices are effectively transforming written content into speech, sounding exactly as you would or you'd like to when you hear. Hu, Li, and Wang (2021) stress that one of the roles of this innovation has been to raise the quality of automated anchors, and that natural sounding communication is necessary to make sure that audience will be receptive.

Li (2004) further points out that such systems' effectiveness and acceptance are subject to factors such as audience preferences and the fast rate of progression of technology. Automated anchors evolved from simple automated system to more advanced methods, such as deep learning and real time data adaptation. They can now optimize their presentations dynamically, adapting their presentations in response to viewer feedback and, most importantly, context to foster more interesting interactions. That evolution tracks broader movements in the media industry to make systems responsive to and interact with humans in ways that are human-like and closer to fans.

Furthermore, recent research gives insight into developments underway in this field. For example, Wang and Li (2023) cover how emotion recognition technologies have enabled automated anchors to have even greater rapport with audiences. Like in Chen, Zhao, and Xu (2023), Chen et al. (2023) examine how deep learning makes automated anchors more adaptable and responsive to quickly changing broadcast environments.

4.2 Comparison Between AI Anchors and Human Anchors

By comparing AI anchors with human anchors, we show similarities and differences in the performance of AI anchors, audience perception, and emotional engagement of them. Automated anchors are seen by Yu and Wu (2022) as this has low operational costs, is suitable to a wide selection of applications and provides efficient delivery. Those are strengths, and yet they tend to fail to deliver the emotional depth and personal rapport that human anchors have become famous for. Like Oyedokun (2023) did, I also discovered that information can be effectively conveyed by automated anchors, but audiences do conceive them less authentic and relatable to human broadcasters.

Bearing on the new technology and automation–virtual reality (Zheng and Sun 2023; for more detail on the further refinements of the process that is underway), automated anchors are presently not correctly enabled to make emotional connections with viewers, and only to a limited degree. Because automated anchors are compared against human standards, particularly with respect to expressiveness and emphaticness, this shift in preference happens due to changes in audience expectations. Combined, these result in the conclusion of these studies that while automated anchors can reproduce a handful of properties related to human performance, there remain an enormous difference in their capacity to engage an audience emotionally or to generate strong network ties.

4.3 Application Prospects of AI Anchors

Obviously the application prospects of AI anchors are quite vast and they apply in different sections like news broadcasting, entertainment, and education. Yao (2023) points out that AI anchors have effectively been used by the big media outlets as their presence proves their ability to switch up the way content is delivered and imbedded with audience interaction in broadcasting. AI anchors are flexible enough to allow rapid content generation, customized presentations and real time interaction with audiences, which make them a great investment for media organizations wanting to make operations more efficient.

AI anchors can be used as engaging guides for learners in the educational sector, presenting useful content in a way that adjusts to a learner's style. This important adaptability becomes especially salient in the era of media convergence, where personalized content delivery has become a central notion (Smith & Brown, 2023). Using AI anchors in entertainment spaces likewise presents new possibilities for interactive storytelling and immersive experiences, possibly creating new ways of engaging with an audience.

Overall AI anchor technology has immense potential for shaping and impacting the media

broadcast domain by way of providing new avenues for engagement and at the same time posing challenges that must be resolved in order to effectively and acceptably take advantage of its abilities across various segments.

4.4 Summary of Major Findings Key Discoveries

Analyses of the literature on AI anchors show that they achieve significant results in their efficiency, effectiveness, and audience engagement. According to Liu (2021), both this rise in AI technology, and the attendant challenges to human anchors to this, has brought about significant changes to the media broadcasting. The fact is that AI anchors are excellent at carrying out what historically have been human purviews, with the caution that they may not sufficiently emotionally affect audiences.

Moreover, Liu, Zhang, and Chen (2023) conducted controlled experiments to study retention in news memory by viewers viewing news on AI and human anchors. Their results suggest that AI anchors lead to poorer memory retention than human anchors, at least in part, because of the lack of social cues that aid in audience connection. This indicates that while AI anchors are quick to deliver content, there seems to be great room for these anchors to spike up the emotional engagement part.

The functionality of AI anchors hinges on synthetic speech technology explored by Huang, Lin and Zhao (2002). Improvements in voice synthesis have made the clarity and appeal of AI generated speech better, they saw, making it more acceptable to the audience. Likewise, Wang (2013) argues that screens of technology have been adapting to AI anchors, like, the more technology develops the more AI anchors are going to serve as audience friendly, provided interactivity is the centerpiece.

In general, the explanations of efficiency and technological capabilities of AI anchors leave one little impression, but their reliability in audience engagement is still a big question mark in terms of emotional engagements and memory retention are better served by human anchors.

4.5 Consistency and Variability in Major Findings

A careful analysis of the literature demonstrates that the performance of AI anchors has been the object of both consistency and variation in the results. For example the issue of audience engagement continues to occupy significant ground. As shown by studies like Liu, Zhang, and Chen (2023), studies report consistently that AI anchors have difficulty increasing emotional engagement compared to their human counterparts. Yet, contrary to the previous point, Xu (2023) suggests that as AI technology advances, it is increasingly challenging audience perceptions which are, at a minimum, favorable to the advancements of AI technology.

Further depth is provided by Wu (2022), particularly regarding the ethical dimensions of AI anchors in relation to the reliability and accuracy of AI generated content. As a growing wave of attention from the public about the role AI plays in media, the study brings to light potential risks of misinformation and an inability to root out fake news. The variability of these findings emphasizes the difficulty of trying to parse audience reception and the interplay of AI and broadcasting more generally.

Moreover, Dong (2023) also explores the qualities of the aesthetic deployments of the AI anchor delivery, and finds it is a mixed reception. Some audiences appreciate the ideal clarity and consistency in AI generated presentations, others favor the dictional nuances of human speaking. What this shows is that these technical advancements are not reaching audiences and are met with resistance; with these divergent opinions it is clear that expectations, and the context they emerge within, have an overpowering effect on audience acceptance of AI anchors.

Finally, while much of the literature agrees that changes in technology and the potential of AI are progressing, the specifics of interaction and ethics are a study in complexity. The findings also highlight that there is a need for further research to investigate how well AI anchors can strike a balance between a technological efficiency with high emotional resonance and ethical integrity.

5. Research Trends and Gaps

As with other aspects of AI systems and media technologies, research on automated anchors is moving fast. In recent years there has been an emerging interest in understanding the impact of automated anchors across domains including news broadcasting, entertainment, and education. By introducing these anchors, Xu and Ma (2022) argue that this is a monumental shift in the media industry that has led traditional broadcasting to find ways to be more automated and interactive with the expectation of a technologically savvy audience. This is becoming an increasingly important need to mainstream media to merge automated systems for enhancing audience engagement.

While there have been a number of advances in bringing ethical considerations and audience perception of automated anchors, there are gaps that still remain to be addressed. Cao, Huang (2023) argue that it is important to study the effects of human AI joint self disclosure and privacy and highlight that users' disclosed information to AI is not always reciprocated in a common and emotional manner. This shows a disconnect that needs deeper investigation, as we ask how automated anchors can create emotional interactions without losing user trust or its attendant privacy.

Additionally, automated anchors' cultural and aesthetic dimensions are underexplored. Zhu and Zhong (2023) analyze the historial importance of voice and language in media but fail to explore the effects associated with reshaping these cultural narratives via automated content. The design and presentation criteria for automated anchors may give rise to a special area of research concerning audience reception and trust.

Finally, Yan (2021) further questions whether human presenters should continue to be represented on news broadcasts given some of its challenges that accomplish that purpose. The further study of how changing roles of human and automated anchors are taking form based on audience preferences and expectations is an invitation.

Pramamente, the interest in automated anchor technology is promoted by its capacity, but the questions related to ethics, emotions and culture are still non resolved. Future work should investigate these aspects in further detail, particularly as automated anchors interact with their audiences through more subtle and complex systems, and with broader consequences for society.

6. Limitations of Current Research

While AI anchors research is valuable, it has a few limitations that are worth critical examination. These constraints can be broken down broadly into methodological, biases inherent in the studies as well as the rapid evolution of AI technology itself.

Qualitative analyses of the majority of the studies on AI anchors can be said to be many and without much robust quantitative validation. For instance, Wang (2022) praises the need of qualitative methods of understanding AI anchor technology but does not offer empirical data to corroborate audience engagement and content efficacy. For example, Chiodino, Smith, and Taylor (2020) also study the dynamic production of multimedia content, but its real world AK's performance is not well quantified. The reliance on qualitative assessment renders

generalizability of findings and the lack of availability of standard metrics for evaluating AI anchor performance.

There is also another limitation arising from existence of potential biases in existing studies. Wu, Zhang and others (2022) open up for AI anchors transformative possibilities but their optimistic viewpoint might ignore problems such as ethical issues and viewer skepticism in traditional media environment. As in Ge and Fu (2023), the ethical consideration of AI anchors is also addressed; however, the implications of these technologies on audience trust and credibility in media are not further explored. However, such biases could lead to the misinformed understanding of broader AI anchor impact on the society.

Second, the rapid advancement of AI technology makes existing research irrelevant. Even a couple of years back, the studies conducted would largely not be a reflection of current AI anchor's capablilities with the advent of synthesis, automated systems, and even adaptablity. With this dynamic nature of AI technology, research must continue to update continuously to make sure AI's findings are still applicable in a rapidly changing field.

Overall, research on AI anchors provides useful understanding of their capabilities and difficulties, however, there are many problems to be solved. More rigorous methodologies, attempts to mitigate biases, and staying as 'relevant' as possible into the AI future are just some of the steps future studies can employ. A better understanding of how AI anchors are part of modern media will come from addressing these issues.

7. Future Research Directions

Several gaps exist in the current literature that should be more explored as AI anchor technology grows. Targeted research could help to fill these gaps and shed light on AI anchors (and the implications of them) in more general media contexts. Several areas for future research also intersect with these concepts — emotional engagement, cross-cultural audience perceptions, longitudinal audience studies, and concerns regarding ethics.

A key area for future work would be improving emotional engagement of the AI anchors. However, our current studies like Yang (2023) highlight AI systems' limitations in portraying real empathy and forming relationships solely based on emotions with the people. The future study may develop the innovative algorithm that will work to capitalize on emotional expressiveness and responsiveness in AI systems. For example, how can we program AI anchors to react to how people are feeling? In addition, the results could be used by researchers to explore the role of increased emotional engagement in audience trust and loyalty and whether the increase in emotional responsiveness results in deeper relationships with the audience.

Second，as AI anchors are deployed globally it becomes increasingly important to understand how audience perceptions vary across cultural contexts. In different cultural context, audience's acceptance and perception of AI anchors can be very different to one another. For instance, cultural norms may persuade people to think less of AI anchors than their human counterparts. why are cultural differences important in audience acceptance of AI anchors? How do cultural factors analyze the trustworthiness of AI anchors in news broadcasting? Answers to these questions may help design digital anchor technologies for various audiences.

Based on the perspective of the longitudinal studies on audience interaction most of the existing studies only measure the snapshot of audience interaction with the AI anchors, and neglect the long term dynamics. Longitudinal studies could be conducted to understand how audience perceptions and its interaction with AI anchors progresses over time. As an example, when the AI technologies are becoming familiar, do the engagement levels amplify? So how long does it take

before AI anchors become a permanent change to audience viewing habits across all media formats? Such studies could help illuminate how sustainable the impact of AI anchors in the media landscape will be.

One of the little worked on, though important areas for future research, is the ethical dimensions of deploying AI anchors. Particularly pressing are questions about the ethical frameworks upon which AI development and deployment is based in media. Take, for example, what principles should there be regarding the use of AI anchors to ensure their fairness, transparency, inclusivity and so on. Additionally, how can media organizations strike a compromise between the efficiency of AI anchors and ethical matters that address representation, bias and accountability? The contributions of these considerations are very important in the responsible use of AI broadcast.

In all, tackling the lines of research in this research could bridge the gap in the existing literature and lead to a more detailed understanding of the use of AI anchor technology. Future studies can focus on emotional engagement, cultural perception, audience interactions, and ethics implications in order to contribute to a larger conversation around the changing role of AI in media. By helping guide the way, these efforts will support the challenges and opportunities presented in the development and delivery of AI anchors, where their development reflects societal needs and values.

8. Conclusion

There remain some important gaps in the studies of AI anchor technology. Targeted research could address these gaps to gain a more complete picture of AI anchors' applicability, as well as to understand the benefits and drawbacks of utilizing them, as well as their societal implications. They explore additional key areas for further exploration of emotional engagement, audience studies across cultures, longitudinal studies of the audience and ethical issues.

Limited ability of AI anchors to form emotional engagement with the audience remains one of the most challenging aspects of AI anchors. Yet Yang (2023) brings out that present AI systems are hard to make them truly be able to convey real empathy and genuinely build up whatever semblance of connections and advancements in emotional AI could resolve this hole. How can AI anchors better detect and respond to feelings of the audience? How does emotional engagement on an enhanced level affect audience trust and loyalty? If we can answer these questions, it might help make our broadcasting's AI anchors more relatable and more engaging.

With AI anchors adopted worldwide, it's more important than ever to understand cultural differences in audience perception. Xu and Ma (2022) argue that cultural norms play a big role in how audiences perceive and believe in AI anchors. For example, Western people might prefer technological efficiency and Eastern cultures might prefer an emotional and personal touch. Really, research could figure out how cultural factors contribute to acceptance and credibility of AI anchors, and if so contribute insights on how to adapt AI technologies for varied audiences.

Recently, most of the studies related to AI anchors have been limited to short term interaction and therefore nobody is addressing the issue of long term effects. According to Wu, Zhang, and Lin (2022) they believe that longitudinal studies could help discover how audience engagement changes as people become more accustomed to AI technologies. When do audiences become more receptive to AI anchors? What are the effects of AI anchors on audience habits and preference in various media formats? The adaptability and sustainability of AI anchor technologies would be best studied with longitudinal research.

Deployment of AI anchors is also a complex issue involving issues of bias, authenticity and accountability. In arguing for the responsible use of AI in media, Ge and Fu (2023) propose the

development of clear ethical frameworks for media usage; with people and opinions serving as sole entry points to the platform. How should AI anchors be designed so as to be fair and transparent? How can media organizations leverage the efficiency of AI anchors without taking on ethical worry such as biasing or inclusivity? It's important to address these questions to ensure that we maintain public trust in media and media credibility.

Finally, though, AI anchors provide transformative potential, but also major challenges for broadcasting. There are important areas that need more in-depth investigation with regard to emotional engagement, cultural adaptability, long-term audience interactions and ethical considerations. Future research can address these gaps and offer insights into how AI anchors are becoming part of media at an evolving role and how AI anchors should develop with respect to societal values and needs.

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