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Postprint: Investigation and Analysis of WeChat Official Account Operations of Traditional Chinese Medicine Academic Journals

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Abstract

[Objective] This study investigates the operation of WeChat official accounts of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) academic journals, analyzing the operational strategies of numerous TCM academic WeChat official accounts to extract successful experiences for reference. **[Methods]** This investigation utilized the Qingbo Big Data Platform (www.gsdata.cn) and employed the WeChat Communication Index (WCI) evaluation tool to survey and analyze the operational status of WeChat public platforms of TCM academic journals. **[Results]** The survey revealed that among 128 TCM and Chinese materia medica journals, 85 had established WeChat official accounts. After searching 79 selected samples on the Qingbo Big Data Platform (www.gsdata.cn), only 45 journals were indexed in the platform's database. An investigation and analysis of these 45 representative TCM academic journal WeChat public platforms showed that the top 5 subscription accounts by WCI ranking were "China Journal of Chinese Materia Medica", "Shanghai Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine", "Chinese Herbal Medicines Journal Society", "Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine", and "Modern Chinese Medicine", while the service accounts were "Chinese Acupuncture & Moxibustion", "Chinese Journal of Experimental Traditional Medical Formulae", "Chinese Journal of Natural Medicines", "China Journal of Chinese Materia Medica" Academic Service Account, and "Liaoning Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine". **[Conclusion]** The investigation and analysis demonstrated that the WeChat platforms of the top 5 subscription and service accounts of TCM and Chinese materia medica journals in WCI ranking featured a relatively high proportion of original articles and high activity levels, serving as valuable references.

Full Text

Preamble

Investigation and Analysis of WeChat Public Platform Operations for Traditional Chinese Medicine Academic Journals

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Abstract

Objective: This study investigates the operations of WeChat public platforms for Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) academic journals, analyzing how these platforms are managed to identify successful operational strategies for reference and emulation.

Methods: Using the Qingbo Big Data Platform (www.gsdata.cn) and the WeChat Communication Index (WCI) evaluation tool, we conducted a comprehensive survey and analysis of TCM academic journal WeChat public platforms.

Results: Among 128 TCM and Chinese materia medica journals, 85 had established WeChat public platforms. After searching 79 samples on the Qingbo Big Data Platform, only 45 journals were included in its database. Analysis of these 45 representative TCM academic journal platforms revealed that the top 5 subscription accounts by WCI were *China Journal of Chinese Materia Medica*, *Shanghai Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, *Chinese Herbal Medicines Journal*, *Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, and *Modern Chinese Medicine*, while the top 5 service accounts were *Chinese Acupuncture & Moxibustion*, *Chinese Journal of Experimental Traditional Medical Formulae*, *Chinese Journal of Natural Medicines*, *China Journal of Chinese Materia Medica* (Academic Service Account), and *Liaoning Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*.

Conclusion: The investigation found that the top 5 subscription and service accounts in TCM journals featured high levels of original content and active engagement, representing valuable models for other journals.

Keywords: WeChat public platform; Traditional Chinese medicine academic journals; WeChat Communication Index (WCI)

With the continuous development of internet technology, the media industry landscape and user reading habits have undergone profound changes, placing increasing pressure on traditional media. Consequently, content production and dissemination methods in journal publishing must adapt accordingly. WeChat public platforms, also known as WeChat Official Accounts, represent a new product of new media in the context of integrated media. These platforms create

convenient channels for group information exchange and publication, offering new opportunities for journal publishing and dissemination. The value of information propagation on WeChat public platforms lies in secondary dissemination—only through user sharing and forwarding can accounts attract new followers and increase readership [1]. Building upon network publishing and digitization, academic journals are further integrating with internet-based new media, particularly leveraging the convenience, interactivity, mobility, and instant reading features of mobile new media to enhance their social impact and improve quality and influence in terms of publication format, dissemination methods, and service approaches [2]. As a typical new media platform, effective integration with WeChat is crucial for driving the transformation and digital construction of journal operations, establishing it as a novel platform for academic journals [3]. TCM academic journals serve as important vehicles for disseminating and promoting TCM academic achievements and prospering academic development, as well as vital windows for promoting outstanding Chinese cultural heritage. They should seize the initiative in digital transformation amid internet development and actively embrace the challenges that digital publishing poses to traditional publishing. TCM academic journals primarily serve researchers, clinicians, and educators in the TCM field, and integration with new media platforms like WeChat can significantly expand their publicity and reach [4-6].

On November 10, 2022, Tencent released its Q3 financial report, showing that the combined monthly active users of WeChat and WeChat reached 1.3089 billion. WeChat Official Accounts have surpassed 120 million registered users, with approximately 60 million active accounts [7]. An increasing number of medical journals have established WeChat public platforms for publicity and promotion to enhance their influence. While some scholars have investigated the operations of medical journal WeChat platforms, no studies have specifically examined TCM academic journal platforms. Therefore, this study investigates TCM academic journal WeChat public platforms, analyzing their operations to identify successful strategies for reference.

1. Research Content

1.1 Sample Determination

We selected 128 TCM and Chinese materia medica journals from the 2021 *Chinese Academic Journal Citation Reports (Natural Sciences and Engineering Technology)* published by the China Academic Library & Information System Evaluation Research Center and Tsinghua University Library, in collaboration with CNKI. Using a census method, we verified their WeChat public platforms through WeChat search channels. The results showed that 85 journals had established WeChat public platforms, while 43 had not. Additionally, 7 journals had merged their platforms with 6 other journals among the 79, such as *Chinese Acupuncture & Moxibustion*, *Acupuncture Research*, and *World Journal of Acupuncture-Moxibustion* merging into the “Chinese Acupuncture Magazine” account; *Shanghai Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine* and *Journal of*

Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine merging into “Shanghai Traditional Chinese Medicine”; *Chinese Herbal Medicines* (Chinese and English versions) merging into “Chinese Herbal Medicines Journal”; *Modern Chinese Medicine* and *Journal of Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine* merging into “Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine Journal”; *Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine* (Chinese and English versions) merging into “Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine”; and *Tianjin Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine* and *Journal of Tianjin University of Traditional Chinese Medicine* merging into “Tianjin University of Traditional Chinese Medicine Editorial Office.” We ultimately selected 79 established WeChat public accounts for our study.

1.2 Analysis Methods

Evaluation methods for WeChat public platforms primarily focus on dissemination impact. The WeChat Communication Index (WCI) is a commonly used evaluation tool developed by new media index platforms. WCI reflects overall popularity and development trends by assessing article dissemination, coverage, account maturity, and influence through comprehensive multi-dimensional data calculation. Generally, higher WCI values indicate greater attention and influence of journal WeChat platforms. This study utilized the Qingbo Big Data Platform (www.gsdata.cn), searching by “journal name” for data collection.

2. Research Results and Analysis

2.1 Sample Data Analysis and WCI Rankings

This study analyzed a six-month period from February 1 to July 31, 2022. As shown in and , the 30 subscription account samples published an average of 409 articles monthly, with 1,167 total pushes and an average of 38.9 pushes per account per month. The total monthly read count reached 522,000, with an average of 17,400 reads per subscription account. Overall, the average total read count was relatively high, but the disparity between high and low performers was substantial. The top 5 subscription accounts by WCI—*China Journal of Chinese Materia Medica* (average 353,000+ monthly reads), *Shanghai Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine* (35,865.8 reads), *Chinese Herbal Medicines Journal* (50,674.5 reads), *Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine* (11,135.2 reads), and *Modern Chinese Medicine* (11,579.7 reads)—demonstrated significantly higher readership. In contrast, the bottom 5 subscription accounts showed minimal engagement: *Journal of Gansu University of Chinese Medicine* (0 reads), *Journal of Practical Traditional Chinese Internal Medicine* (31.3 reads), *World Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine* (146.3 reads), *Jilin Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine* (88.7 reads), and *Chinese Traditional Patent Medicine* (367.5 reads).

The 15 service account samples published an average of 96.4 articles monthly, with 34.7 total pushes and an average of 6.4 articles per service account per month. The total monthly read count was 66,000, with an average of 8,284.8

reads per service account. Similar to subscription accounts, higher read counts correlated with top WCI rankings. The leading service accounts were *Chinese Acupuncture & Moxibustion* (49,164.5 reads), *Chinese Journal of Experimental Traditional Medical Formulae* (5,191.2 reads), *Chinese Journal of Natural Medicines* (3,660.3 reads), *China Journal of Chinese Materia Medica* (Academic Service Account, 2,145.5 reads), and *Liaoning Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine* (1,599.0 reads). The bottom 5 service accounts included *Journal of Rehabilitation* (38.5 reads), *Acta Chinese Medicine* (95.3 reads), *Traditional Chinese Medicine Bulletin* (231.0 reads), *Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine Journal* (254.2 reads), and *Beijing Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine* (468.5 reads). These results demonstrate that higher WCI rankings correspond to greater monthly readership.

2.2 Push Content

Content quality is crucial for WeChat public platform construction. Just as print journal quality affects overall journal quality and impact factor, high-quality push content generates more reading, sharing, and sustained user attention, thereby increasing platform visibility. While print journals serve as pure reading and knowledge acquisition platforms, journal WeChat platforms are comprehensive service platforms whose content should align with journal positioning and be tailored to different journal types and target readers. TCM academic journals possess unique resources and advantages, maintaining close connections with TCM experts and having specialized content, author groups, and readership.

Analysis of the studied platforms revealed that the most popular articles included: (1) health preservation and TCM popular science articles with high readership; (2) clinical experience articles; (3) expert consensus and guidelines; and (4) academic forum and conference announcements. These articles employed attractive titles, images, music, and videos—particularly videos, lighthearted text and images, and everyday life-related content—to make “high-end” TCM knowledge more “down-to-earth.” For example, the subscription account *China Journal of Chinese Materia Medica* published an original health preservation article titled “Yin-Yang Imbalance, the Root of All Diseases: A Good Prescription to Lock in Yang Qi and Constrain Yin Qi,” which garnered over 25,000 reads in two weeks. The *Shanghai Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine* account shared an original video featuring a renowned Shanghai TCM practitioner, “Fifth Batch of ‘Shanghai Famous TCM Experts’ | Wu Yaochi,” which reached over 14,000 reads in two weeks. The service account *Chinese Acupuncture & Moxibustion* published an original article “[Hot Topic] ‘Small Town Exam Takers’ in TCM—Does This Resonate with You?” that achieved 6,522 reads in two weeks. The *Chinese Journal of Experimental Traditional Medical Formulae* service account posted “[Liyue Lecture Hall No. 3] Academic Report from the Institute of Chinese Materia Medica, China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences: Scientific Interpretation of TCM Disease Prevention,” which received 2,242 reads in two

weeks.

2.3 Original Content

As shown in , the top 2 subscription accounts by WCI—*China Journal of Chinese Materia Medica* and *Shanghai Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*—primarily publish original articles featuring popular topics and attractive health and wellness content. This approach engages not only professional readers and authors but also the general public, expanding the audience and increasing attention. The 3rd and 4th ranked accounts, *Chinese Herbal Medicines Journal* and *Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, focus on original research articles. *Chinese Herbal Medicines Journal* features diverse content from three journals (*Chinese Herbal Medicines*, *Modern Drugs and Clinic*, and *Drug Evaluation Research*), attracting a larger corresponding author and reader base. *Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine* presents original research articles, primarily clinical experiences, in accessible language that enhances readability and attention. The 5th ranked account, *Modern Chinese Medicine*, focuses on latest news and published research articles, with news content covering hot topics that generate relatively high attention. In contrast, lower-ranked subscription accounts primarily republish original articles verbatim or simply post tables of contents or abstracts without editorial processing, resulting in highly specialized but less engaging content that attracts minimal attention.

As shown in , the top 5 service accounts differ from subscription accounts by focusing mainly on original research articles with fewer publications (limited to 4 times per month, once per week), resulting in relatively low attention and readability. Lower-ranked service accounts share similar characteristics but publish even less frequently, with some accounts not posting at all within a month, leading to minimal attention.

3. Problems and Solutions for TCM Academic Journal WeChat Platforms

This study analyzed both subscription and service accounts among TCM academic journals, revealing that while some platforms operate successfully—such as *China Journal of Chinese Materia Medica*, *Shanghai Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine*, and *Chinese Herbal Medicines Journal* with high activity and attention—most platforms perform poorly. Some journals have established WeChat platforms but maintain low activity levels, while others have not established platforms at all, limiting information access for readers and authors and failing to achieve effective publicity. TCM academic journal WeChat platforms require significant improvement.

3.1 Low Update Frequency

The investigation revealed that lower-ranked platforms by WCI publish articles infrequently, with some subscription accounts not posting at all in a given month,

resulting in a WCI value of 0. In contrast, top-ranked subscription and service accounts maintain high and stable publication frequencies, with subscription accounts posting over 20 times monthly and service accounts approximately 4 times monthly. This demonstrates that stable publishing frequency and volume contribute to higher attention levels.

3.2 Content Quality Needs Improvement

TCM academic journal WeChat platforms should not only push published academic papers but also summarize and highlight classic and key TCM articles in concise, clear formats to attract diverse reader groups. More original content is needed, such as health preservation and TCM popular science articles, as well as the content types mentioned in Section 2.2 that characterize top-ranked platforms. Platforms should deliver medical rehabilitation and health-related content and services from the reader's perspective to enhance communication effectiveness. Additionally, platforms should continuously adjust based on user needs to meet audience requirements for each journal, strengthen engagement between readers and authors, and attract potential authors [8-10].

3.3 Strengthening Platform Promotion

Enhanced promotion and marketing can be achieved through four approaches: (1) WeChat platforms are not simply electronic versions of print journals requiring basic editing. They are entirely new platforms that demand dedicated editorial teams who understand journal positioning, expert/author/reader needs, and possess marketing and planning capabilities. (2) During initial establishment, platforms may have small audiences with minimal readership and followers, but dedicated teams should not be discouraged. Instead, they should improve content quality, consistently deliver high-quality material, and create a virtuous cycle of increasing reads and attention. (3) Medical journals possess unique advantages, including vast expert networks, medical students, and associations, with superior industry knowledge compared to general media. They can attract more followers through online and offline activities [11]. (4) Academic journals should encourage authors to create related, reader-friendly content based on their papers for exclusive WeChat publication, enhancing original content capacity.

This study investigated and analyzed TCM academic journal WeChat platforms using the WCI evaluation tool. Among 128 TCM and Chinese materia medica journals, 85 had established WeChat platforms (a 50.6% adoption rate), while 43 had not. Seven journals had merged platforms with six others among the 79, and only 45 of the 79 samples were included in the Qingbo Big Data Platform database, representing a 57% inclusion rate and 43% exclusion rate. This indicates that 43% of journals with WeChat platforms show low activity and infrequent posting. However, some journals demonstrate exemplary platform operations worth emulating.

As a traditional medicine with Chinese characteristics, TCM possesses inherent scientific value and unique advantages, creating exceptional conditions for development. In recent years, the market demand for TCM scientific information has clearly surpassed that of Western medicine-focused journals [12]. Therefore, TCM academic journals should fully leverage new media advantages to improve quality and influence, transforming from traditional static, unidirectional text publishing to dynamic, bidirectional knowledge services that fulfill communication, exchange, operation, and service functions.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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