

Research on the Communication Effectiveness of Mainstream Media News Clients: A Case Study of Qingdao Daily' s “Guanhai News” client (Post-print)

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Abstract

“Guanhai News” serves as a strategic project for Qingdao' s advancement of deep media convergence and as the core platform for the transformation and reform of Qingdao Daily, attracting attention from both within and outside the industry upon its launch on August 17, 2020. The era of integrated media is driving mainstream media to undergo transformation, upgrading, and even generational renewal. The Guanhai News client emerged precisely in response to this wave of developmental change, unleashing tremendous energy through the deep integration of traditional and emerging media. The communication ecosystem led by “Five Intelligences” media continues to optimize, and the influence of aggregated communication is also continuously increasing. Although its profit model in the specific communication process is not yet entirely clear, its development prospects hold significant research value from the current perspective.

Full Text

A Study on the Dissemination Capacity of Mainstream Media News Clients: A Case Study of Qingdao Daily' s “Guanhai News” Client

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Abstract: As a strategic project to advance media convergence in Qingdao and the core platform for Qingdao Daily' s transformation, “Guanhai News” attracted widespread attention from both within and outside the industry upon its launch on August 17, 2020. The era of convergent media is driving mainstream media to upgrade, transform, and even renew themselves, and the Guanhai News client

emerged precisely within this developmental wave. Through achieving deep integration between traditional and emerging media, it has unleashed tremendous energy, continuously optimizing its communication ecosystem guided by the “Five Intelligences” media framework while enhancing its aggregated dissemination influence. Although its specific profit model during the communication process remains unclear, its development prospects hold significant research value from a current perspective.

Keywords: Aggregated local mainstream media; news client; dissemination capacity; deep integration

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1. Background of the Guanhai News Client

1.1 Development Trends of Media Mobilization in the Convergent Media Era

Network communication technology represents one of the most valuable technological achievements created by humanity in recent years. Mobile phones have become essential for modern life, enabling the public to stay informed about current events with just a device at hand. According to the 48th “Statistical Report on China’s Internet Development” released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) in 2021, China’s internet user base reached 1.011 billion, with internet penetration reaching 71.6% of the population. This demonstrates how the internet era has fundamentally transformed the ways and channels through which the public receives news and information, even reshaping previous patterns of life and work [1]. Internet technology has provided solid technical support for the birth and development of mobile clients, effectively accelerating the process of media mobilization. Media mobilization primarily refers to the various mobile strategies adopted by traditional media under the influence of internet technology and market forces to keep pace with the times and maintain their industry position, manifested specifically through emerging platforms such as Weibo, WeChat public accounts, and Douyin short videos. The continuous advancement and deepening of media mobilization have also created new development opportunities for media clients, allowing more news-attentive members of the public to participate in the entire news dissemination process, thereby significantly driving self-reform and innovative development within the news industry.

1.2 Diverse User Needs for the Guanhai News Client

China's news industry has already established a comprehensive, multi-level, and full-coverage news client dissemination pattern centered on central-level clients such as CCTV News and People's Daily, complemented by local mainstream media adopting a "one region, one client" or even "one region, multiple clients" approach. Most of these clients are built and operated by local mainstream media under the convergent media background to better attract, retain, and serve users. They innovate news information and communication channels around national policies, social livelihood, and government affairs communication to achieve coordination between their functional and public welfare roles [2]. The internet era has brought users an explosion of accessible information, substantially raising their demands for both the speed and quality of hot event coverage. Under the influence of this information explosion and evolving user demands, news production and dissemination have achieved breakthroughs in geographical and temporal constraints, enabling high-speed global transmission of news information at any time and place while providing various convenient services for users. As news reception methods and channels show increasingly diversified trends, the public's dependence on news client platforms grows daily. News clients can screen dissemination content layer by layer, filtering out false information from network transmission to provide users with professional and authoritative official news, which explains their widespread popularity. Against this backdrop, Qingdao Daily Press Group, as a newspaper with 72 years of history, has been seeking change and substance in accordance with national development plans for mainstream media and convergent media, investing considerable effort in client construction and operation. Through long-term optimization and innovation, it has ultimately formed the current "Guanhai News."

2. Analysis of Reasons for Qingdao Daily's Upgrade to Guanhai News

2.1 Insufficient Momentum in Original Content

Qingdao Daily has long served as the core client for Qingdao Daily Press Group's external communication work, with the quality of its content largely determining its industry influence and dissemination capacity. However, examination of its client news reveals that only a small portion of content is produced and published by its own editorial team, with the majority sourced from mainstream media such as CCTV News, People's Daily, and The Paper. While this enriches multi-angle coverage of current affairs and social livelihood to some extent, it also reduces the editorial team's enthusiasm for original content creation and hinders the construction and development of a professional and efficient editing workforce [3]. Meanwhile, as Qingdao Daily's online channels continuously expand and content grows increasingly abundant, the massive demands of original content creation have placed considerable pressure on the editorial and operational teams due to high-tech limitations. Without simultaneous development

of client functions, the platform cannot guarantee quality in content creation, promotion, and control, ultimately affecting user impressions. To solve this problem, Qingdao Daily would need to recruit more professional talent into its reporting and editing teams, with funding being the key to achieving this goal—a significant pressure and challenge for the organization.

2.2 Business Model Failing to Achieve Profitability Goals

In its early operations, Qingdao Daily's business model aimed to attract traffic by providing comprehensive, high-quality services to users, then generate revenue through advertising after establishing a sizable user base. While this approach appeared to maximize user benefits, as a traditional current affairs news client with a single content production method and dissemination channel, it could not attract a massive user base and consequently could not attract a steady stream of advertisers. The reasons are twofold: First, Qingdao Daily neither stratified users according to age or preferences nor created special contextual language for specific content or groups. The same news was instantly pushed to all users, which seemed to achieve full coverage but would eventually reduce user interest and even cause aversion over time. Second, Qingdao Daily Press Group operates multiple local mainstream media enterprises in Qingdao and has not established a correct understanding of profitability for its own development. Instead of using multi-faceted integration and advancing all-media matrix construction to open new development paths, it focused on image-building, capital investment, and solidifying existing advantages as its survival strategy. In other words, if Qingdao Daily continues its news dissemination work along traditional profit logic, it will remain “old media” in the public's eyes and will be unable to achieve new breakthroughs in its business model [4].

2.3 Intense Competition Among Similar Mobile Clients

In recent years, internet technology has been widely and deeply developed and applied in the news industry, providing new means and channels for mainstream media to break through and achieve new development while also enabling non-official news platforms and the general public to engage in news dissemination. With news platforms blooming everywhere today, Qingdao Daily lags far behind domestic mainstream media such as People's Daily and CCTV News. Meanwhile, despite achieving high integration of news information, it still faces fierce competition and serious homogenization with local media clients such as Bandao News and Qingdao News. Additionally, the arrival of the convergent media era has made major mainstream media clearly recognize the importance of stickiness between news content and users, forming a shared understanding that news development should move toward differentiation, personalization, and audience segmentation. Consequently, news client managers deeply understand the importance of being first to grasp news and obtain advertising promotion fees, intensifying industry competition. Although Qingdao Daily has long been renowned in Qingdao's news field, homogenized content and single dissemina-

tion channels cannot effectively promote the formation of core competitiveness [5].

3. Building a “Five Intelligences” Media Matrix to Form Unique Communication Advantages

In the convergent media era, the emergence and deep development of high-tech technologies such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and big data have provided Qingdao Daily with technological advantages for self-innovation, giving birth to the Guanhai News client. Simultaneously, the increasing professionalization of practitioners provides more creative possibilities for the development, application, and practice of these technologies. To build an aggregated mainstream media client that better meets public needs and expectations, Guanhai News established the “Five Intelligences” media development goals from its inception: think tank media, intelligent media, smart-interest media, smart service media, and smart chain media. The “Five Intelligences” media framework—comprising think tank media (building a new local think tank communication system), intelligent media (advancing cutting-edge intelligent technology applications), smart-interest media (providing new mobile smart-interest content experiences), smart service media (creating new online smart service platforms), and smart chain media (building new interactive smart chain production ecosystems)—aims to enable the public to receive and publish news more conveniently and interestingly through technology. Currently, many local news clients face development dilemmas similar to those of Qingdao Daily. This paper analyzes the construction of Guanhai News’s “Five Intelligences” media matrix to provide reference for expanding the dissemination capacity and influence of local news clients [6].

3.1 Building a New Local Think Tank Communication System

Think tank media refers to building a new local think tank communication system where news media clients form a new communication system that provides constructive suggestions for urban development, promotes economic and social progress, and creates media think tank memories for the city. By extending upstream and downstream from news communication, they help cities plan strategies and create new value. At the national level, mainstream media clients have been regarded as a channel for social governance practice since their inception, with their quality affecting the functioning of the national governance system to some extent. Therefore, to build think tank media that meets public demand for news communication, mainstream media should proactively increase capital investment and construction efforts in think tank media on their clients, thereby forming a core competitive advantage unmatched by other mainstream media—an important manifestation of serving the overall situation and connecting with the masses. For instance, Guanhai News has planned and executed several communication projects of great significance to Qingdao’s urban development and public services, such as “Made in Qingdao,” building a think tank-level com-

munication team with Qingdao characteristics through continuous exploration and experience accumulation, and achieving its transformation into think tank media. While disseminating these projects, Guanhai News continuously advances into upstream and downstream industrial chains by inviting think tank experts online and offline, planning hot news events, and achieving full-process reporting of hot events to enhance its industry discourse power and influence in local Qingdao communication. Meanwhile, Guanhai News has used intelligent technology to conduct distinctive news activities such as VR video exhibitions, live broadcast viewing of communication projects, and outdoor naked-eye 3D screens, integrating think tank thinking into news communication and achieving holographic presentation of news events through high-tech means, thereby driving innovative development in Qingdao's communication industry [7].

3.2 Advancing Cutting-Edge Intelligent Technology Applications

Intelligent media refers to actively leveraging intelligent technology to deeply develop how mainstream media provide news information to users, creating more attractive news communication channels that satisfy readers' need to understand hot events immediately while ensuring news aligns with public reading interests. For example, the "Guanhai Morning News" column serves as the "morning news" feature in the Guanhai News client. To achieve integrated broadcasting of news content, images, and videos, enabling users to more intuitively understand the causes, processes, and outcomes of events, Guanhai News has established virtual anchors Xiaoqing and Xiaohai using AI, intelligent technology, and 3D technology for morning news broadcasting, achieving positive results. Additionally, Guanhai News has increased investment and development in emerging technologies such as intelligent customer service, aerial live broadcasting, and 5G transmission. On this basis, it has used big data and intelligent recommendation functions to classify and stratify readers, continuously optimizing and expanding client service functions to attract, retain, and form a stable user base through content. This demonstrates that the deep development, innovation, and application of intelligent technology in the news field can not only significantly improve the production efficiency of mainstream media news content but also enrich the dissemination forms of information content, laying a foundation for Guanhai News to further enhance its influence and dissemination capacity in the industry [8].

3.3 Providing New Mobile Smart-Interest Content Experiences

Smart-interest media refers to the mobile communication news model that Guanhai News client implements around its reader user group. This model enables efficient development and operation of dissemination content through high technology, enhancing readers' reading experiences while allowing them to feel the changes and surprises technology brings to news communication. For example, in July 2021, Guanhai News reporters used VR technology to complete an online broadcast of a "flash mob" event celebrating the 100th anniversary of the found-

ing of the Communist Party of China. Readers could achieve 360° panoramic viewing of the live scene by shaking or rotating their phones. From its early development, Guanhai News has already implemented multiple activities with diverse forms and 硬核 (hardcore) technology through mobile communication, enabling readers to transform from passive single receivers to immersive participants [9].

3.4 Creating New Online Smart Service Platforms

Smart service media refers to building an online smart service platform through integrating various resource advantages of Qingdao Daily Press Group and its subsidiaries to create a “smart cloud brain,” ensuring readers receive more cost-effective news services. As the intermediate link and solid bridge for national and local policy implementation, social cohesion, and social stability maintenance in the new era, mainstream media clearly understand their position and role in media convergence work and the responsibilities they bear in facilitating communication between higher and lower levels. Guanhai News recognized this during its construction. To better fulfill this mission, it established a full-time, all-weather news reporting and user feedback mechanism, maintaining social stability and promoting healthy social operation while disseminating hot topics and managing public opinion. For instance, Guanhai News aggregated various high-quality resources from the Smart Qingdao platform under Qingdao Daily Press Group, establishing over 30 functions related to people’s daily production and life, including news information, social livelihood, and innovative services, making users’ lives more convenient through small daily matters. Meanwhile, Guanhai News continuously develops and adds new functions such as vaccination services, online government inquiries, and supervision feedback according to readers’ evolving daily needs. In summary, while solidifying existing advantages and continuously amplifying its “good-looking” content strategy, Guanhai News adheres to readers’ actual needs as the core of its service work, pushing itself toward becoming a “useful” smart client.

3.5 Building a New Interactive Smart Chain Production Ecosystem

Smart chain media refers to building a new interactive smart chain production ecosystem through innovative marketing, user interaction, and service 下沉 (sinking to grassroots levels) to achieve strong associations between resources, users, and communities. As a client of a newspaper with 72 years of history, Guanhai News always prioritizes readers in its construction and operation. For example, since its launch, Guanhai News has implemented a points and coins system where readers can earn coins through long-term news reading, commenting, and article sharing, which can then be exchanged for gifts in the coin mall according to relevant requirements. Meanwhile, Guanhai News has established a content community co-creation mechanism based on reader user group needs, forming a special dissemination model of “community co-creation with intelligent distribution” by establishing self-media associations, online editing teams,

and photographer teams. This has achieved classified and stratified targeted dissemination of Guanhai News content while providing “Guanhai experience” for the reform and innovation of mainstream media in Qingdao and even Shandong Province.

In summary, under the convergent media environment, mainstream media must achieve deep integration and functional superposition of traditional and new media. How to realize mutual benefit and win-win situations between clients and users remains in the exploration stage. However, convergent media communication has already allowed mainstream media such as People’s Daily and CCTV News to taste the “sweetness” of all-media matrix communication. Although Qingdao Daily previously faced issues including insufficient momentum in original content, business models failing to achieve profitability goals, and intense competition among similar mobile clients, the construction and operation of Guanhai News’ s “Five Intelligences” media matrix have opened a new development situation in the industry, gradually expanding its dissemination capacity and influence in the field.

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

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