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On the Role of Mobile News Clients in County-Level Media Convergence: Postprint

Authors: Xu Haiqin

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Abstract

During the transformation of traditional media toward converged media, news client applications play a vital role in upgrading communication philosophy, innovating communication methods, and broadening communication channels. County-level converged media client applications must leverage their advantages, emphasize distinctive features, achieve precise positioning, serve the public, and explore a viable path for survival and development tailored to their specific circumstances.

Full Text

A Brief Discussion on the Role of Mobile News Clients in County-Level Media Convergence

Xu Haiqin

Changle County Converged Media Center, Weifang, Shandong 262400

Abstract: In the transformation from traditional to converged media, news clients play a vital role in upgrading communication concepts, innovating communication methods, and broadening communication channels. County-level converged media clients must leverage their advantages, highlight distinctive features, achieve precise positioning, serve the public, and explore a viable development path suited to their local context.

Keywords: mobile client; resource aggregation; platform optimization; enhanced communication; diversified communication

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As traditional media transition toward convergence, they have increasingly shifted their focus to new media platforms, with news clients serving as an indispensable component. A critical challenge for county-level converged media centers is to harness the brand and resource advantages of traditional media while enhancing their communication capacity, guidance, influence, and credibility through new media platforms, thereby securing discourse power in an intensely competitive media landscape. Drawing on the experience of developing and promoting the “Aichangle” mobile news client at the Changle County Converged Media Center, this paper reflects on the advantages of local mobile news clients in news communication, their significance in advancing deep media integration, and potential pathways for optimizing their development.

On October 19, 2019, the “Aichangle” mobile news client officially launched, surpassing 140,000 downloads by November 2021. Based on news content broadcast and published by Changle Radio, Television, and Changle Daily, the client integrates news information, mobile livestreaming, government services, and other functions to establish a three-dimensional, all-media communication matrix, enabling users to “understand Changle with just one phone.” The “Aichangle” client not only provides rapid updates but also leverages diverse formats including graphics, video, audio, H5, long-form images, and livestreaming to become Changle’s most authoritative one-stop media publishing platform. Additionally, it features functional modules for government services, online policy consultation, and life services, striving to create a diversified life information service platform.

1. Strengthening Mobile Platforms to Broaden County-Level Media Convergence Channels

The era of “fragmented” reading and the proliferation of news communication channels have endowed mobile news clients with natural advantages, making them the most dynamic platforms in new media. Compared with the fixed-time, unidirectional, linear communication of traditional media, mobile news clients offer numerous benefits including strong timeliness, large information capacity, diverse content formats, broad audience choice, and robust interactive services, earning them increasing favor from mainstream media and demonstrating broad development prospects.

1.1 Limitations of Traditional Media Before the internet era, traditional media dominated mainstream ideological discourse with closed information resources and single communication modes, essentially operating in a “I speak, you listen” unidirectional pattern. Television programs had fixed broadcast times, and newspapers had fixed publication dates, limiting information capacity. Even when television could broadcast breaking news immediately, audiences could

not receive information anytime and anywhere due to the physical limitation of the screen, and broadcast content was fleeting—once missed, it was difficult to retrieve.

1.2 Advantages of Mobile Clients In the mobile internet era, people can connect with the world using just a smartphone, receiving information from every corner of the globe. Rich and diverse information resources have liberated audiences from passive reception, granting them autonomous choice. They can also express their views and interact with others through comments, likes, shares, and voting, greatly enhancing participation and experience. According to the 48th “Statistical Report on China’s Internet Development” from the China Internet Network Information Center, by June 2021, China’s mobile internet users reached 1.007 billion, an increase of 20.92 million from December 2020, with 99.6% of internet users accessing the internet via mobile phones. The advantages of mobile clients in communication methods, operating costs, channels, practical services, and interactive participation make them the most suitable carriers for converged media communication characteristics.

2. Significance of Mobile News Client Construction in County-Level Media Convergence

2.1 News Resource Aggregation and Platform Optimization Following the principles of intensive development, mobile-first strategy, and “Media+” concept, the Changde County Converged Media Center focuses on building the “Aichangle” mobile news client as its main new media platform. It adheres to an integrated development approach of “unified planning, one-time collection, multiple generation, diversified release, and multi-platform interaction” to construct a three-dimensional information service platform characterized by “news + livestreaming + policy consultation + services.” To ensure content has sufficient influence, it is essential to integrate the advantages of traditional and new media to improve news quality. The all-media journalist department centrally manages reporters and news resources across newspapers, television, websites, clients, and micro-media, while the editorial committee uniformly manages topic planning and coordinates editors and post-production staff across these platforms. According to the center’s requirements of “unified planning, unified dispatching, unified platform, and unified assessment,” the initiative optimizes and reorganizes core reporting forces to mobilize the enthusiasm of editors across all platforms for planning, information collection, and content release. News products should reflect the credibility, thoughtfulness, standardization, and comprehensiveness of traditional broadcasting, television, and print media while incorporating the speed, openness, diversity, and interactivity of new media. Under this new operational model, following the “mobile-first” development strategy, reporters prioritize providing news materials to the “Aichangle” client, with incentive mechanisms ensuring implementation (coefficient increased by 0.1 for prioritizing mobile submissions, decreased by 0.2 for failing to submit to the client).

2.2 Collaborative Communication Across Platforms for Enhanced Dissemination

The integration of news resources through the converged media command hall and editorial center enables unified command and dispatching for all-media operations and cross-platform collaboration, with clearer division of labor and more standardized processes. Particularly for important planning, major events, and themed live activities, novel angles and diverse content design demonstrate strong organizational planning and execution capabilities. During the China (Changle) International Gem Expo, the “Aichangle” client maximized the collaborative power of all-media platforms, reporting on the event from multiple levels, angles, and dimensions. To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of China, the client produced and broadcast a flash mob video “Today is Your Birthday, My China,” which exceeded 50,000 clicks and shares within 24 hours. These blockbuster products once again confirmed the powerful communication capacity of mobile platforms and tested the achievements of media convergence.

2.3 Editorial Staff Updating Concepts and Actively Transitioning

Whether in traditional or new media, people remain the decisive factor in content production. The construction and development of the “Aichangle” mobile news client have actively promoted the growth of the all-media journalist and editor team. While mobile platforms excel in service and interactivity, traditional media editors often excel in news gathering but lack two-way interaction skills. As the communication power and influence of the “Aichangle” client have grown, so have the new media capabilities of its editorial staff. This transformation in news gathering and editing concepts has made them pay greater attention to the experiential and service aspects of news products, leading to more mature and closely coordinated traditional-new media cooperation. Traditional television journalists previously focused only on filming visuals, while newspaper journalists concentrated only on writing copy. However, the “Aichangle” client requires short video materials, concise yet profound text descriptions, and detail-oriented visuals, demanding that all-media journalists mobilize all their thinking to produce truly mobile-suitable “short, new, micro, and fast” new media products from the perspective of user needs.

3. Optimizing Development Paths for County-Level Media Clients

3.1 Leveraging Strengths to Compensate for Weaknesses

As the mouthpiece of local party committees and governments, county-level media clients possess strong authority and credibility with certain influence. County-level media can leverage internet technology to build new communication models oriented toward interactivity and multidirectionality while rationally and effectively utilizing their own resources to innovate content and communication methods. Relying on the original team of excellent reporters and editors from Changle Daily and Changle Television, the “Aichangle” operation team has achieved optimal composition, combining veteran editors and journalists with newly recruited “post-95s” talent. The former excel in news sensitivity,

gatekeeping, and public opinion guidance, while the latter have advantages in creative innovation, understanding audience needs, and new media technology. Through division of labor, mutual learning, and complementary strengths, the team ultimately produces news information and service content suitable for mobile dissemination.

3.2 Highlighting Features and Precise Positioning When traditional media transition to new media, they must recognize that the 主场 (home field) and format have changed, inevitably facing different users. Clear positioning is crucial for providing targeted content to specific audiences. As an authoritative and practical official mobile publishing platform for Changle, the “Aichangle” client features columns for news, online policy consultation, and government services. Users can also watch Changle TV’ s news channel and listen to Changle People’s Radio in real-time through “Watch TV,” “Listen to Radio,” and “Digital Newspaper” functions, with options to share, interact, and comment. The client emphasizes practicality and service, allowing users to watch livestreams, study party history online, submit inquiries and complaints, and even pay utility bills through the service module. To facilitate daily life in Changle, the classified information section features “Changle Information Encyclopedia,” covering service information for government departments, education, enterprises, hospitals, hotels, catering, finance, department stores, real estate, and tourism. Citizens can open this section to find contact information and addresses for businesses or departments they need, with real-time navigation available.

3.3 Content is King, Innovation is Paramount Both the survival of traditional media and the development of new media depend fundamentally on content. Traditional media’ s rigorous editorial process, rich information channels, and experienced editorial teams establish their advantages and create strong credibility and authority—strengths that remain relevant in the new media era. Although traditional media has shown declining momentum compared to new media in recent years, it still commands a considerable audience share and possesses authoritative news information channels. The continuous growth of new media platforms like mobile clients has compelled traditional media to actively explore transformation under mobile internet technology, seeking new breakthroughs and development opportunities from new media communication systems to form more distinctive products. This shift in communication patterns has also forced traditional media to increasingly prioritize audience needs and interactivity, leading to more rational resource allocation.

3.3.1 Focusing on Local News The “Aichangle” mobile news client actively promotes the media convergence development strategy of “upholding integrity while innovating, and achieving greatness through convergence.” It fully utilizes local resources to attract user attention through authoritative, massive, and timely local news coverage—reporting major activities of the county party committee and government as they happen, strengthening planning for major

thematic reports, and consolidating the news propaganda position. For emergencies, it actively guides public opinion to demonstrate social responsibility. After the COVID-19 outbreak, the Changle County Converged Media Center comprehensively strengthened epidemic prevention and control publicity. The “Aichangle” client and other platforms immediately conveyed over 80 announcements, response plans, and control measures from the county party committee and government, while disseminating more than 160 public service announcements covering COVID-19 knowledge, prevention measures, and relevant laws and regulations. Led by the “Aichangle” client, all media platforms including radio, television, newspapers, and WeChat collaborated to publish over 280 news reports on the epidemic response from various departments.

3.3.2 Enlivening Content Products The “Aichangle” mobile news client continuously innovates media language expression, utilizing graphics, video, audio, posters, H5, and other formats to present news reports in more vivid forms, producing numerous high-traffic, well-received converged media “blockbusters.” The client’s series on Changle’s intangible cultural heritage foods explored the history of traditional delicacies like Masong Cake, Chuntang Babao Pastry, and Shuangchi Gangzi Bread, evoking nostalgic childhood memories and appreciation for present happiness among Changle residents. For a time, discussions about Changle cuisine dominated social media, with clicks and shares exceeding 100,000. To improve Putonghua usage and popularity in Changle, enhance internal communication efficiency, and present a positive external image, the county held a “Speak Putonghua, Build a Civilized City” competition. The “Aichangle” client collaborated with Changle media hosts to launch a series of related products, including “I am Chinese, I Speak Putonghua,” “Hand in Hand Speaking Putonghua,” “Easily Mispronounced Place Names,” and “Easily Mispronounced Idioms,” creating a strong atmosphere for the campaign.

3.3.3 Innovating Short-Form and Micro-Videos In the converged media context, short video has become an important mode for news content and information dissemination, providing new momentum for traditional media transformation. Leveraging its video production talent advantages, the “Aichangle” mobile news client actively explores short video-centered news product development, launching series like “24 Hours in Changle” and “Building a Civilized City, Being Civilized Citizens.” These products adopt “short, new, micro, and fast” expression forms with fresh, interesting language, documenting Changle’s development and interpreting livelihood hotspots from new perspectives with attention to detail. Additionally, the client deeply engages with hot news events and topics of user interest, conducting special live broadcasts on COVID-19 vaccination, the Gem Expo, and the Watermelon Festival, demonstrating mainstream media responsibility. In 2021, it released nearly 40 live broadcasts with an average of 80,000 clicks per broadcast.

3.4 Serving the People and Building Brand Utilizing resources available to county-level converged media to address high-demand livelihood services related to daily necessities can help break through the fan and traffic “ceiling” while driving more user attention and interaction. Through sharing, liking, and other methods, extensive coverage and communication effects can be achieved, generating brand impact and maximum influence. The “Aichangle” mobile news client combines news with services and information with policy consultation, using news propaganda to drive comprehensive services. Its “Policy Consultation” column builds a bridge between government and citizens, actively listening to public voices and providing timely feedback to party committees and governments to support scientific decision-making. The column receives over 40 monthly posts from citizens on livelihood issues such as children’s education, property management, and urban management, with a 99.1% response rate and 98.2% citizen satisfaction.

Strengthening mobile platforms is a crucial component of county-level converged media center construction. The timeliness, convenience, service orientation, and interactivity of mobile clients effectively compensate for the shortcomings of traditional media while complementing their authority and credibility. The development of county-level converged media mobile clients should leverage advantages, highlight features, achieve precise positioning, serve the public, and build a “small, agile, and fast” converged media ecosystem at the grassroots level, exploring a development path suitable for county-level media.

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Author Biography: Xu Haiqin (1984-), female, from Changle, Shandong, editor, research direction: new media communication arts.

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

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