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## Online Platform Operations for Children's Newspapers and Periodicals: Exploration, Challenges, and Strategies (Postprint)

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### Abstract

Against the backdrop of the Internet era, educational children's newspapers and periodicals have successively invested in the construction of online new media platforms. However, the traditional publishing industry exhibits numerous deficiencies in the process of platform construction and operation. This article constitutes a work summary of the author's several years of operating the WeChat public platform matrix, micro-website, and related online platforms for *Times Learning Newspaper*. Drawing from practical work experience, the author systematically reviews the exploratory journey of online platforms for educational children's newspapers and periodicals, confronts their operational predicaments, and proposes corresponding countermeasures, thereby providing a valuable reference for the development of such platforms to a certain extent.

### Full Text

#### Preamble

#### Online Platform Operation for Children's Educational Newspapers: Exploration, Dilemmas, and Countermeasures

*(Jiangsu Phoenix Press and Media Co., Ltd., Nanjing, Jiangsu 210009)*

**Abstract:** In the Internet era, children's educational newspapers have actively invested in the construction of online new media platforms. However, the traditional publishing industry exhibits numerous deficiencies in platform construction and operation. This paper summarizes the author's several years of experience operating the *Times Learning Newspaper* WeChat public platform matrix, micro-website, and related online platforms. Drawing on practical work experience, the author reviews the exploratory journey of online platforms for children's educational newspapers, confronts the operational dilemmas they

face, and proposes corresponding countermeasures, thereby providing a valuable reference for the development of such platforms.

**Keywords:** children' s newspapers; WeChat public platform; online; platform matrix; micro-website

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WeChat is a free instant messaging application for smart terminals launched by Tencent in 2011. Over the past decade, it has fundamentally transformed how people access information and socialize. The WeChat Public Platform, introduced by Tencent in 2012, is a new media platform built upon WeChat' s massive user base. According to Tencent' s 2020 financial report, WeChat has surpassed 1.2 billion users, with over 120 million users posting daily to Moments, 360 million users reading public account articles, and 400 million users utilizing mini-programs. This vast user base and rapid information dissemination have prompted all industries to join the WeChat Public Platform ecosystem. Numerous publishing enterprises, recognizing the market potential, have actively invested in platform construction by leveraging their inherent advantages in content, brand, and dissemination.

As an educational children' s newspaper, *Times Learning Newspaper* has established its WeChat public platform matrix. Beginning with the launch of its main service account "Times Learning Newspaper" and the mathematics subject subscription account "Times Learning Math," the newspaper has subsequently opened five additional public platforms. In the process of platform operation and development, the author has accumulated operational strategies while encountering various challenges. This paper organizes these experiences for shared reflection.

### 1.1 Leverage Traditional Publishing to Establish Platform Positioning

Constructing an online platform requires first determining its functional positioning. A precise and clear positioning forms the foundation for long-term, effective operation. For children' s educational newspapers, online platform construction is based on existing print readership and represents an extension of the newspaper brand from offline to online. Therefore, platforms must rely on traditional publishing content and users to clarify positioning and ensure successful operation.

*Times Learning Newspaper* targets primary and secondary school students, par-

ents, and teachers, focusing on quality education and learning methodology guidance. The *Times Learning Newspaper* service account aims to serve traditional publishing users by disseminating information, promoting the brand, sharing resources, and maintaining user relationships on the basis of extensive print distribution. The subject-specific subscription accounts function as vertical classifications within the WeChat platform matrix, further subdivided by discipline to provide users with high-quality subject content. Service accounts and subscription accounts complement and mutually reinforce each other.

### 1.2 Curate Complementary Content to Enhance User Stickiness

The traditional publishing industry has always adhered to the principle of “content is king.” In online platform operation, users care about what content they can obtain. Content push notifications from children’s educational newspaper platforms must align closely with user needs, complement print newspaper content, and ensure that users gain value both offline and online, thereby enhancing user loyalty [1]. The print content of *Times Learning Newspaper* primarily consists of subject-specific learning method guidance, knowledge summaries, and related exercises. However, it lacks educational industry hot topics, extended reading of print content, and timely, effective interactive communication. This gap provides a “source of vitality” for content planning on the WeChat public platform.

For example, the print edition of *Times Learning Newspaper* (Junior High Math) features knowledge mind maps summarizing chapter content, while the WeChat public platform pushes detailed explanations of relevant chapters. This creates complementary content and format, enabling readers to achieve deeper, more systematic learning of knowledge modules.

### 1.3 Transform Operational Philosophy and Enhance Service Awareness

From the perspective of traditional editors, children’s newspapers merely transmit information and provide resources to readers through print media, creating significant temporal and spatial distance from readers. Online platform construction enables instantaneous content delivery to users, narrowing the temporal and spatial gap between editors and users. This transformation demands a shift from traditional product-oriented thinking to service-oriented thinking, providing not only quality resources but also timely, effective services.

Before establishing the *Times Learning Newspaper* WeChat public platform, answers to exercises in the print newspaper could not reach users promptly, causing considerable inconvenience. After launching the service account, subject editors uploaded relevant answers online in a timely manner, resolving this issue. This experience made us realize that users’ consumption of our print newspaper does not mark the end of editorial work; users have additional needs requiring service and resolution. Based on this understanding, we enhanced our

service awareness in subsequent platform operations, planning more content and features to meet other user needs.

#### **1.4 Maintain Regular Operations and Emphasize Brand Extension**

The development of new phenomena proceeds from nonexistence to existence. Although children's newspaper online platforms are built upon traditional print products, converting offline users to online users also begins from zero. This requires maintaining regular platform operations to attract more user resources and extend the newspaper brand from offline to online.

After several years of development, the *Times Learning Newspaper* WeChat public platform matrix now has 400,000 users. Throughout this process, each platform has consistently pushed graphic content, strengthened user interaction, published WeChat QR codes in the print newspaper, and promoted the platform through offline activities. The online platform extends the newspaper brand, while the brand influence of the print newspaper has further expanded on the online platform.

#### **1.5 Advance Product Development and Improve Platform Functionality**

Online platform construction transforms numerous offline users into online users. However, platform functions have limitations. To better serve users, platforms must explore potential user needs, develop more targeted products, and improve functionality during construction.

By 2016, after two years of operating the *Times Learning Newspaper* WeChat public platform with accumulated users and increasing content, the editorial department began planning and developing the *Times Learning Newspaper* micro-website to categorize content logically. This allowed users to conveniently locate needed resources by subject and grade level. In 2020, the editorial department further developed the *Times Learning Newspaper* Error Notebook WeChat mini-program. By scanning corresponding test paper codes, the mini-program helps users collect errors from print newspapers, meeting personalized needs and further improving platform functionality.

#### **1.6 Focus on Dissemination Effects to Serve Traditional Publishing**

Children's newspaper online platforms are built upon traditional print newspapers and should, in turn, serve traditional publishing. Therefore, content planning and functional development must center on the traditional publishing business, ensuring that every graphic push represents brand promotion and every function development reflects user need feedback.

In early 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, primary and secondary school students could not return to school, making home-based learning the mainstream model. To facilitate "continuous learning despite class suspension,"

the editorial department immediately provided learning resources for frontline teachers and students, opened electronic versions of some newspapers and other products, and fully opened *Times Learning Newspaper* online video course resources. We also produced and published WeChat graphics and related links for immediate access. Relevant WeChat graphics achieved over 30,000 daily clicks at their peak, with total cumulative clicks exceeding 150,000 and total resource downloads surpassing 400,000. This initiative not only provided quality learning resources promptly but also served as direct brand promotion for the newspaper.

## 2. Operational Dilemmas and Countermeasures for Children's Educational Newspaper Online Platforms

### 2.1 Traditional Thinking Constraints Limit Content Advantages

In today's Internet era, traditional publishing will not end but should actively seek change. In practice, we cannot break free from traditional thinking constraints in publishing models and work methods. The publishing industry remains stuck in the traditional print publishing process of "writing, publishing, and selling books," lacking integration and innovative thinking. Consequently, content advantages are limited by constrained platforms.

**Countermeasure:** To address this dilemma, efforts must focus on content innovation, technological innovation, and market innovation. We should actively integrate new technologies and communication methods, extend industrial chains and service segments according to Internet industry models, comprehensively apply new technologies, and develop new product forms based on our content advantages.

### 2.2 Insufficient Editor Participation Leads to Homogenized Content

Operating a successful online platform for children's newspapers requires quality content resources, which demands deep editor participation. However, current industry development shows that traditional editors lack sufficient understanding of the Internet and digital media, resulting in inadequate participation in the integrated development of publishing. This leads to unoriginal, unremarkable platform content planning. When users do not highly recognize platform content, it affects editors' enthusiasm for content planning, creating a vicious cycle.

Currently, original content on children's newspaper online platforms mostly consists of previously published articles and activity reports. Other content is largely reposted, resulting in serious homogenization. If we remove "newspaper introduction," "subscription," and "submission entry" information, most children's newspaper online platforms become virtually interchangeable.

**Countermeasure:** To address this dilemma, efforts must focus on column setup, content planning, and push frequency. Traditional editors should learn

more, observe more, practice more, and reflect more to master Internet technologies proficiently and develop Internet thinking. We must cultivate a group of integrated media editors dedicated to platform content innovation.

### 2.3 Insufficient Human Resources Lead to Absence of Professional Operations

Constructing children's newspaper online platforms requires not only content editor participation but also professional platform operators. However, most children's newspapers do not prioritize platform operations, with editorial staff serving dual roles as operators. The lack of professional operators results in fragmented content operations and hinders the online extension of newspaper brands [2].

**Countermeasure:** To address this dilemma, we must strengthen platform operation and management by establishing a professional online platform operation team. This team should consist of employees with both editorial experience and interest in new media operation. WeChat public platform operation teams should not be one or two staff members fighting alone, should not be traditional editors working part-time, and certainly should not be outsourced to operation companies.

### 2.4 Lack of Technical Talent Creates Technological Bottlenecks

Currently, digital media editors in children's newspapers are mostly traditional editors working part-time. Although they can complete basic content planning and production, their incomplete understanding of digital media creates significant limitations, particularly in implementing the operational strategy of "advancing product development and improving platform functionality." Traditional editors cannot realize new functions through new technologies.

**Countermeasure:** To address this dilemma, we must recruit professional technical personnel who understand and recognize the content resources and brand advantages of children's newspapers. Technical professionals should communicate extensively with traditional editors to redevelop and reuse traditional content resources, leveraging technical advantages to develop new product forms.

### 2.5 Weak Overall Marketing Hinders Resource Monetization

For children's newspapers, online platform construction represents more than just an additional channel; it requires...

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

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