

Strategies for Leveraging WeChat Official Accounts to Expand the Dissemination Capacity of Traditional Print Media: A Postprint Analysis

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Abstract

The development of Internet information technology is advancing rapidly, accelerating the convergence of traditional print media and new media. As a new media platform, WeChat Official Accounts have become a standard configuration for traditional print media; however, their potential has not been fully realized by some print media. By effectively leveraging WeChat Official Accounts and capitalizing on their communication advantages, traditional print media can not only provide more and better information services to the general public, but also continuously expand their communication capacity, influence, and credibility. This paper focuses on media convergence and intends to analyze the advantages, existing problems, and operational strategies in the utilization of WeChat Official Accounts by traditional print media.

Full Text

Strategies for Leveraging WeChat Official Accounts to Expand the Communication Power of Traditional Print Media

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Abstract: With the rapid development of internet information technology, the integration of traditional print media and new media is accelerating. WeChat official accounts, as a form of new media, have become standard for traditional print media, yet their potential remains underutilized by some organizations. By effectively leveraging WeChat official accounts and maximizing their communication advantages, traditional print media can not only provide better information services to users but also expand their own communication power, influence, and credibility. Focusing on media convergence, this paper analyzes

the advantages, existing problems, and operational strategies of WeChat official account usage in traditional print media.

Keywords: traditional print media; WeChat official account; media convergence; official account operation; expanding communication power

With the rapid development of internet information technology, traditional print media face increasingly severe competitive pressures. To survive and thrive in this environment, traditional print media must pursue media convergence by leveraging new media technologies. As Xi Jinping emphasized during the 12th collective study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee on January 25, 2019, “We must apply the achievements of the revolution to promote in-depth development of media convergence.” [1] As a new media platform, WeChat official accounts possess unique advantages over traditional print media in information dissemination and have become standard equipment for traditional print media, providing an excellent platform for transformation and development. For example, according to a report from *Media* magazine’s WeChat official account, in January 2021, *Hebei Daily* published 197 issues with 561 articles, reaching 28.56 million readers through its WeChat official account. Similarly, *Beijing Daily* achieved 11.8 million reads on its WeChat official account in January of the same year.

2. Communication Advantages of WeChat Official Accounts Deserving Special Attention from Print Media

Why do some traditional print media fail to make good use of WeChat official accounts? Based on my analysis, some suffer from small operational scale, limited strength, and insufficient personnel—particularly lacking talent proficient in new media technologies—making effective operation impossible. Others have inadequate understanding of the communication advantages offered by WeChat official accounts. Additionally, some media organizations, confident in their existing advantages and unconcerned about circulation or revenue, remain satisfied with the status quo and are unwilling to invest in developing their WeChat presence.

These problems arise primarily because some print media have not sufficiently valued or understood the advantages of WeChat official accounts in information dissemination. Therefore, I will outline these advantages here in hopes of drawing attention to them:

Advantage 1: Real-time information dissemination. WeChat official accounts utilize mobile internet technology, enabling real-time information 传播. Users can browse news and receive messages anytime and anywhere via their smartphones, making information release far more timely than print media. Newspapers and periodicals have fixed publication cycles, meaning even breaking news must wait until the next issue to reach readers. Consequently,

print media's timeliness cannot compare with WeChat official accounts powered by new media technology.

Advantage 2: “One-to-many” communication with high reach and strong interactivity. WeChat official accounts facilitate “one-to-many” information dissemination with extremely high delivery rates and make it easy for users to forward, share, and interact with the platform and other followers. Interaction is an excellent method for maintaining user stickiness; responsive engagement gives users a sense of presence and satisfaction, increasing readership and activity levels. Traditional print media, by contrast, largely represent one-way content output with weak audience interaction. WeChat official accounts, however, provide an interactive platform where readers can provide immediate feedback, and both users and operators can quickly access data on readership and forwarding volumes. This enables print media to communicate and interact with users instantly and conveniently, strengthening information dissemination effects. In terms of convenience and bidirectional interaction, print media's audience feedback mechanisms are inferior to those of WeChat official accounts.

Advantage 3: Diverse presentation formats. WeChat official accounts offer greater diversity than print media, which is limited to text and images within fixed layout spaces. WeChat enables rich media communication combining images, text, audio, and video, better attracting users and facilitating comprehensive communication and interaction.[3] In today's environment, text plus images no longer satisfy consumers. WeChat official accounts support more dynamic formats such as audio, GIF animations, and versatile emojis—presentation methods that WeChat users genuinely enjoy.

Advantage 4: Integration of content production strengths with mobile internet advantages. WeChat official accounts can combine print media's content production advantages with mobile internet capabilities. Additionally, through this platform, print media can strengthen new media communication talent development based on their content advantages, leverage their resource strengths, and even integrate content resources from multiple channels.

1. Problems in Traditional Print Media Operation of WeChat Official Accounts

Over the past decade, new media based on internet and digital communication technologies, supported by smartphones and other mobile devices, have profoundly impacted traditional print media. This has left many traditional print media, particularly news, current affairs, and social comprehensive publications, struggling to survive or even facing crisis. Beyond new media impact, traditional print media suffer from their own shortcomings. Although they possess advantages that new media lack—such as resources, platforms, talent, facilities, and public opinion gatekeeping mechanisms—they increasingly fail to meet contemporary demands in reporting presentation, content layout, news timeliness, and audience interactivity, poorly satisfying audience information needs.[2]

Under these circumstances, most traditional print media recognize the importance of WeChat official account platforms. However, many still neglect them. Even when accounts are established, they exist in name only, with infrequent updates, slow information release, and monotonous reporting styles lacking images or videos. Some print media WeChat accounts post frequently with images but fail to coordinate with print media for in-depth reporting. These accounts not only fail to provide better information services or attract users and followers but also cannot help expand print media's communication power and influence.

3. Four Key Points for Traditional Print Media Using WeChat Official Accounts

As demonstrated above, WeChat official accounts, as a new media platform, offer greater advantages in information dissemination than traditional print media and can serve as a platform for media convergence. If traditional print media can effectively utilize WeChat official accounts, they can leverage new media technological advantages to compensate for their own shortcomings and expand their communication power and influence. To operate WeChat official accounts effectively and expand communication power, I believe the following four points should be emphasized:

3.1 Emphasize Timeliness in Information Release on WeChat Official Accounts

When news or important reports break, strive to be the first to report on WeChat official accounts, seizing the high ground of communication timeliness. Follow-up in-depth reporting can then be provided through print media. This approach leverages the respective advantages of both platforms, creating complementary reporting angles and presentation methods that form a cohesive reporting synergy, enabling traditional print media to achieve convergence development through new media. *People's Daily* consistently prioritizes timely reporting of major current affairs and social news, fully utilizing the new media advantages of its WeChat official account to promptly release numerous political and social news reports. These posts are not only timely but also feature rich images and videos, undoubtedly attracting and satisfying users' needs for news browsing and information acquisition. Evidently, *People's Daily's* WeChat official account has played an enormous role in expanding the media's communication power and influence—an impact that print media alone cannot match.

3.2 Strengthen Convergence Media Awareness and Provide More Convenient Information Services

Beyond using WeChat official accounts for information release, traditional print media should also promptly post key articles and reports from their publications to facilitate mobile browsing and access for audiences and users. For example,

the party journal *Qiushi* and academic journal *Media* both timely post their latest and previous issues' tables of contents and articles on their WeChat official accounts, providing convenient and thoughtful information services. For these two periodicals, this approach helps convert potentially lost print readers into WeChat users or followers, thereby expanding print media' s communication power and influence.

3.3 Fully Utilize New Media Technology to Compensate for Print Media' s Lack of Format Diversity

WeChat official account platforms integrate multiple media formats including text, audio, video, images, and emojis. Particularly, their audio and video functions are unavailable in print media.[4] Traditional print media should maximize new media technology usage, presenting content on WeChat official accounts through diverse methods to attract users and meet their comprehensive visual and auditory information needs. Taking *People' s Daily' s* WeChat official account as an example, it not only reports various news with strong timeliness but also provides abundant accompanying images and videos. This compensates for print media' s lack of format diversity while continuously attracting user attention to the official account. Many news reports on *People' s Daily' s* WeChat account easily reach 100,000+ reads, with countless users participating in comments and discussions.

3.4 Enhance Service Awareness to Win User Stickiness

For instance, *People' s Daily' s* WeChat official account has established "Cloud Classroom" to teach knowledge about Chinese classics and arts, continuously attracting and retaining users by providing additional services. *Qiushi* magazine' s WeChat account features three main sections—"Reading the Journal," "Convergence Media," and "Selected Works"—on its primary interface. Users clicking these titles enter secondary interfaces containing numerous columns such as "Qiushi Online Commentary," "Study Notes," and "Qiushi Videos," where they can browse various reports. *China Calligraphy and Painting News* not only publishes main reports but also frequently releases information about exhibitions and sales of calligraphy and painting works, enabling users to access other potentially interesting information while reading articles.

Beyond these four points, traditional print media must eliminate two concerns to operate WeChat official accounts effectively and leverage their communication advantages. First, do not worry that limited strength prevents successful operation. Some believe that operating a WeChat official account requires massive human and material resources. This is not necessarily true. Small-scale print media with limited strength can still operate successful accounts by valuing their role, maintaining high posting frequency, ensuring rapid updates and timeliness, and including more images. Second, do not fear that WeChat official accounts will undermine print subscriptions or advertising sales. Some worry that increased WeChat users will lead to lost print subscribers. This concern

is unnecessary because print media's lost audience will otherwise migrate to other new media platforms regardless. The trend toward media convergence is unstoppable; even if print media refuses to adopt new media technologies or platforms like WeChat official accounts, they cannot prevent declining audiences and subscriptions. However, well-operated WeChat official accounts can bring convenience to audiences and users, attract more followers, and convert lost print readers into WeChat users. As the user base grows, it will naturally increase revenue—for example, through advertising on WeChat, publishing tables of contents or article summaries to guide users toward print purchases, or developing paid online reading services.

New media technology continues to evolve rapidly. For traditional print media to survive and develop, they must fully utilize WeChat official accounts as a new media platform, leveraging their information dissemination advantages to provide audiences with as much timely, in-depth information service as possible. This will drive deeper media convergence development and expand media communication power, influence, and credibility.

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

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