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Multi-channel Efforts to Strengthen the Influence of Mainstream Traditional Media: Reflections on the Breakthrough of County-level Converged Media Centers (Postprint)

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Date: 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

Traditional media and emerging media are not in a replacement relationship, but rather an iterative one. Currently, county-level media convergence centers are being constructed in full swing. From the perspective of platform building, this paper takes county/city newspapers in county-level media convergence centers as examples and provides several reference examples for content development.

Full Text

Preamble

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Journal: China Media Technology, 2019(12): 18-19

DOI: 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2019.12.001

Although the Danyang Media Convergence Center was not among the first batch established in Jiangsu Province, it has benefited from Danyang's well-developed and comprehensive media landscape. While physical integration of the center has not yet fully commenced, the conceptual integration among its personnel began several years ago.

1. Strengthening Internet Thinking: From “1+N” to “N+1”

In the internet era, reporting news solely through print newspapers is undoubtedly fighting the enemy’s strengths with one’s own weaknesses. Based on this understanding, *Danyang Daily* has actively advocated for “running a ‘newspaper’ beyond the printed page,” seizing the window of opportunity to develop multiple new media platforms including WeChat, Weibo, Danyang News Network, and a mobile app. Through nearly five years of effort, it has gradually formed a “1+N” dissemination pattern (one newspaper + N new media platforms). The *Danyang Daily* fresh client has exceeded 30,000 downloads, its Weibo account has over 135,000 followers, its WeChat account has surpassed 160,000 followers, and even its youngest platform, the Toutiao account, has 29,000 followers—far exceeding the newspaper’s circulation of 30,000 copies. The total reach of *Danyang Daily*’s all-media matrix has surpassed 350,000, making it not only a leader in media convergence development among county-level newspapers in Jiangsu but also a “stabilizing anchor” influencing and guiding both online and offline public opinion in the Danyang region, further consolidating and demonstrating the mainstream values of traditional media.

In 2018 alone, *Danyang Daily*’s WeChat platform produced over 180 articles with more than 10,000 clicks each, accounting for approximately 50% of all posts. On Toutiao, the article “*Danyang Native Yan Chengtao KO’d Three Times in 40 Seconds—Wants to Fight Xu Xiaodong Again: See What He’s Thinking?*” garnered over 1 million clicks. On Weibo, a post capitalizing on the trending topic “*Danyang Removes ‘Fan Bingbing’*” reached more than 1.4 million views. On November 30, 2018, our exclusive report on a Danyang mother who passed the teacher certification exam while accompanying her child was reported by dozens of mainstream new media outlets including *People’s Daily* Client, *People’s Daily* Online, Xinhua Net, CCTV Net, Reference News Net, and Sina News, generating over 20 million total clicks within nearly a week. The inspirational “Danyang Mother” became a national internet sensation, and Danyang frequently appeared in major media, significantly boosting the city’s visibility.

1.1 Producing More Viral Content

Centering on the Party’s work and serving the overall situation is our duty and main business. Regardless of difficulties, this main thread must never be loosened or deviated. When covering emergencies such as heavy rain or snow, many online media and self-media focus on disaster impacts and losses. Since 2017, we have changed our conventional reporting approach by shifting perspective to ordinary people, highlighting volunteers and disaster relief efforts. Articles like “[Live] *Facing the Strongest Rainstorm: A Touch Called Perseverance, A Phenomenon Called Civilization...*” and “*Surprise! Danyang Snows! Astonishment! Snow Disappears Overnight!*” have turned every severe weather event into an opportunity for positive energy aggregation, with these news pieces becoming viral content on *Danyang Daily*’s new media platforms.

On December 1, 2019, Danyang hosted its first half marathon. This was a major event attracting nationwide attention, and news media had to demonstrate their value through such coverage. How could we effectively make our voice heard first and attract more traffic? “Live broadcasting” emerged as a viable solution. Subsequent events proved that if we had not conducted live broadcasting that day, online self-media and civilian photography organizations would have become the protagonists of Danyang’s “Half Marathon,” putting us in a rather passive position. As of December 3, the live broadcast page had 80,853 views, with a total of 85 articles published.

1.2 Creating More Innovative Products

As a new media platform under mainstream media, we typically maintain a serious and orthodox image, though exceptions have become the norm. In 2019, we placed special emphasis on this approach when covering heartwarming news. Stories like “*Live Here and Become a Top Student?! Every Child in Danyang’s ‘Top Scholar Building’ Attends Provincial Danyang High School + Key Universities—The Reason Is Astonishing!*”, “*‘What Are You Doing! Danyang Bus Driver Suddenly Shouts…Video Records the Incident’*”, and “*Danyang Woman Parks Car in Someone Else’s Spot, Gets a Note! Here’s What It Says…*” increased heartwarming news coverage by over 50%, with each piece receiving more than 10,000 clicks on new media platforms within 24 hours.

Regarding the ban on fireworks and firecrackers implemented in Danyang’s urban area on New Year’s Day 2019, we conducted multiple rounds of creative campaigns covering H5 pages, special topics, WeChat posts, and advertisements. Among them, the H5 relay campaign for the fireworks ban integrated interactivity, knowledge, and entertainment, attracting over 10,000 participants.

2. Strengthening Conceptual Reform: Build Platforms Where the Readers Are

Journalism is also a service. As reader interests shifted from forums to Weibo, WeChat, Toutiao, and other platforms, *Danyang Daily* followed its audience. In recent years, under the “Danyang Daily” or “Danyang News Network” accounts, we have established presence across forums, Weibo, WeChat, Toutiao, NetEase accounts, and People’s Daily accounts, delivering quality *Danyang Daily* content to readers through various channels. Readers may not necessarily receive *Danyang Daily* information through the traditional printed page, but despite diverse methods and numerous channels, the source of information remains *Danyang Daily*.

Currently, *Danyang Daily* has achieved one-time news collection with multi-platform distribution. The synergistic effect among print newspapers, WeChat, Weibo, websites, and outdoor platforms is increasingly evident, forming a new communication pattern where new media platforms “quickly” report news while print media “carefully” produces in-depth content. At the “Third China News-

paper New Media Conference” hosted by the China Newspaper Association, *Danyang Daily* ranked among the top 20 county-level party newspapers in China for new media influence, one of only three in Jiangsu. Moreover, *Danyang Daily* has joined the *People’s Daily* Central Kitchen distribution system and cloud platforms of major central media like Xinhua’s Live Cloud, amplifying Danyang’s voice on higher-level platforms.

2.1 Deepening Localization

We focus on strengthening three major sections around “one high, one old, one young” : “One high” refers to Party and government officials at all levels, enterprise leaders, and village cadres; “one old” refers to elderly readers who mostly subscribe to the newspaper; and “one young” refers to students and junior reporters. We further strengthen government affairs news and people’s livelihood news, optimize service sections such as Health Weekly, Great Love Danyang, Life Services, and Business Online, and enhance the *Education Weekly* by pushing it into campuses while enriching activities for junior reporters and creating features on parenting, growth, and experiential learning.

By carefully building social media platforms for Health Weekly, junior reporters, and car enthusiasts based on mobile internet, our connections with these three audience segments have grown closer through the development of their respective new media matrices.

2.2 Focusing on Media Convergence

Through the operation mechanism and assessment system of the central kitchen, we have forced transformation among editorial staff to achieve “N” priorities in content production, forming a converged media production pattern where “new media is faster and more dynamic, print media is slower and more elegant.” Recently, with the popularity of short videos, *Danyang Daily* has extended its reach to Douyin (TikTok). After registering an account, we initially posted multiple short video products collected by reporters and editors without adding personnel or investment. Once editing skills mature, we will identify opportunities during the “Two Sessions” or major local events to advance strategically, aiming to quickly establish a new platform.

2.3 Advancing Community Building

We further encourage and support the development of small new media accounts within the organization, motivating these self-media platforms to cultivate vertical 细分 audiences and continuously expand and optimize their reach. Simultaneously, we require all editorial staff to establish work-related WeChat and QQ groups, develop followers based on work realities, expand social circles, and create a pattern where everyone must expand their social network, with each person’s social circle serving as a dissemination platform for the organization.

3. Strengthening Dissemination Innovation: Operating and Publishing Multiple Government New Media Accounts

At present, Danyang’ s various government departments have increasingly high requirements for new media content production. To better serve central work and demonstrate the newspaper’ s capabilities, building a competent new media editorial team is essential. Over the past five years, relying on its strong content production capacity, *Danyang Daily* has strengthened its own new media “content + platform” while also enhancing technical and editorial output. As of December 10, 2019, we have operated over a dozen content platforms and WeChat public accounts for Danyang’ s Party Committee and government agencies. Among them, the Danyang Release WeChat account hosted by the Danyang Municipal Party Committee’ s Propaganda Department receives content and technical support from *Danyang Daily*. After two years of operation, its follower count has grown to nearly 60,000, and it won the “Jiangsu Government Affairs and People’ s Livelihood Service Award” —the first provincial-level award for a Danyang government affairs WeChat account.

Beyond WeChat public platforms, *Danyang Daily*’ s editors and technical staff have collaborated to undertake website content support, record management, and technical support for the Danyang Municipal Government website cluster, Danyang Civilization Network, and Danyang People’ s Hospital. Quality news content and materials are collected and published across all platforms in the first instance, amplifying *Danyang Daily*’ s channel value.

In the internet environment, not only are we changing, but our service targets’ needs are also evolving. Facing various user demands, *Danyang Daily* personnel treat customer requirements as their own work standards. Sometimes when customers raise needs in the evening, we resolve them as early as the next morning. Some customers temporarily request special page production to improve inspection records, which we deliver within five days through overtime work without reducing normal operations. When customers ask if we can implement advanced practices from elsewhere, we always provide positive responses within our capabilities. Some manuscripts have been revised 19 times, and we patiently cooperate each time. Our service portfolio continues to expand, including websites such as Danyang Propaganda Network, Danyang Development Zone, Danyang People’ s Hospital, and Danyang Charity Network; WeChat accounts including Danyang Release, Danyang Justice, Danyang Charity, Danyang Transportation, Danyang Planning, and Danyang High-tech Zone; and operation services including updates on Danyang-related news on China Danyang Network.

Leveraging transformation and development, Danyang Daily has gradually improved its personnel quality, platform influence, and channel value. Transformation and development of traditional media has only a starting point, no end point; only better, no best. With the establishment of Danyang Media Convergence Center, we will forever remain on the path of exploring transformation and development.

[1] Yu Guibing, Zhu Jiangda. Carving a New Path for Transformation Development in Change and Constancy [J]. Urban Party Newspaper Research, 2018-09-10.

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

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