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Strengthening New Media Platforms to Consolidate and Enhance the “Four Forces” of Party Media: Practice and Exploration of Qianxinan Daily in Guizhou in Consolidating the Mainstream Position and Promoting Communication Capacity Building (Postprint)

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Abstract

Through securing project funding support, Qianxinan Daily has focused on strengthening new media platforms and promoting media convergence development, which has effectively facilitated the communication capacity building of local Party newspapers. The establishment of a “2+N” media platform has made it the most important publicity and public opinion front in Qianxinan Prefecture. Qianxinan Daily has been promoted to a first-level Party newspaper, with China Qianxinan Website and its official Weibo account consistently ranking among the top 10 media outlets in Guizhou in terms of influence, thereby consolidating and enhancing the communication power, guidance power, influence, and credibility of mainstream Party media.

Full Text

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Building Strong New Media Platforms to Consolidate and Enhance the “Four Capabilities” of Party Media: Practices and Explorations of the Guizhou Qianxinan Daily in Strengthening Its Mainstream Position and Promoting Communication Capacity Building

Abstract: The Qianxinan Daily has secured project funding to build robust new media platforms, promoting media convergence and significantly enhancing

the communication capacity of local party newspapers. It has established a “2+N” media platform, becoming the most important public opinion front in Qianxinan Prefecture. The Qianxinan Daily has been promoted to a first-tier party newspaper, with its China Qianxinan Website and official Weibo ranking consistently among the top 10 media outlets in Guizhou, thereby consolidating and enhancing the propagation power, guidance power, influence, and credibility of the mainstream party media.

Keywords: media convergence “2+N” ; propagation power; platform construction

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Preamble

Due to regional economic development disparities, local party newspapers across China face significant financial gaps, particularly those in underdeveloped western minority regions with weak economic strength. Relying on their own resources to improve newspaper and online infrastructure, these outlets find new media investment extremely challenging. The Qianxinan Daily seized the opportunity of central government support and special project funding for underdeveloped local media, securing funds to improve operational conditions, build robust new media platforms, and continuously consolidate and enhance the propagation power, guidance power, influence, and credibility of local mainstream media in the new media era.

To better connect local news with external audiences, the newspaper secured support from competent authorities to launch a pictorial supplement, using visual storytelling to intensify publicity for Qianxinan. Additionally, leveraging its strong relationships with regional photography enthusiasts and internal resources, the newspaper created a photo archive that gradually became an important visual historical record of major prefectural events. Although these initiatives achieved certain results and gained recognition from some leaders, the newspaper’s decision-makers clearly recognized that this development pace was too slow, the methods overly simplistic, and innovation lacking. Continuing on this path would cause press and publishing operations and digital construction to seriously lag behind, unable to keep pace with new media development trends.

1. Paper Media Goes Online: Establishing a Diversified Media Structure

The Qianxinan Buyei and Miao Autonomous Prefecture is located at the junction of Yunnan, Guizhou, and Guangxi provinces, in the southwestern corner of Guizhou Province at the southeastern edge of the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau. Established on May 1, 1982, it is one of the youngest autonomous prefectures among China's 30 minority autonomous prefectures. Constrained by historical, natural, and transportation factors, the prefecture's economic and social development has long remained in an underdeveloped and under-explored state among Guizhou's nine prefecture-level cities and the nation's 30 minority autonomous prefectures.

Founded in October 1984, the *Qianxinan Daily* operates as a local public institution with differential fiscal appropriations (adjusted to full budget management in 2014), with nearly two-thirds of its annual expenditures requiring revenue from circulation and advertising. From its founding through 2009—a span of 25 years—the financially constrained prefecture government provided minimal infrastructure and hardware investment totaling less than 1.5 million RMB.

Under the leadership of the Qianxinan Prefectural Party Committee and government, the newspaper's party committee led all staff in diligent entrepreneurship, achieving certain improvements in operations and working conditions. By 2009, the newspaper possessed a nine-story office building and a three-story printing plant. Beyond its traditional newspaper, the outlet established a website to adapt to media development trends, enabling local news to better connect with external audiences. The newspaper also secured support from competent authorities to launch a pictorial supplement, using visual storytelling to intensify publicity for Qianxinan. Leveraging its strong relationships with regional photography enthusiasts and internal resources, the newspaper created a photo archive that gradually became an important visual historical record of major prefectural events.

In early 2009, in accordance with the *Interim Measures for the Management of Special Central Government Funds for Local Cultural, Sports, and Media Development*, the Qianxinan Daily applied to the Guizhou Provincial Press and Publication Bureau for special central government funds for local media development through the *Qianxinan Daily Information Technology Construction Project*. That year, the State Press and Publication Administration and the Ministry of Finance approved the project, allocating 1 million RMB in special funds. The Qianxinan Daily combined these special funds with self-raised capital to purchase Active Directory servers, file servers, advertising management systems, firewalls, network management software, editorial software, and a batch of computers and cameras. This represented a major step forward in the newspaper's editorial system and website information technology construction, effectively resolving long-standing issues such as insufficient software and hardware capacity to handle increasing news 稿件 and images, severe storage

space shortages, and problems in news gathering, editing, layout composition, data management, remote transmission, and office automation. This also laid the network information foundation and platform for the party newspaper to provide authoritative, timely, and effective information products for all ethnic groups and boost poverty alleviation efforts.

In early 2013, following the prefectural party committee' s directive to “secure funding to intensify investment in news gathering and editing, network equipment procurement, and technical transformation, enhance the functional role of the *Qianxinan Daily* and China Qianxinan Website in news propaganda, achieve ‘newspaper extending inward, network expanding outward,’ and position this as an urgent strategic task for Qianxinan’ s external publicity and opening-up,” the newspaper again applied for special central government funds through the *Qianxinan Daily News Gathering and Editing, Network Equipment Procurement, and Technical Transformation Project*, receiving another 1 million RMB in support for comprehensive upgrades to its news gathering and network equipment technology.

2. Newspaper-Web Interaction: Exploring New Media Convergence Paths

During its development, the Qianxinan Daily continuously explored new forms of media expression. During that period, mobile newspaper products flourished nationwide, becoming the “fifth media” after newspapers, radio, television, and the internet. Seizing this trend, the newspaper launched the *Qianxinan Mobile Newspaper*. From its inception, it actively secured support from China Mobile, China Unicom, and China Telecom to simultaneously release the same product across all three platforms—a pioneering move in Guizhou’ s industry that earned peer recognition.

The *Qianxinan Mobile Newspaper* prioritized content development from the start, providing personalized services tailored to audience characteristics to avoid homogenization. It promptly published local and regional news while highlighting lifestyle information on food, clothing, housing, transportation, shopping, and entertainment, offering comprehensive life and service information. The newspaper also enhanced interactivity by organizing mobile photography contests to increase user loyalty. At its peak, the mobile newspaper reached over 60,000 subscribers, generating additional revenue for the newspaper for a period.

Although the mobile newspaper achieved short-term success and boosted morale, it represented a transitional product in the new media era. With the gradual impact of 3G and 4G technologies, it faded from the stage. To achieve sustainable development, the newspaper had to adapt to the times and seize opportunities—it could not afford to wait.

Under these circumstances, in 2011 the Qianxinan Daily proposed the strategy of “using newspaper-web integration to drive media convergence,” strengthen-

ing new media platform construction while running its print media effectively, enabling both to develop in parallel. Despite severe funding constraints, the newspaper thoroughly studied and leveraged policies to secure information technology construction subsidies from the Qianxinan Prefecture Industry and Information Technology Commission, building the prefecture' s portal website—China Qianxinan Website.

Relying on the China Qianxinan Website, the Qianxinan Daily integrated its digital newspaper, *Today' s Qianxinan* pictorial, and mobile newspaper while establishing official Weibo accounts on Sina and Tencent and launching the China Qianxinan WeChat public account, initially building a multimedia convergence platform. To further advance newspaper-web integration and fully leverage the *Qianxinan Daily* as the main channel and position for news propaganda in Qianxinan Prefecture, the newspaper applied for and received 250,000 RMB in special media convergence development funds from the Guizhou Provincial Press and Publication Bureau in 2015. This funding also leveraged several million RMB from the prefecture' s tourism development special funds to build a tourism website and tourism new media platform.

3. Building Platforms: Strengthening the Mainstream Position of Party Media

In 2014, like other prefecture-level party newspapers, the Qianxinan Daily encountered a major transformation opportunity when the central government issued the *Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Convergence Development of Traditional and Emerging Media*. This guidance represented a major strategic deployment by the Party Central Committee to consolidate propaganda and ideological cultural positions and strengthen mainstream public opinion, heralding another great development spring for the Qianxinan Daily to further promote convergence between traditional and emerging media.

Seizing this opportunity, the Qianxinan Daily comprehensively upgraded the *Qianxinan Daily' s* news content and layout while redesigning the China Qianxinan Website. Simultaneously, it formed a task force to tackle challenges, developing the “Palm Qianxinan” APP mobile news client and the *Qianxinan Daily* “micro-newspaper” platform—a process that took only one month at the Qianxinan Daily but would have required two to three months at other media outlets. On February 2, 2015, the Qianxinan Daily held a launch ceremony for its three new media platforms. Liu Chong, then Deputy Director of the Guizhou Provincial Cyberspace Affairs Office, and Yang Qingwu, Deputy Director of the Guizhou Provincial Press and Publication Bureau, attended the meeting and affirmed the newspaper' s bold attempt at traditional-new media convergence. Deputy Director Yang Qingwu noted: “The simultaneous launch of the Qianxinan Daily' s three platforms aligns with the provincial party committee' s requirements. We hope the Qianxinan Daily will boldly innovate, enable these platforms to bear fruit quickly, and explore a successful path for media convergence development.” Both leaders highly praised the newspaper' s

approach of achieving maximum effect with minimum investment and expressed immediate support for project funding.

Accordingly, the Qianxinan Daily applied for and received 250,000 RMB in special media convergence development funds from the Guizhou Provincial Press and Publication Bureau, leveraging several million RMB from the Qianxinan Prefecture tourism development special funds to build a tourism website and tourism new media platform. The newspaper has now achieved a “2+N” media matrix, where “2” refers to the *Qianxinan Daily* and “China Qianxinan Website” as the main platforms, and “N” represents multiple platforms including websites, APPs, WeChat, Yixin, Weibo, micro-newspapers, and pictorials, laying a solid foundation for media convergence.

The “2+N” media matrix fully demonstrates the Qianxinan Daily’ s commitment to serving the central work and uniting people’ s hearts. Coupled with the newspaper’ s persistent efforts to improve original news quality, the Guizhou Provincial Press and Publication Bureau promoted the *Qianxinan Daily* from first place in the second tier to the first tier in its 2016 annual assessment of prefecture-level party newspapers, reflecting high-level recognition of the newspaper’ s quality. In 2017, the Qianxinan Daily’ s official Weibo @ChinaQianxinan and China Qianxinan Website ranked third and seventh respectively among Guizhou’ s most influential top ten Weibo accounts and websites. The newspaper also received the China Newspaper Media Convergence Development Innovation Unit award and was named one of China’ s “Top Ten Media Convergence” city party newspapers.

4. Converged Communication: Enhancing Public Opinion Guidance Capability

The successful establishment of the “2+N” media platform has enabled interactive synergy with traditional media during major events and important conferences, gradually forming the prefecture’ s most important public opinion front and external publicity platform. During the “Beautiful Chinese Villages·Wanfenglin Summit” and the “International Mountain Cuisine Festival and Three Bowls of Rice Noodles Festival” held in Qianxinan Prefecture, the Qianxinan Daily mobilized all reporters for full media action. While conducting graphic live broadcasts of the conferences, the newspaper fully utilized new media methods for video livestreaming and video connections, widely attracting attention and achieving remarkable results—attracting over 20,000 viewers in less than one hour during the cuisine festival.

While generating heat through new media, the newspaper maintained depth in its traditional print media. During the summits, it published numerous in-depth articles such as “Qianxinan: Embarking Anew After the Mountain Tourism Conference, Adding Vitality to Tourism-Based Poverty Reduction,” “Harmony Between Heaven and Humanity·Mountainous Guizhou’ s Qianxinan Becomes a Global Model,” and “Deep in the Mountains and Waters, Creative Beauti-

ful Villages,” fully showcasing the highlights and experiences of Qianxinan’ s mountain tourism development and its successful practices in leveraging summits to promote opening-up, attract investment, and drive economic and social development.

On the Weibo platform, the “China Qianxinan” account launched a series of event-related topics such as “New Year’ s Eve Dinner in My Hometown,” “Celebrating Chinese New Year in My Hometown,” “Hometown Snacks,” and “Beautiful Chinese Villages · Wanfenglin Summit,” all of which received widespread attention and participation with numerous likes, forwards, and comments. On the WeChat platform, the “China Qianxinan” public account tailored content to dissemination characteristics, planning a series of user-friendly works with innovative content and formats. For instance, a minor infrastructure construction story was deeply processed into “Qianxinan Plays Big: 14.8 Billion RMB to Build Key Projects for the Second International Mountain Tourism Conference,” accompanied by numerous photos. Another article used internet buzzwords: “Wanfenglin Riverside Walkway’ s ‘Face King’ Architecture Arrives with High Energy, Directly Overturning the Friendship Boat in the Architecture World.” Many public accounts reposted these pieces, and users widely shared them. During the nearly half-year period around the summits, the WeChat public account’ s news posts exceeded 900,000 views, and the “China Qianxinan” WeChat public account surpassed 100,000 followers.

The key to media convergence lies in sustained effort to avoid falling behind in an ever-changing era. In news propaganda, the Qianxinan Daily fully combines the authority of traditional media with the speed, convenience, and novelty of new media platforms, accelerating the depth and breadth of convergence to enable various target users to obtain what they need and maximize multimedia coverage. The newspaper has also planned and improved a new round of platform upgrades, developing new platforms and building a cost-effective “central kitchen.” In this project, the newspaper secured the “Ethnic Language Digital Publishing Project,” establishing a big data editorial platform system, ethnic language publishing system, and OA office system, while adding servers, computer rooms, and other equipment. Command center system construction is progressing in an orderly manner. Currently, the newspaper is planning to launch a converged media e-commerce platform system, establishing a major events office and organizing activities such as “junior reporter training” and summer camps to achieve organic unity of economic and social benefits.

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

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