
AI translation · View original & related papers at
chinaxiv.org/items/chinaxiv-202310.01949

Research on the Development Status and Trends of Chinese Self-Media Under the Internet New Normal: Postprint

Authors: Li Xu

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

Abstract

As individual users engage deeply with the internet, self-media—encompassing forums, blogs, microblogs, WeChat, and emerging video platforms—has become the primary channel of expression. Both the selection of self-media and the act of voicing through it constitute a continuous process of self-reflection for each audience member or operator. Confronted with the rise of new media and the flourishing of Weibo, WeChat, and news client applications, unified identification has become increasingly difficult. Against this historical backdrop, self-media is inevitably niche-oriented and precisely targeted.

Full Text

Outlook and Analysis · Research: A Study on the Development Status and Trends of China's We Media Under the New Normal of the Internet

Abstract: With individual users' deep engagement with the internet, We Media—encompassing forums, blogs, microblogs, WeChat, and emerging video platforms—has become the primary channel of expression. Both the selection of We Media platforms and the act of voicing through them represent a continuous process of self-reflection for each audience member or operator. Faced with the rise of new media and the flourishing of the “two micros and one end” (Weibo, WeChat, and news clients), achieving unified “identity” has become increasingly difficult. Against this backdrop, We Media is destined to be niche and precisely targeted.

Keywords: Internet New Normal; We Media Platforms; Profit Models; Development Status; Development Trends

CLC Number: G206

Document Code: A

Article ID: 1671-0134(2018)07-121-02

DOI: 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2018.07.044

Author: Li Xu

In 2014, the Central Leading Group for Cybersecurity and Informatization was established, completing the national top-level design for internet security. This move had a profoundly positive impact on China's internet development, safeguarding cybersecurity and fostering a secure, stable, and healthy online environment. Through legislative measures to regulate internet behavior, China began to enter the "new normal" of the internet.

1. We Media Types

The term "We Media" (or "We media") was first coined by American scholars in 2003, also known as "citizen media" or "personal media." Although it attracted considerable attention at the time, it failed to truly develop and expand until 2013, when the rise of WeChat Official Accounts led increasing numbers of people to engage in We Media platforms to disseminate their values and gain influence within their circles. In Western countries, We Media is generally regarded as personal media rather than a form of media for enterprises or other organizations.

The membership system represents the shortest and most economical path for businesses to establish connections with users. The reason why major We Media accounts can develop membership systems and profit from them is initially due to the large base of loyal fans accumulated through high-quality content. However, whether such membership systems can be sustainably maintained depends not only on continuously producing quality content but also on how well the community platform is constructed.

In 2017, readership of Official Accounts had already declined severely. Once headlines fail to be eye-catching, the open rate plummets to a mere 2%, with the average user reading rate at only 5%. This marks the so-called "5+2 era" for Official Account operations, indicating that the accounts we operate have effectively lost contact with 95% of our followers. At this point, follower data displayed in the Official Account backend becomes devoid of marketing value.

4.2 Information Overload and Scarcity of Quality Content

From topic selection to headline crafting, marketing accounts exhaust their ingenuity in content creation. However, among the numerous trending topic pushes, only a few offer in-depth analysis, while most are merely patched-together click-bait articles. Consequently, the proliferation of useless information leads to an overflow of homogeneous content, compounded by a scarcity of high-quality material. It is evident that in the future, We Media lacking original and high-quality content will be eliminated by the market.

4.3 Changing Objectives

According to data from the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), as of December 2017, China's internet user population reached 772 million, with a penetration rate of 55.8%, exceeding the global average (51.7%) by 4.1 percentage points and the Asian average (46.7%) by 9.1 percentage points [?]. With user growth difficult to maintain at a rapid pace, capturing more of users' time has become the new objective for We Media and platform operations. As content becomes increasingly abundant, users' patience and attention are ultimately limited, and the number of readers engaging in fragmented reading continues to grow. High-quality, time-saving, and concise content will become crucial for competing for user time and enhancing user experience.

4.4 Rise of Audio and Short Video, Accelerated Content Iteration

The audio and short-video industries continue to attract capital favor due to their inherent advantages. According to the "2017 We Media Trends Report" released by Penguin Intelligence, numerous audio and short-video We Media ventures have secured financing in the tens of millions or even hundreds of millions. In terms of content, short videos are shifting from broad entertainment to vertical niche segments. Compared with browsing text and images, audio, video, and live-streaming content better immerse users, prompting them to spend more time than they would on reading. Well-produced and creative audio and video programs have become the best means of attracting traffic. As regulatory oversight gradually intensifies, the market enters a rapid reshuffling period, with content iteration accelerating and large amounts of low-quality content being eliminated. We Media with sustained original content capabilities and innovative spirit can obtain greater traffic and revenue support. For platforms, beyond seizing quality resources and controlling content quality, maintaining social media operations is also critical.

4.5 From Individual to Institutionalization and Matrix Operations

We Media that have obtained financing are placing greater emphasis on diversifying commercial profit models, with many gradually transitioning from We Media to products. Quality IP (intellectual property) is scarce, and aggregating multiple IPs can generate greater commercial value. After all, content entrepreneurship is a protracted battle, and as the number of We Media accounts continues to grow, individual capacity is limited. Through team operations managing n+1 accounts and platforms trending toward matrix-based operations, high-traffic accounts are beginning to transform.

4.6 Diversified Commercial Monetization and Improving Regulation

As content distribution channels multiply, more We Media are experimenting with monetization approaches such as content + e-commerce, scaled content payment, and community operations. Some financed We Media are gradually

reducing their reliance on advertising as the primary profit channel. Following the initial shift from free to paid content, the first round of reshuffling in the knowledge payment sector is imminent. Whether for large knowledge payment platforms like the “Dedao” App or niche brand knowledge apps fighting alone, user renewal and continued purchases will become the industry’s focus after a year of popularity. Undoubtedly, knowledge payment has promising development prospects. As regulatory authorities have strengthened intellectual property protection for digital content in recent years, users’ willingness to pay for knowledge has increased, and the public’s awareness of intellectual property rights forms the foundation for scaling the paid content market. For currently scarce high-quality content, users who recognize its value and are willing to pay for it have already reached a considerable scale.

4.7 Multi-Channel Distribution According to Platform Characteristics

In the future, major traffic platforms should identify their positioning, as audiences differ according to each platform’s characteristics. Multi-channel distribution has become the norm for We Media operations. According to the “2017 We Media Trends Report” released by Penguin Intelligence, nearly 60% of We Media have established presence on four or more traffic platforms. Content entrepreneurs and platforms are interdependent: quality content serves as the entry point for platform traffic, directly determining the platform’s characteristics, user base, and influence, while the platform’s content distribution capability also affects content readership. It is precisely this factor that drives content creators toward cross-platform development. Traffic remains the foundation for We Media commercial monetization, and most We Media will continue to rely on traffic platforms.

4.8 Strengthening Online-Offline Integration

Integrating online and offline represents a major trend in We Media development—namely, merging content, community, and products to create “new retail.” The first step is to continuously create quality content, then leverage community operations for monetization, and strive to develop customized products. WeChat Mini Programs clearly demonstrate WeChat’s intention to connect with the offline world. Extending online influence offline to provide upgraded services for fans, the strategies for content entrepreneurship continue to evolve.

“The medium is the message”—this is the classic assertion of renowned media theorist Marshall McLuhan. Its meaning is that media represents an extension of the human body, senses, and spirit. Today, more than half a century later, McLuhan’s media theory has been further validated: each of us is We Media, and human beings themselves are part of the medium. We Media accounts represent the output of the author’s own ideas, values, and thoughts, a point fully demonstrated on social networking sites and in friend circles. In other words,

media has changed the way people exist, reconstructing human perception and our approach to the world.

[?] Zhang Yixuan. Analysis of the Current Status, Issues, and Prospects of We Media Financing in China [J]. Youth Journalist, 2016(28): 49-51. (Author' s affiliation: Dalian Art College)

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

Source: ChinaXiv –Machine translation. Verify with original.