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Ninghai News Network: Facilitating the “Main Channel” for Online News Post-print

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Abstract

Amidst the rapid development of the Internet, how county-level media can integrate existing resources, seize online positions, and strengthen the main channel for online news represents an important challenge currently facing county-level media. Ninghai News Network has forged a path of online news development with distinctive local characteristics by adhering to platform expansion as its foundation, news strengthening as its focus, and cultural enlivening as its highlight, thereby providing practical experience for county-level media to establish the main channel for online news.

Full Text

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Ninghai News Network: Unblocking the “Main Channel” for Online News

Abstract: In the context of rapid internet development, how county-level media can integrate existing resources, seize online positions, and strengthen the main channel for online news represents a critical challenge. Ninghai News Network has forged a distinctive path for local online news development by expanding its digital presence, strengthening news content, and invigorating cultural offerings, providing practical experience for county-level media seeking to establish a primary online news channel.

Keywords: news main channel; mobile terminal; online news; internet culture; media convergence

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By Ma Yiwei

Ninghai News Network, launched in April 2003, stands among the earliest county-level websites established in Zhejiang Province. The platform has earned numerous accolades, including “Top Ten Innovative Cultural Communication Websites in Zhejiang Province,” “Zhejiang’ s Most Locally Distinctive News Website,” “Zhejiang New Media Construction Excellence Award,” “Ningbo’ s First Batch of Civilized Website Demonstration Units,” and “Ningbo’ s Top Ten Websites,” establishing itself as Ninghai’ s most authoritative portal.

In recent years, Ninghai News Network has proactively adapted to the new normal of media development, capitalizing on accelerated new media growth to expedite construction of its online presence and enhance news gathering and editing capabilities, thereby strengthening its capacity to guide online public opinion and forging a “main channel” for online publicity.

1. Expanding the Online Presence

In the era of media convergence, Ninghai News Network treats the expansion and strengthening of its online presence as a prerequisite for integration. Seizing the rapid development opportunities of new media, the organization has accelerated its digital platform construction, establishing a network presence encompassing “two micros and one terminal” that covers all mobile access points, successfully transitioning from PC-centric to mobile-centric distribution.

WeChat public accounts have developed rapidly, with the network’ s role as a main channel gradually becoming prominent. Ninghai News Center has built a core WeChat matrix led by two major accounts—“Ninghai Release” and “Ninghai News Network”—supplemented by “Taste of Ninghai” and “Ninghai Parent Help,” which collectively drive the development of WeChat accounts across county departments and townships. Through continuous innovation and expanded reach, the network’ s main channel function has become increasingly visible. Specifically, “Ninghai Release” has 85,000 followers and consistently ranks among the top municipal government release accounts in Ningbo for comprehensive competitiveness, while “Ninghai News Network” has 190,000 followers and maintains a leading position among fiercely competitive media WeChat accounts citywide. Responding to the segmented online market, we launched the “Taste of Ninghai” WeChat account in mid-2016, focusing on Ninghai cuisine and tourism services, which quickly gained popularity. Within just one year, it has attracted 20,000 followers with an average readership of 3,000, demonstrating high user stickiness. “Ninghai Parent Help,” launched in January 2017, accumulated nearly 10,000 followers within six months, gradually establishing a firm foothold in the education sector.

A WeChat release matrix has taken initial shape, enabling synchronized de-

velopment across county departments and townships. Leveraging its technical and media advantages, Ninghai News Network provides technical support for township and departmental WeChat platforms, with over 20 departments and townships entrusting their operations to the network. Additionally, Ninghai News Network has established a WeChat matrix on the “Ninghai Release” account, enabling real-time linking and simultaneous publication of important content to expand online influence. The network has also integrated information resources to establish news release channels. The County Party Committee Propaganda Department issued a dedicated document establishing a “Ninghai Release” WeChat assessment system that incorporates all county departments and townships into the release framework, creating a complete information reporting system. Building upon this foundation, Ninghai News Center has established an online correspondent team, strengthening information gathering capabilities, enriching content, enhancing readability, and effectively increasing readership and influence.

2. Strengthening Online News

During the recently concluded 15th Xu Xiake Tourism Festival in 2017, “Ninghai Release” achieved new heights in graphic push notifications. The independently produced article *Today, Ninghai Extends an Invitation to the World* reached over 100,000 views, while *First Release! Ninghai’s New Urban Promotional Video Shows You How Beautiful Ninghai Is* garnered 200,000 views. The *Leisurely Ninghai* urban promotional video achieved 500,000 views on Tencent Video, fully demonstrating the creative vitality of the Ninghai News Network team.

Consistently adhering to a content-is-king strategy, Ninghai News Network has intensified news planning efforts, focusing on the central work of the county Party committee and government while catering to netizens’ aesthetic preferences to produce a batch of WeChat masterpieces and a series of socially influential online reports.

In terms of content selection, the network consistently shoulders the responsibility of disseminating positive voices and showcasing positive energy, promoting truth, goodness, and beauty online while building a “Beauty” platform. We continuously focus on Ninghai’s development, highlighting its developmental beauty. Major news concerning Ninghai’s progress—including the announcement of Ninghai’s list of characteristic towns, the selection of an ancient village in our county among the nation’s 100 “Most Beautiful Ancient Villages,” construction of the Sanmenwan Bridge and connecting routes in the Ninghai section, and the establishment of the China-Germany International Health and Elderly Care Characteristic Town—has been released promptly, enabling residents to stay informed about Ninghai’s transformations and creating a favorable social atmosphere for the central work of the county Party committee and government.

The network also focuses on people’s livelihoods, showcasing spiritual beauty by using touching local stories to convey moral excellence. For instance, on

August 18, 2016, “Ninghai Release” posted about a financial aid project for 100 impoverished students in Ninghai, reaching the crowdfunding target within just 38 minutes. The following day, “Ninghai Release” published the article *38 Minutes, ¥20,475.41! Yesterday, Your Small Gesture of Kindness Warmed This Small Town!*, demonstrating goodwill and releasing “positive energy at your fingertips.”

Regarding presentation, the network insists on advancing with the times, using internet language to tell compelling online stories and building a “people-friendly” platform. We fully utilize new media’s integration of text, images, audio, and video effects, employing networked language and methods for multi-dimensional publication and expression to deliver content of interest to audiences promptly. In the widely praised article *Today, Ninghai Extends an Invitation to the World!*, we extensively used exquisite images paired with elegant, concise text to visually震撼 readers while touching them with succinct prose, sparking a sharing frenzy on social media. In 2017, we also prioritized introducing live-streaming technology, equipping basic facilities and training personnel to establish a live-streaming brand. We plan to broadcast important meetings, online surveys, festival activities, dialogues and interviews, and online training directly to the internet, leveraging the characteristics of online platforms—such as intuitiveness, speed, rich content, strong interactivity, unrestricted geography, and targetable audiences—to enhance on-site promotion effects. Both the County Party Congress and the County People’s Congress have been live-streamed, receiving widespread social acclaim and sparking a live-streaming trend in Ninghai.

In terms of online social responsibility, the network insists on delivering authentic information and establishing authoritative credibility, building a “clear and bright” platform. We consistently monitor online hotspots, effectively coordinate with relevant departments, and rapidly disseminate real-time images and information to keep citizens informed of actual conditions, effectively mitigating the impact of negative information and guiding online public opinion. On one hand, we operate a rumor-debunking column, maintaining interaction with higher-level propaganda media to regularly release authentic information and protect residents from misinformation. On the other hand, we pay close attention to domestic public opinion incidents, promptly notifying relevant departments about social events that trigger massive online reactions and actively participating in online opinion guidance by releasing timely facts and appealing to netizens for rational, objective treatment, achieving positive results.

Through creative publishing by its news team, Ninghai News Network has continuously improved its operational quality, with over 70 news works winning provincial and municipal journalism awards, placing it among the top county-level news websites in the province in terms of both quantity and quality of award-winning works.

3. Activating Online Culture

As a portal website, we consistently prioritize online cultural construction, advocating for a positive and healthy online cultural life, advancing cyberculture development, shaping a clear cyberspace, and leading the healthy development of the county' s online culture.

First, we have established a public welfare brand to gather netizen compassion. Since its establishment over a decade ago, Ninghai News Network has vigorously promoted mainstream values and gathered positive energy. Netizens have repeatedly formed volunteer teams through the Wenfeng Forum to engage in public welfare activities, transforming the forum into a caring platform. Among these, the “Leisurely Ninghai, Photos to the Countryside” initiative, launched in 2014, has had the broadest impact and become another public welfare brand. We organize netizens and photography enthusiasts to visit elderly residents in mountainous areas, providing free photo shoots and printed albums. Since its inception, the program has photographed over a thousand elderly people across 28 villages in five townships (subdistricts), generating positive social response and attracting widespread attention from provincial and municipal media, with coverage in *Zhejiang Daily*, *Ningbo Daily*, and *Ningbo Evening News*.

Second, we have established cultural brands focusing on cultural festivals and celebrations. One initiative involves hosting the Ninghai Wenfeng Network Culture Festival to showcase the network' s soft power in cultural development. On the tenth anniversary of Ninghai News Network in 2014, we planned and launched the first Wenfeng Network Culture Festival, featuring photography competitions, cultural performances, and charity activities that internally united netizens and externally demonstrated our cultural creativity, building reputation for Ninghai News Network' s entry into the cultural industry. Additionally, we support central work by providing creative backing for township festivals and departmental special initiatives. On one hand, we actively undertake township festival activities—for example, organizing a netizen matchmaking event during the Huchen Peach Blossom Festival, a music camping conference during the Yuexi Vicissitudes Festival leveraging our large hiker community, and a netizen visit experience activity during the Dajiahe Mass Culture Festival. On the other hand, we leverage our creativity to provide intellectual and network support for departmental activities. During the annual Xu Xiake Tourism Festival, we co-host the Ninghai Shopping Festival with the County Commerce Bureau and organize special snack shop selection events with the Industry and Commerce Bureau, creating a strong online atmosphere for the development of the online cultural industry.

Third, we have established activity brands to unite netizen strength. Netizens form the foundation of the network and constitute the main body of cultural activities. When planning online activities, we consistently place netizen participation at the core. Targeting the large hiker community on the Wenfeng Forum, we launched the “Wenfeng Invitation: Beautiful Countryside” large-

scale news interview activity, organizing netizens to visit townships such as Huchen and Chalu. Through special editions and interactive articles between journalists and netizens, we published interview pieces across multiple platforms, earning recognition from both townships and netizens. For photography communities, we annually plan photography competitions—for instance, during last year’s “Beautiful County” construction campaign, we launched the “Beautiful County” photography contest to guide netizens to focus on surrounding beauty and strengthen their sense of ownership. For netizens with strong social responsibility awareness, we launched online supervision activities. During the environmental improvement campaign, we collaborated with the County Comprehensive Law Enforcement Bureau on the “Snap Unsanitary Corners” initiative, calling on netizens to photograph and expose uncivilized phenomena for rectification. Such activities have advanced central work while educating participants through personal experience. Through these online activities, we have greatly enriched netizens’ cultural lives, prospered online culture, and provided strong support for creating a clear cyberspace.

The path ahead is long and arduous, but we must press forward with determination. In an era of ever-evolving new media, Ninghai News Network will forge ahead with an enterprising spirit, actively embracing media convergence to achieve new strides on a new journey.

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

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