

Brand Building for Local News Apps in the All-Media Era: A Study (Postprint)

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Abstract

In the context of the all-media era, the popularization of smartphones has made mobile applications a necessity in people's daily lives. The rapid development of mobile applications has brought disruptive changes to the media industry, giving rise to a batch of news applications. Local media, leveraging their own advantages, have successively launched their own news applications. To gain a foothold among numerous applications, local news applications with strong geographical limitations need to undergo brand packaging and enhancement in terms of basic element design, interface visual design, and interaction design.

Full Text

Research on Brand Building of Local News Apps in the All-Media Era

Abstract: In the all-media era, the proliferation of smartphones has made mobile apps an indispensable part of daily life. The rapid development of mobile apps has brought disruptive changes to the media industry, giving rise to a new generation of news applications. Leveraging their unique advantages, local media outlets have launched their own news apps. To establish a foothold in this crowded marketplace, local news apps—constrained by their geographic limitations—must undergo comprehensive brand packaging and enhancement across fundamental element design, interface visual design, and interaction design.

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Since the birth of the internet, the new media landscape has undergone continuous transformation. Driven by the vigorous development of mobile internet technology, big data, cloud computing, and integrated content-platform technologies, smartphones have become the primary choice for the general public due to their portability, large capacity, and convenient internet access. The proliferation of smartphones has given rise to mobile terminal applications, and within just a few years, these apps have become the main memory occupants on smartphones. In this era of rapid app development, the media industry has experienced disruptive changes, particularly in news media. To adapt to the transformation in communication models brought about by media evolution, news organizations have undertaken a revolutionary shift using internet thinking, resulting in the emergence of news apps.

News apps refer to third-party mobile applications specifically designed to provide news and information services. Local news apps represent a branch of this category. As traditional print media experienced market decline, local media outlets capitalized on their superior geographic positioning and the opportunities of the internet era to integrate and launch local news media apps tailored to meet the needs of regional users. These local news apps are grounded in local markets, providing vertical news content and services targeted at local user groups.

1.1 Geographic Characteristic

Most local news media apps are backed by traditional local media outlets, initially transplanting information from print media to digital platforms. Compared to other news media, they started relatively late but possess strong geographic characteristics, primarily rooted in local communities to provide regional news and information services, delivered to relevant user groups at appropriate times.

1.2 Specialization

Due to their strong geographic focus, local news apps can precisely target their user base, with all content sections configured according to the characteristics of these users. Through data-driven precision content 推送, interactive sharing, and personalized customization, they enhance user experience.

1.3 Comprehensiveness

Local news apps function not only as online news media but also as providers of local livelihood services. Beyond real-time news broadcasting, they can offer sections covering entertainment, photography, lifestyle, shopping, and more, integrating local all-media resources to achieve a combination of news information services and local vertical services.

2. Analysis of Basic Brand Image Design Elements for Local News Apps

The core of brand image design comprises two aspects: product appearance design and external brand promotion. This paper focuses on product appearance design, specifically the interface visual design of news app clients. As highly interactive new media platforms, apps incorporate not only the visual elements and composition methods found in traditional media but also those unique to mobile interfaces. Interface visual design serves as the appearance of news app products, directly influencing brand recognition capabilities. It utilizes visual symbols—including text, graphics, color, icons, and layout—to convey information and create the app’s visual identity.

2.1 Text Elements

As news products, text constitutes primary content in news apps, existing in three main forms: First, menu control text within page frameworks, which contains few characters but must emphasize hierarchy and enhance overall layout structure on mobile interfaces. Second, textual information within news content, which involves larger character counts and should avoid redundancy from long paragraphs; artistic font interface design can be employed to increase layout interest. Third, advertising copy in text form, which focuses on content and should adopt a clean, straightforward design approach.

2.2 Graphic Elements

In today’s fast-paced, high-pressure reality, “image-reading” has become the preferred reading mode for mobile users. For news apps to secure a position among numerous competitors, images have become exceptionally important. Graphics in news apps primarily consist of accompanying and illustrative images for news reports, mainly in the form of photographic images and illustrations. In this image-reading mode, such visuals become the main information carriers in news content, with design techniques primarily reflected in photography skills and image processing technology. For instance, adjusting image tones or maintaining stylistic consistency can effectively enhance visual brand recognition for news apps.

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2.3 Color Elements

Color carries more profound meaning in internet media app interfaces than in print media, serving not only to express emotions but also to create an appropriate reading atmosphere in conjunction with interaction design. Particularly for

content-focused news apps, interface colors must provide readers with strong visual impact and artistic appeal, ensuring that even if readers cannot recall specific interface features, the color scheme remains memorable.

2.4 Icon Design

Expressive logos are essential for brand success. Mobile app icons represent the primary visual manifestation of an app's brand identity, functioning as graphic symbols with referential meaning that must condense information effectively, facilitate memory, and enable rapid information transmission. Icons in local news apps can be combined with color to achieve distinctive recognizability and guidance, visually embodying the client's brand philosophy.

2.5 Page Layout

News app pages involve the rational and artistic arrangement of visual elements—including text, graphics, color, and icons—to deliver artistic and informational content to readers clearly and hierarchically. Given the substantial amount of reading information contained in news apps, the rationality and coordination of page layout become crucial factors for mobile terminals. In specific layout design, visual centers can reference the golden ratio principle, with page formats reasonably planned according to information hierarchy to avoid confusion from overly complex interface elements.

3. User Experience Design Analysis for Local News Apps

User experience refers to the holistic, subjective psychological feelings formed when users consume products and enjoy services, representing an essential factor for new media brand success.

3.1 Download Page Design

Brand packaging begins with the download page. Anyone who has downloaded the “Toutiao” app remembers its tagline: “What you care about is the headline.” This emotional appeal, which prioritizes user interests as the app's introduction, is particularly important for news apps that cannot attract users through humor or entertainment but must deliver authentic content. Therefore, emphasizing user-centered design and focusing on user experience to provide satisfactory news services is paramount.

3.2 Splash Screen Design

Since app launch requires time, users often encounter advertisements and instinctively seek a “skip” button—an unpleasant experience. Designing personalized splash screens can effectively improve user experience during app startup by addressing user needs, selecting images and text that align with user psychological requirements, stimulating user interest, and enhancing app stickiness.

3.3 Main Interface Design

News app main interface design requires comprehensive analysis of app functionality, user cognition, and behavioral characteristics to determine the overall color scheme, with daily updated news images also coordinated with this palette. For news apps, the main interface must provide guidance functionality, enabling first-time users to quickly understand the app's general content and visual style—what is commonly called “visual chemistry”—to capture users' first impressions. Particularly in high-pressure, fast-paced living conditions, improving reading efficiency is essential to maintain users' willingness to continue using the app.

3.4 Interaction Design

Interaction design for any app type must emphasize humanistic emotions, especially for long-term use apps where users develop memories and personal interaction habits. News app interaction design should focus on several principles: First, simplicity. Users primarily enter news apps to browse local hot news, so user operation processes should be simplified as much as possible. Second, respecting user habits. Functional interactions should be designed based on summaries of users' daily behavioral habits and psychological models, with system upgrades implementing gradual changes within psychologically acceptable boundaries for users. Third, timely user feedback. Designers must not only follow system requirements but also promptly listen to user reports and implement differentiated designs accordingly. Fourth, visual consistency in interaction functions. The overall visual style, color, and layout of interactive functions should maintain consistency with the main interface.

3.5 Personalized Innovative Design

Local news apps exhibit distinct regional characteristics. Beyond providing local news and information services, they can incorporate personalized services such as linking to local government services, local economic resources, utilities payment inquiries, private vehicle violation processing, medical services, local transportation information, and local supermarket shopping—practical, grounded services that significantly enhance local user stickiness. These represent effective means for native apps to attract and retain local users. In terms of spiritual and cultural services, collaboration with local cultural departments to develop traditional culture and intangible cultural heritage sections, providing training services for intangible cultural heritage skills, can attract local users working elsewhere to follow their hometown's cultural development, thereby enhancing engagement among non-local users.

Against the backdrop of the all-media era, mobile apps have broad prospects and massive user bases. In this context, news apps are transforming people's work and lifestyles, giving rise to news apps with regional characteristics and comprehensive functionality that keep pace with the mobile internet era. How-

ever, various problems and challenges also exist. Therefore, this paper analyzes app layout visual design elements, page layout language application, interface arrangements, and interactive user experiences. Combining the characteristics of local news clients, it proposes enhancing local news client visibility through brand thinking, improving local user stickiness through local service thinking, and maintaining user experience through content thinking, thereby enabling local news apps to leverage their distinctive advantages.

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