

How to Monitor the Media’s “Media”—An Exclusive Interview with Han Hui, Founder of Lanmeihui (Postprint)

Authors: Zhang Yu

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Abstract

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Full Text

Preamble

How to Monitor the Media’s “Media” — An Interview with Lanmeihui Founder Han Hui

By Zhang Yu

The original intention was to serve the media industry. By documenting the flow of capital, we are essentially upgrading our services to a higher level, which in turn makes the media circle value our content production even more.

China Media Technology: You previously worked on in-depth reporting at print media, and currently Lanmeihui also produces substantial content including deep-dive interviews. What differences exist between producing in-depth reporting for print versus new media in terms of topic selection, planning, interviewing, and editing?

Han Hui: While content production in new media certainly differs from traditional media, the fundamental principles remain interconnected. Take the recent “Mother Insult Case” as an example—the story was originally reported by a Southern Weekend journalist, but NetEase News played the most significant role in amplifying it into a viral sensation. Today, whether new media or traditional media, everyone covers such stories, some breaking the news and others providing analysis. Here, new media’s characteristic of presenting and

reconstructing scenes comes into play—it can embed short videos or animations into articles to show what happened at the scene, what the environment was like, and what suspicions arise from the on-site perspective. Traditional media, constrained by print, must rely on relatively static illustrations and charts paired with textual descriptions, which lack the immersive quality of video or animation.

China Media Technology: Lanmeihui initially focused on the “pan-media circle” before shifting attention to the entire content industry. Why consider such an expansion of your content territory?

Han Hui: Our initial focus was simple: how to serve media and media professionals. Therefore, our early content direction was to show media insiders the major and minor happenings within their circle. For instance, we published pieces on journalist rights protection, matchmaking for media professionals, and media recruitment—all conveying a service philosophy. In retrospect, Lanmeihui was born in a favorable era. First, content creators are receiving unprecedented attention. Beyond having their work recognized, copyright has gained importance like never before. Everyone is discussing IP and how much someone’s IP sold for—conversations that didn’t exist a few years ago. This elevated status of content creators is one prerequisite for our territorial expansion.

Since its founding, Lanmeihui has insisted on producing original content. Our founding team comes from media backgrounds with strong journalist DNA, so content is our greatest strength and what the industry recognizes us for most. Meanwhile, starting last year, we expanded our reporting scope from the media circle to the pan-media circle and internet sectors. This adjustment relates not only to transformations in the media industry but also to business model considerations. Rather than saying we expanded our content territory, it’s more accurate to say we amplified our distinctive characteristics by riding the wave of change.

Additionally, Lanmeihui tracks capital flows in the media circle. This is essentially a product production process. Technology drives new media development by actually expanding this entire workflow, so everyone from reporters to editors-in-chief to entire media organizations must adapt.

China Media Technology: What is Lanmeihui’s current financing situation, and what changes has capital brought to the platform?

Han Hui: Lanmeihui secured angel round financing at its inception. Although the amount wasn’t large, our ability to generate revenue through advertising and events means we aren’t heavily reliant on capital. Some might view this as a conservative approach, but we believe the priority is to first establish ourselves—to produce quality content and products. With those foundations, we can then consider further financing. Since we’re “selling,” we naturally hope for a good price.

China Media Technology: From July 2014 to today, what has been Lanmei-

hui's biggest transformation? How has it evolved, and how would you define Lanmeihui today?

Han Hui: If I had to describe the transformation from then to now in one word, it would be “taste” (尝). This has two meanings: first, “try” (尝试); second, “enduring hardship” (卧薪尝胆).

Starting in July 2014 as a WeChat public account and website operated part-time by a few people in the media circle, we've made many attempts. In 2014, many media professionals left to start businesses, and we were among them. Entrepreneurship itself is an attempt—to see if we could survive outside the traditional media system. To date, we've tried adjusting our content, intervening in media training and recruitment, experimenting with short videos, and will soon attempt productizing copywriting. Some projects succeeded while others failed. We continue strengthening our foundation, moving forward and discovering more possibilities.

As for enduring hardship, this needs little explanation—it's a term every entrepreneur understands. I can only say we're still “tasting the gall,” and we know exactly what that tastes like. In defining Lanmeihui, I would say it's “new.” Because no matter what we try, we are always learning and practicing the latest and best approaches.

China Media Technology: As a content entrepreneur, how does Lanmeihui layout and prioritize its presence across major social content platforms, and why adopt this approach?

Han Hui: While there are many platforms, our top priority remains sticking to our strengths. Fundamentally, we focus our content on media and the internet.

China Media Technology: Many self-media platforms have incorporated live streaming and short videos. Will Lanmeihui consider these formats, and what are your thoughts?

Han Hui: “Media Veteran” (传媒老炮儿) is actually our flagship video product. Host Lao Dou has become the program's brand. The show airs weekly on Sundays, runs about five minutes, and has produced nearly 40 episodes, averaging 100,000 views per episode across all platforms, establishing its position and voice in the industry.

Initially, we positioned this five-minute short video as discussing media circle history. Lao Dou, approaching sixty, isn't suited for cute posturing on camera. As the program gradually built its fanbase, we discovered that not only media insiders but also many young people enjoy the show. Recently, Media Veteran's focus has expanded from traditional media to new media. The entire editorial team for this program, except for Lao Dou, consists of post-90s generation members with fresh ideas. Combined with an older generation figure like Lao Dou fronting the show, this contrast itself becomes one of the program's characteristics.

China Media Technology: What reflections can you share on operating Lanmeihui since leaving traditional media to become a self-media entrepreneur?

Han Hui: To describe it in one character, it would be “confront” (怼). Many don’t understand this choice, but “confront” is a top-bottom structure that can be separated into “to heart” (对心). In operating Lanmeihui, I constantly ask myself whether I still maintain my original intention from when I resigned. I believe that no matter what we’ve tried or what hardships we’ve endured, our purpose and passion for serving the media have never changed. On this point, my “heart is true.”

Returning to the character itself, over the years I’ve often confronted myself with questions like, “Is this approach viable?” or “Would a different method be better?” This internal wrestling—myself and our team have experienced it countless times. As an operator and entrepreneur, I believe this “confrontation” is a process of examining and refining oneself and one’s project. It’s absolutely essential.

China Media Technology: What new developments will Lanmeihui pursue in 2017?

Han Hui: This year, on one hand, we will continue strengthening content refinement; on the other hand, we will make new attempts at commercialization.

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

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.