

An Exploration of the Transformation of Print Publications to New Media: A Case Study of Sanlian Lifeweek's WeChat Official Account Post-print

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Abstract

The emergence of new media has impacted the traditional publishing industry, prompting numerous publishing houses to venture into digital reading. However, blind transformation and the development of corresponding mobile applications not only entail substantial financial and human resource expenditures but may also fail to achieve anticipated outcomes, ultimately proving counterproductive. WeChat, as a representative of new media mobile terminals, integrates multiple advantages of new media—including immediacy, efficiency, and diverse presentation modalities—while maintaining cost-effectiveness. This study employs Sanlian Life Weekly as a case study to investigate how WeChat, as a new media platform, can function as an auxiliary tool for print publications in facilitating their transition to new media, particularly in aspects such as content planning and promotional marketing.

Full Text

Research on the New Media Transformation of Publications— A Case Study of Sanlian Life Weekly's WeChat Platform

Abstract: With the rise of new media, traditional publishing has faced significant challenges. While many publishers have ventured into electronic reading, blind transformation and the development of mobile applications not only consume substantial financial and human resources but may also fail to achieve desired outcomes. WeChat, as a representative new media mobile terminal, offers numerous advantages including instant delivery, diverse presentation formats, and low cost. This paper examines how Sanlian Life Weekly utilizes WeChat as an auxiliary tool for its print publication, exploring its role in content planning, promotion, and facilitating the transition to new media.

Keywords: new media transformation practice; Sanlian Life Weekly; WeChat; WeChat public platform

In 2011, Sanlian Life Weekly launched its WeChat public account “lifeweek” primarily to disseminate and promote its print magazine. The platform shares the same column structure and similar content with the print edition. As new media experience accumulated, Sanlian Life Weekly subsequently developed a series of online products including Sanlian Zhongdu, Sanlian Life Solar Terms, and Nut Life, undertaking more new media experiments to meet diverse reader needs. This paper uses Sanlian Life Weekly’s WeChat account as a case study to examine the practical interactive relationship between print publications and new media platforms.

1. Column Setup Corresponding to Print Magazine

Page columns constitute an important part of a magazine, reflecting its overall structure and conveying its editorial policies and positions. Sanlian Life Weekly’s WeChat platform closely mirrors its print edition in both content and categorization, primarily divided into three main sections (New Issue, Selected, One-click Order) and twenty sub-sections (including Film, Reading, Art, Theater, Music, Performance, Documentary, New Knowledge, Column, Ran Ran, Food, Fashion, Comics, Video, Solar Terms, Special Topics, Philharmonic, Readers’ Club, and E-commerce). This column structure better targets reader needs and increases reader participation while enabling timely feedback—advantages that the print edition lacks.

2. Content Presentation Combining New Media Characteristics

Content Composition. First, in terms of content selection, Sanlian Life Weekly’s WeChat account adapts to new media reading characteristics by reducing news and current affairs articles while increasing the proportion of culture, music, film, emotion, sports, and personality pieces. In its early stage, the account merely updated daily with excerpts from the print magazine without incorporating many new media-specific elements. As experience accumulated, it gradually increased the number of articles and added images to supplement the text. Subsequently, it incorporated hyperlinks allowing readers to access original articles and rich audio-visual content to help readers better understand the information being communicated.

Second, regarding title selection, most headlines on Sanlian Life Weekly’s WeChat account correspond to those in the print edition, being straightforward and easy to understand, such as the March 2014 articles “China’s Paparazzi: Zhuo Wei and His Homegrown Gossip” and “They Say Games Are Humanity’s Instinctual Preference, So Let’s Play a Game Today!” While most titles are extracted from the print edition, they are often modified to accommodate contemporary readers’ habit of selecting articles based on headlines, creating intrigue to attract attention. For example, the February 2014 article “Is Woody

Allen Innocent?” employs such a strategy.

Finally, in image selection, the public account adheres to the philosophy that “a magazine must have its own face to build a brand.” Selected images are high-resolution and thematically appropriate, ranging from tranquil and elegant to vibrant and eye-catching, capable of being both simple and attention-grabbing. Additionally, for readers’ convenience in saving and using images, most pictures in the Sanlian series of public accounts are unedited and watermark-free.

It is also worth noting that many WeChat accounts publish advertisements for profit, creating cluttered pages and causing readers to accidentally click buttons. Sanlian Life Weekly’s WeChat account carries minimal advertising, and the advertisements it does publish mostly promote its own products, maintaining a clean and elegant page layout with clear advertising information that does not create visual disturbance even for readers who choose not to view them.

Presentation Methods. Regarding presentation methods, new media advantages are evident not only in convenience and speed but also in its display modes. First, **bidirectional interactivity**: utilizing internet and wireless technology to transcend temporal and spatial limitations, increasing opportunities for audience engagement. While publishing content, the platform encourages readers to upload articles, publish information, and express viewpoints. Sanlian Life Weekly’s editors reply to comments below articles, maintaining communication with readers and enhancing feedback effectiveness. Second, **composite diversification**: this manifests in rich content, diverse formats, emphasis on innovation, and discovery of new themes. Additionally, value-added services are incorporated, adding e-commerce services while satisfying audience information and entertainment needs. Hyperlinks are the most frequently used multimedia method across the Sanlian series of accounts, through which readers can access other original articles and past issues, or be redirected to Sanlian Bookstore’s web pages and online store to purchase books directly [1]. Third, **heterogeneous segmentation**: traditional media has long followed a path of “homogeneous broadcasting” using point-to-mass communication. New media, particularly internet-based audio-visual new media, breaks away from traditional point-to-mass models, creating multiple new interactive communication modes including point-to-point, mass-to-point, and mass-to-mass, transitioning from traditional media’s “audience-dominated” approach to an “audience-dominant” model.

3. Development and Utilization of Print Magazine Resources

The development and utilization of information resources can become topics for an issue, columns, or individual articles. These contents can be arranged differently based on real-time situations and trends. For instance, although Sanlian Life Weekly is a current affairs and lifestyle magazine, it does not extensively cover the “Two Sessions” political conference. In early 2013, it published only five short articles covering topics such as pension systems, urbanization, and

income distribution. In 2014, it published no articles on the Two Sessions, and in 2015, it published only one promotional piece about the print edition's special issue "China's 2015 Economy: The Dual-Engine Era." In contrast, the more lifestyle-oriented topic of "milk" received significantly more attention. On November 15, 2013, three articles were published about milk, covering its history, dairy enterprises, the milk market, and milk-based recipes. Over a month later, three more articles were published on milk-based recipes, milk source safety, and milk packaging design. Similarly, the topic of "New Year goods" was repeatedly mentioned before the Spring Festival. On January 23, 2015, it published "New Year Goods, New Year Flavor: Unbreakable Nostalgia"; on the 26th, it released "The Most Missed New Year Goods" in its Liangpin column; on the 28th, it introduced "New Year Goods: Local Specialty Stores" and "Sanlian Prepares New Year Goods for You"; and on the 30th, it published "Sanlian Notes: A Paper's Ink, A Taste of Memory." This demonstrates that Sanlian Life Weekly's WeChat account derives from but distinguishes itself from the print edition, focusing more on life and experience, much like its tagline: "A magazine that advocates for life."

Furthermore, resource utilization extends beyond the resources themselves to include derivative resources. In 2014, while introducing baking, Sanlian Life Weekly's WeChat public account also opened baking classes for pastries and cakes, allowing readers to participate through hands-on experience.

4. Mutual Promotion Between Print and New Media

From the perspective of print publication promotion and publicity, Sanlian Life Weekly's print edition, as a widely circulated publication with large distribution, has a highly targeted audience and obvious promotional effects. Most readers who subscribe to or purchase the print magazine are also willing to read magazine content through the WeChat public platform. Therefore, using small spaces in the print magazine for promotion can effectively publicize its WeChat public account.

From the perspective of new media promotion and publicity, WeChat, as a leader among social media platforms, has a massive user base. Sanlian Life Weekly leverages this platform for promotion and publicity, reaching more groups and audiences through interpersonal communication—a highly effective dissemination method that enhances word-of-mouth without incurring promotional costs. Additionally, readers increase their sense of participation through offline activities, establishing more connections with the magazine. Meanwhile, posting content about these activities on social media platforms such as WeChat Moments and Weibo also serves as indirect promotion for Sanlian Life Weekly [2].

5. Conclusion

As a representative of new media terminals, WeChat serves not only as a promotional tool but also as a publishing platform. Compared with traditional

publishing and distribution channels, it offers numerous benefits and advantages: increased timeliness, convenient dissemination and feedback; diversity in both textual content and presentation methods, such as images, videos, audio, and hyperlinks; enhanced targeting that can lock in target readers and attract advertising investment; and anytime accessibility, portability, and storage convenience. Sanlian Life Weekly, with its rich resources and good reputation, possesses strong capabilities in writing, editorial staff quality, and financial capacity. Whether in production and publishing, text quality, or update speed, traditional print publications represented by Sanlian Life Weekly lead other public accounts [3]. Leveraging its own advantages and using the WeChat public platform as a new media experiment not only helps increase its own influence and competitiveness but also maximizes the utilization and dissemination of its resources and information, actively advancing into new media transformation while enriching the spiritual world of the general public and conveying more positive values to people.

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