

Postprint of Research on the Application of Media Convergence Methods in Sports News Apps

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Abstract

In the context of media convergence, sports news apps exhibit their distinctive communication characteristics and reporting advantages. Employing literature review and content analysis methods, and taking three sports news apps—Dongqiudi, Sina Sports, and Tiantian+—as research subjects, this study explores the application of media convergence methods in sports news apps, as well as the reporting advantages of sports news apps in the context of media convergence.

Full Text

Abstract

In the context of media convergence, sports news apps exhibit distinctive communication characteristics and reporting advantages. Employing the methods of literature review and content analysis, this study examines three sports news apps—Dongqiudi, Sina Sports, and Tiantan Plus—to explore the application of media convergence techniques in sports news apps and the reporting advantages they offer under media convergence.

Keywords: media convergence; sports news apps; reporting advantages

3.1 Analysis Based on Official APP Content

This section employs content analysis, with the sample comprising all news reports from three apps during the week of December 5–11, 2016. The analysis focuses on the “Headlines” section of Dongqiudi, the “Hot” section of Sina Sports, and the “Headlines” section of Tiantan Plus. User-generated content was excluded during the selection process to ensure that all selected reports were produced by official APP operators. The analysis establishes seven secondary

indicators for media forms used in reporting: text, images, audio, video, GIFs, data charts (tables), and H5 pages.

3.1.1 Timeliness of Reporting

In the mobile internet era, sports news apps face increasingly fewer temporal and spatial constraints in news dissemination, a advantage that becomes particularly prominent during major breaking events. Taking the tragic plane crash involving the Brazilian football club Chapecoense on November 29, 2016, as an example: the incident occurred at approximately 11:15 AM Beijing time. Dongqiudi released official news at 13:51, less than three hours after the event. Furthermore, Dongqiudi launched a live text broadcast for the incident at 14:26, which continued until 17:53, with a total of 96 updates during the period. Similarly, Tiantan Plus also immediately opened a “Disaster Live Broadcast,” which ran from 14:00 on the same day until 12:02 the following day, with 83 updates posted.

Within 24 hours of the incident, in addition to the live broadcast content, Dongqiudi published 48 related news articles, Tiantan Plus published 7, and Sina Sports published 46. As long as users have a mobile phone and network signal, they can read the latest reports on the incident anytime and anywhere. Sports news apps also push major events through banner notifications in the first instance. This immediacy and ubiquity of dissemination is unmatched by other media.

3.1.2 Comprehensiveness of Reporting Methods

A major advantage of sports news apps in content presentation lies in the diversity and comprehensiveness of media forms—what is referred to as “converged journalism.” As shown in Table 1, the reporting of the target apps demonstrates diversity in media forms. Dongqiudi’s weekly coverage utilized all seven media forms, Sina Sports covered six (excluding audio), and even the least diverse, Tiantan Plus, employed five media forms (excluding audio and H5 pages).

Combined with Table 2, we can further analyze the usage of media forms in the target apps. The proportion of reports using images exceeds 90%, with Sina Sports and Tiantan Plus reaching over 98%. It can be said that the combination of text and images has become the most fundamental and primary reporting format in current sports news apps. Next to text and images, video has also become an important form in sports news app reporting. Although in some apps, the utilization rate of video is not yet very high—Tiantan Plus, which relies on traditional print media resources for content production, is a typical example—there is no denying that the role and significance of video in sports news app communication is increasingly prominent. In the mobile media era, users’ demand for sports event information is no longer limited to static forms such as text and images; they show greater preference for video content, which has become a core element for mobile clients to capture users’ attention [5]. Ad-

ditionally, GIFs and data charts are also widely used. While enriching the visual effects of news reporting, GIFs possess unique advantages in presenting game details and key moments. Based on the characteristics of sports and sporting events, data constitutes an essential component of sports news communication and a basic information need for sports news audiences, making the form of data charts indispensable.

Table 3 and the three pie charts present data from the perspective of the number of media forms used in reports. It is not difficult to see that reports using a single media form have almost “disappeared” in the target apps. Reports employing composite media forms—so-called “converged news”—have become the basic content. The most common are “dual-media form” reports, primarily in the form of “text + image/video/GIF.” Reports that comprehensively use three, four, or even five media forms also account for a considerable proportion. Reports using three or more media forms (including three) account for 14.4% and 15% of content in Dongqiudi and Tiantan Plus, respectively, and reach as high as 31.9% in Sina Sports.

Based on the above data and analysis, the comprehensiveness of reporting methods in sports news apps is evident. Reporting content that integrates multiple media forms, combining the characteristics and advantages of each medium in communication, can achieve better dissemination effects.

3.1.3 Interactivity of Communication Process

Unlike traditional “one-way communication,” in sports news apps, audiences are no longer passive recipients of reporting content, nor are they the end point of communication. Instead, they can provide timely feedback and interaction on reporting content. Meanwhile, sports news apps are increasingly emphasizing interaction with users. The interactivity of sports news app communication is manifested in two aspects: interaction between operators and users, and interaction among users themselves.

To interact with users, operators employ various methods. Opening comment sections is the most basic form of interaction and a standard feature of every sports news app. Prediction games are also increasingly adopted by sports news apps, typically combined with matches and player award selections. For instance, Tiantan Plus conducted a “Golden Ball Prediction” activity before this year’s Golden Ball selection, allowing users to participate in predicting the award results for a chance to win prizes. Additionally, operators have attempted to add interactive forms such as questionnaires, tests, and votes to reports, demonstrating considerable effort.

In terms of user interaction, as mentioned earlier, users can exchange ideas and interact about reports or live broadcast content in comment sections or live broadcast rooms. A typical case worth mentioning is Dongqiudi’s live chat rooms. During match broadcasts, chat rooms are opened for fans to communicate. Dongqiudi’s particularly thoughtful design is that it simultaneously opens

multiple chat rooms, including a “Live Anchor Chat Room,” a “Fans Chat Room,” and a “Football Lottery Chat Room,” for users with different needs to communicate, allowing users to “go to their respective places and speak freely.”

3.1.4 Personalized Content Push

The ability to select news push content is a user-friendly feature of sports news apps and reflects their attention to users’ personalized needs. Content push personalization is particularly evident in two comprehensive sports news clients: Sina Sports and Tiantan Plus. These two apps have adopted a “channel-based” setup for content push. In addition to the three basic channels of “Hot,” “Recommended,” and “Columns,” Sina Sports offers 27 optional channels, including 13 under “Event List” and 14 under “Project List.” Users can select according to their interests, and the chosen channels will appear in their channel menu. In Tiantan Plus, besides the two basic channels of “Headlines” and “Customization,” there are 25 other channels for users to choose from.

Subscribing to “Columns” is another major method of personalized push. In Sina Sports’ “Columns” channel, there are 79 subscription accounts for users to select from, with column authors including well-known media professionals, athletes, and coaches. Dongqiudi’s “Senior Columns” are located in the “Dongqiudi Account” channel. After following a column, the updated content will be directly pushed to the user’s Dongqiudi app. Users select content they are interested in to follow, and the APP “customizes” news for users based on their selections. At this point, the sports news app on the user’s terminal becomes their “personal portal.” This “tailor-made” approach satisfies audience members’ personalized needs and actually helps users filter information.

3.2 Analysis Based on UGC Content

UGC (User Generated Content) is another important content production “front” in sports news apps besides officially released content. UGC content production in sports news apps mainly takes three forms: comments, community posts, and self-media.

Comments. Although brief and casual, comments indeed contain information and viewpoints conveyed by users and are sufficient to be regarded as user-produced content. Sports news apps set up dedicated comment sections for each news item, where users can not only post their own comments but also like or reply to other users’ comments. Dongqiudi even allows users to share comments to social platforms. In terms of presentation form and browsing method, user comments are, to some extent, short news or short commentaries. The saying, “I’m not here to read the news, I’m here to read the comments,” though somewhat exaggerated, is sufficient evidence of the brilliance and appeal of user comments.

Community Posts. The user community of sports news apps is the main gathering place for users and the primary origin of UGC content. Users can

follow different communities based on their interests and post content. Similarly, users can follow, like, and reply to each other's posts. Some high-quality posts are pinned, pushed to "Hot Posts," or even selected by operators for the news homepage.

Self-Media. The entry of self-media also brings rich UGC content to sports news apps. For example, in Dongqiudi's "Dongqiu Account" channel, besides "official entries" from major clubs and author columns, most of the stationed "Dongqiu Accounts" are self-media users. As shown in Figure 4 [Figure 4: see original paper] and Figure 5 [Figure 5: see original paper], the Dongqiu Account is an original content platform created by Dongqiudi for fans, encouraging fan users to produce content and providing support and assistance in content promotion and rights protection. Similarly, Tiantan Plus opened a "Campus" channel in conjunction with its "Tiantan Plus New Force" campaign, where all published articles are contributed by participating university students. To some extent, Tiantan Plus's "Campus" channel is also a self-media platform.

Although UGC content has its own various problems and limitations in terms of quality and authenticity, there is no denying that it has become an important component of content in sports news apps and possesses unique advantages. Clay Shirky's *Here Comes Everybody* mentions that social media can reach any corner that might have been previously unreachable. Due to cost issues, traditional media practitioners are always limited in number, and because they are limited, they cannot pay attention to every corner. In contrast, social groups are unlimited in number, and with greater numbers comes diversity, enabling them to reach any angle [6]. When "social groups" become active in sports news apps as content producers, they provide richer and even "massive" amounts of information, offer perspectives from more angles, and to some extent supplement professionally produced content.

Japanese scholar Hideo Ono once proposed that humans have three basic desires in information exchange: "wanting to know," "wanting to make others know," and "wanting to be known." After the desire to "know" is satisfied, users participate in the production and dissemination process of news content, and their need to express their own viewpoints and ideas is fulfilled. After receiving likes and replies from other users, they gain a sense of identity and achievement. As a result, users' enthusiasm for using the app increases, user stickiness is enhanced, and the audience market for sports news apps can be further developed.

4. Conclusion

As an emerging sports news integration and dissemination platform in the mobile internet era, sports news apps are playing an increasingly important role in sports news communication and have become one of the main channels for the public to obtain sports news information. At the same time, the rise of media convergence has brought changes and development opportunities. In this era (continued on page 50).

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

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.