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The Content Production Logic of Chinese We-Media Driven by the Platform Economy

Fengying Wu[1,2*]

[1]School of Advertising, Communication University of China, Beijing 100024, China
[2]Academy of Art, Harbin University of Science and Technology, Harbin, Heilongjiang, China
[*]*Corresponding author. Email: 260830889@qq.com*

ABSTRACT

With the diversification of Chinese we-media platform types and the continuous innovation of service models, content production entities at different levels from grassroots to elite are all involved in the content creation field, and the scale of content production has been increased unprecedentedly. The we-media platform not only aggregates a large amount of content, but also masters the right of speech for content distribution. Its ability to intelligently allocate production resources greatly improves the efficiency of content production. The expansion of the productivity of we-media content is closely related to the drive of the platform economy. This article takes we-media platform as the starting point, focusing on the three aspects of we-media platform content aggregation needs, efficient content distribution and content transaction services, analyzes the reasons for the great release of we-media content productivity in the mobile social contact era.

Keywords: *We-media, we-media platform, content production, transaction service*

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the launch of the WeChat official accounts in 2012, various types of we-media platforms have emerged. Stylized highlights of graphics, short videos, small videos, live broadcasts, audio, etc., have entered the public's field of vision and become popular. The content production of the self-media has thus grown continuously, forming a realistic picture of large-scale production, large-scale circulation and large-scale realization. Since the beginning of the we-media, it has been regarded as a channel for personal expression. The lead we-media has gradually evolved and has become a new type of digital content production organization.[1] The functions of the we-media platform are also constantly improving, providing a good infrastructure for the production of we-media content. The definition of "we-media platform" in this article is relatively broad, and the platforms with we-media content publishing function are called we-media platforms. Such as Weibo, WeChat official accounts, Headline accounts, Tencent content open platform, Douyin, Kwai, Zhihu and so on.

The we-media platforms do not produce content, but play the role of the third parties which are committed to aggregating a huge content production group and a large number of users, and building a "free market" for the circulation of media products and the replacement of information resources between the two.[2] The we-media platform provides convenient conditions and incentives for the vigorous development of we-media content production, and analyzes the interactive relationship between the platform driver and the we-media content production, which is conducive to understanding the operation concept of the we-media platform, the symbiotic and win-win relationship between the platform and the we-media, and to objectively understanding the formation of the we-media content landscape and the future trend of content production.

II. LARGE-SCALE DEMAND FOR PLATFORM CONTENT AGGREGATION DRIVES CONTENT PRODUCTION

The separation of intermediary and content production has allowed media to expand to content platforms, embrace more content producers, and create open platforms for aggregation. The we-media platforms such as Penguin, Baijia, and NetEase, which appeared in 2016, are typical of such platforms. They "assemble social resources and improve their effectiveness to realize commercial interests and public opinion influence"[3]. Social platforms such as Weibo and WeChat are genetically pure content aggregation platforms, and content production comes from external forces.

The we-media platforms need to occupy a large amount of content. From the perspective of content production cost, UGC's content entry is a very effective way to expand the content source, and achieve the unlimited production of content with the minimum content production cost, forming a cooperative and symbiotic situation. It solves the problems and barriers of "limited content" of traditional media, realizes the scale benefits of content products, and thus brings large-scale users. Therefore, encouraging content creators to settle in and provide heavy subsidies has become an important strategy for the platforms. First, at the end of 2015, Yidian Information launched the "creator exclusive" policy. Toutiao launched the "thousand people ten thousand yuan" plan. Tencent then followed up in March 2016 to launch the "Grain in Ear" plan. In November, Baijia launched a "Carving up 10 billion" plan. Since then, each platform has some corresponding incentives. At the same time, the major platforms have also built different channels to expand their rich content forms, such as byte beating from Toutiao to Watermelon Video, Volcano Video, Douyin, Wukong Q & A, etc., covering graphics, short videos, micro headlines, Q & A, small videos, etc., which also make it more diverse content requirements.

Unlimited content demand triggers unlimited content production. The value logic of the platforms lies in traffic and users. Only a large number of users can attract advertisers and attract investment. Therefore, attracting and maintaining users with high-quality content has become the survival rule of we-media platforms. There are a large number of network users, and each user has personalized needs that are different from others; only by aggregating diverse and different types of content can large-scale users be attracted and large-scale communication benefits generated. So in the mobile Internet era, the content aggregation capabilities of various platforms have become the focus of competition, and the platform subsidy war is the best example. All major content platforms hope to attract more users through the unlimited possession of content.

The large-scale demand for content aggregation from the we-media platform makes the content present a "scarcity" reality, and mobilizing the whole society to participate in content production has become a means to make up for the scarcity. Government departments, media, enterprises or general content producers are all sources of content aggregation from we-media platforms. The platform will provide tools, services, and management to collaborate on content production and help content creators get more help. For example, Baijia uses Baidu's artificial intelligence technology to launch "Creative Brain", which provides free writing materials for creators; it also has functions such as automatic video conversion of graphics and online video editing. In order to protect the original content, Toutiao created a unique eliminating weight protection mechanism. The operation support of the platform has greatly released the energy of we-media content production, and the light weight of content production costs has given small producers a certain living space. Content creators are willing to actively participate in platform games and use content supply to meet the content needs of the platform. According to the "Toutiao Content Value Report 2019", the number of Toutiao platform accounts has exceeded 1.6 million, the number of high-quality vertical creators is more than 100,000, the vertical field is over 100 categories, the number of articles published exceeds 160 million, and the number of videos released exceeds 150 million.

III. PLATFORM'S CIRCULATION EFFICIENCY AND EFFICIENT MATCHING DRIVE CONTENT PRODUCTION

Content output is the first step, and content distribution determines whether the output content can effectively reach the target users, and promote the recycling of content.

The content distribution mechanism of we-media platforms is increasingly dependent on technical means. The new content distribution platform is mobile-based and integrates social, search, personalized recommendations, and intelligent aggregation into one, and technical forces outside the media can be driven in this direction.[4] Since the content distribution capability of the we-media platform is becoming more and more efficient, a large number of users and content need to be screened and matched, and this process is often completed in an instant. This efficient matching between content and users is actually the circulation of content among users, reflecting the efficiency and economic attributes of content products. The higher the circulation efficiency, the greater the demand for content products.

In the mobile social era, the mainstream distribution methods of we-media platforms are algorithmic distribution and social distribution. Algorithmic distribution is based on the needs of the audience. Through big data, the user's demand characteristics are analyzed, the algorithm is grasped, the content itself is labeled, and then the appropriate content is passed through the appropriate channels and in the right scene to push down to the right people.[5] Algorithmic distribution can achieve rapid matching of information based on user's hobbies and interests, such as interest maps, collaborative filtering, improve communication efficiency, and allow long tail information to find the right people. Social distribution is the sharing of content that is considered valuable and interesting to friends. It is based on the social relationship chain to forward and share content. The open circle of friends has greatly expanded the scope of information dissemination by members of society. The interaction and sharing of information between different individuals and groups has become a prominent feature of content dissemination. "My" attention and friends determine the content of the information flow and the way of content production to a certain extent. The interaction has become more convenient. The social fission of the circle of friends has improved communication efficiency. Content creators gain more opportunities for benefits by regaining the initiative of communication, inspiring them to produce content.

The content distribution mechanism based on algorithm recommendation and friend circle relationship is more conducive to the spread of content. Its faster spreading speed reduces the cost of content circulation, that is, the cost of finding consumer users from we-media content. This means that the consumption of content is accelerated, the metabolism of content has changed rapidly. From another angle, it has stimulated the demand for content and promoted the production of content.

The large-scale demand for content from the we-media platform is also inextricably linked to the diversification of content distribution channels. In traditional content transmission, different content needs to be transmitted through different media, and channels have specificity. In the we-media era, content transmission means that the same content can be transmitted multiple times on different channels and platforms. Even if it is the same entrance, there are multiple transmission channels. Taking the Tencent content open platform as an example, the content settled in the Penguin can be distributed to WeChat, QQ, QQ space, Tencent News, Tiantian News, QQ browser, Tencent Video, National KTV and other platforms with one click to achieve "one-point access to distribute on all platforms". The transmission channels of the same content increase, and the spread of a single channel will stimulate the creative desire of content creators, because more exports mean more traffic. The distribution capability of the we-media platform has forced the production of content. The content such as graphics, video and audio previously carried by different channels is now transmitted by the same platform. The communication process becomes concentrated and efficient, the content can reach the audience directly, which accelerates the arrival rate and update frequency of the content, and promotes the continuous production of we-media content.

IV. PLATFORM'S TRAFFIC MONETIZATION AND TRANSACTION SERVICES DRIVE CONTENT PRODUCTION

In the "Platform Economics" book, "platform economy" is defined as "a virtual or real trading place". It is believed that the platform itself does not produce products, its function is to facilitate the exchange between supply and demand, and its essence is the embodiment of the market.[6] We-media platforms are no exception. With the development of the Internet, the media ecosystem has undergone tremendous changes. The economic attributes of platforms such as Weibo and WeChat are becoming stronger and stronger. The function of we-media is no longer limited to information dissemination and social interaction, and its added commercial value is increasingly apparent, which is derived into an important "long tail" market. We-media content can be sold as a commodity, and content creators can obtain revenue from the output of the content. The we-media platforms have created a set of trading mechanisms to help content creators monetize, encourage content production entities to actively participate in content production, and bring traffic to the platform. Platform monetization ability has also become one of the indicators of competition between platforms.

Taking Toutiao as an example, in 2018, 300,000 creators each day received traffic sharing on the Toutiao platform; the "Qingyun Plan" launched by Toutiao today, rewards at least 100 articles per day, each rewarding 300 yuan, a large number of creators received cash subsidies through continuous production of content; at the same time, they also launched a headline shop, allowing authors with product supply capabilities to open the shop to monetize fans; and it also opens paid columns for some high-quality authors so that authors can get user fees income.

Since the we-media platforms have both content and users, both the supply and demand sides remain on the platform. Only an appropriate transaction mechanism is needed to achieve closed loop of content production and content transaction, and the resource circulation is self-contained. All major platforms are establishing trading mechanisms that match their platform characteristics. For example, audio platforms such as Himalaya FM have opened a content payment mechanism. Q & A platforms such as Zhihu open a knowledge question and answer payment service. The Douyin platform opens an e-commerce Taobao link to content creators with more than one million fans, and the WeChat public platform opens a reward function. In order to attract content creators, the platforms generally establish the internal content intelligent trading and management platforms, and undertake the tasks of connecting brands and content creators, such as Weibo's microtasks and Douyin's star chart platform. This official promotion task ordering platform brings together a large number of content creators and MCN institutions, which can help brands to connect with suitable content creators and assist creators in content production.

Commercial monetization encourages content creators to continue to produce high-quality content to better attract traffic. With the lower threshold of content production, more and more participants in content production, but their production methods are fragmented and bargaining power is weak. Only platform-based content aggregation can solve the problem of advertising sales. In addition to advertising, content creators can rely on the platforms' exposure effect and online and offline interactive closed-loop to develop more commercial monetization methods, expanding from online to offline. The offline monetization method seems to be separated from the platform ecology, but the development of offline is inseparable from the exposure of the online platform and the accumulation of traffic. Cross-border has become a trend, such as the establishment of an offline store in 2018 and the establishment of an offline bookstore of Reading at Ten.

The rise of the we-media platform economy has changed the lives and fate of countless people. The commercial exchange of we-media content helps content creators realize economic benefits. Content creators and we-media platforms form a two-way interactive cycle. The platforms use the content to stick users to obtain advertising revenue or commercial investment. Content creators use platform services to obtain entrepreneurial revenue. The greater the income, the more people will be attracted to participate in the content production.

V. CONCLUSION

The Internet is a media tool in the first stage, a social tool in the second stage, and a service tool in the third stage; it is presented in the form of content, spread through socialization, to realize the essence of the service, and to satisfy the users in all aspects of spiritual, material and social demand, which is a direction for the future Internet content industry model.[7] The we-media platform's content aggregation capabilities, content distribution mechanism, and content transaction services are the tests of the platform's service capabilities. If the platform wants to attract more we-media to settle in and obtain high-quality content to attract users, it must have its own unique platform value and value-added service, so that we-media can grow and become prosperous. In the future, the platforms will continue to strengthen their service capabilities, especially intelligent service capabilities, such as natural language processing, knowledge graphs, big data and other technologies for automatic writing, intelligent distribution, intelligent review, and intellectual property protection. Especially for the application of 5G technology, the intelligence will be more advanced, and the content form will be further expanded. Both the platforms and the we-media must face a new round of technological change, and they must have a deep understanding of the logic contained therein.

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