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DISCUSSING STRATEGIES FOR OPERATING ACADEMIC JOURNALS' WECHAT PUBLIC ACCOUNTS IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA ERA

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ABSTRACT

With the rise of social media, academic journals have begun using WeChat official accounts to promote their research and facilitate the application and transformation of their academic results. While the use of WeChat for academic dissemination has shown success, some issues like low engagement, content homogenization, and lack of interaction remain. The article suggests enhancing user stickiness, strengthening the new media talent pool, and improving user experience to optimize the operation strategies of academic journals' WeChat accounts.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, people have entered the age of social media. Social media, represented by wechat, has gradually changed from a communication tool to a comprehensive multimedia joint platform, which not only publishes information, but also provides related media services. Academic journals have used wechat public accounts to publish relevant academic information, and users can receive relevant information in a real, effective and timely manner. In this process, the audience positioning of academic journals' wechat public accounts is very accurate, and the value and advantages of information diffusion are obvious.

On August 23, 2012, the wechat public account was officially launched. In 2013, academic journals began to try to use the wechat public account to achieve contact with readers and further promote academic journals. Nowadays, wechat public accounts have become an important tool for academic journals to expand their dissemination and improve their influence. In this era of information explosion, how to make academic achievements better serve the society has become an urgent problem for the academic circle to solve. This paper will try to discuss the operation strategy of academic journals' wechat public accounts in the era of social media.

Current situation of the operation of academic journals' wechat public accounts in the era of social media

According to statistics, nearly 60% of the more than 200 SCI journals have opened wechat public accounts. Nearly 600 CSSCI (2021-2022) source journals and extended journals have opened and maintained wechat public accounts. This means that more than half of the top academic journals have recognized the importance of public accounts and have begun to use the wechat platform for dissemination. The popularity rate of wechat public accounts has reached a fairly high level. The communication characteristics of wechat public number are sharing, timeliness and interactivity.

The academic community has taken the initiative to embrace new media and disseminate academic achievements in a more open and convenient way.

The functions of wechat public accounts are also continuously enriched and improved. In addition to the basic information release function, wechat public account also provides a wealth of interactive functions, such as messages, comments, voting and so on. These functions make the communication between academic journals and readers more direct and convenient. At the same time, wechat public accounts can also attract more users' attention and participation by pushing articles and event announcements, so as to improve the influence of academic journals. Compared with the traditional operation mode based on paper and periodical publication, academic communication through wechat public account can greatly improve the timeliness of communication, and make up for the shortcomings of traditional mode such as long academic communication cycle, difficult



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discovery and difficult acquisition. Academic communication through wechat public accounts has the advantages of immediacy, interaction and a wide audience base, so readers can pay attention to it

The wechat public accounts of academic journals or in the circle of friends of friends to quickly find relevant articles, and share at any time, so that the transmission cycle of academic journal articles can be shortened. Academic communication through wechat public accounts often provides the main ideas and content of academic journal papers, and some wechat public accounts even provide the full text, which reduces the acquisition cost of readers. Of course, wechat public number can not completely replace the paper database, because it lacks real-time data such as reprinting and citations in the paper database. In the past, the dissemination of academic journals mainly relied on the distribution and mailing of paper publications, a process that was time-consuming and labor-intensive. Now, academic journals only need to push articles through wechat public accounts to achieve instant communication, which greatly improves the efficiency of communication. Wechat public account push can effectively solve the problem of slow academic information transmission speed, so that relevant audiences can quickly obtain the latest research results of the academic circle, and timely update the subject knowledge. In addition to the transmission speed, the use of wechat public accounts can make the dissemination of academic information relatively expanded. Different from the past, which mainly relied on paper media for communication, the wechat public accounts of academic journals can realize the cracking communication. Users can spread academic information in a wider medium through various means such as moments of friends.

The important value of academic journals' wechat public accounts lies in the effective dissemination of academic information, which not only provides content integrated with paper media, but also provides auxiliary reading information, including the research background, research process and influence of academic information. In addition, social media can transform corresponding academic information into social information and encourage scholars to conduct academic research. The important role of wechat public account in academic communication is self-evident. It not only improves the communication efficiency of academic journals, expands the scope of communication, but also innovates the communication mode of academic journals and enhances the communication effect. In recent years, the Chinese Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences Comprehensive Evaluation of Nanjing University and the State Key Laboratory of Media Integration and Communication jointly developed the "CSSCI source journal public number Communication Power Index" list, revealing CSSCI

The transmission dynamics of the source magazine on the wechat public number platform. The index model comprehensively evaluates the communication effect of academic journals in the context of new media by integrating six key indicators: activity, coverage, professionalism, recognition, popularity and interaction. Taking the wechat public account of "Culture and Vertical" as an example, since 2020, it has been ranked first in the comprehensive social science category. From the perspective of academic influence, the influence of Culture and Culture may not be the first in the social science category, but due to its emphasis on the academic communication of wechat public accounts, it has attracted more readers and obtained more contribution resources. Further, these resources will create better conditions for academic dissemination.

Issues and Causes of WeChat Official Account Operation for Academic Journals in the Social Media Era

The operation of WeChat official accounts for academic journals is not without challenges. Several issues exist, and understanding the underlying causes is essential for improving the effectiveness of these platforms.

1. Low User Engagement

According to statistics from Qingbo Index, among the WeChat accounts with "journal" or "academic journal" in their title, many have a low level of user activity. For example, "Harbin University of Music Academic Journal" saw fewer than 400 total reads and no more than 3 likes in a period between March 20 and April 19, 2024. Random checks across 43 academic journal WeChat accounts found numerous instances with fewer than 150 reads and zero likes.

The issue stems from a lack of user-centered thinking in the operation of these accounts. Many academic journals treat their WeChat accounts as secondary promotional tools, with little focus on engaging users. This results in low interaction rates, which harms the brand image of these journals. Specific problems include:



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The frequency of content publication is dictated by the operator's subjective preferences rather than user needs. Content duplication from print journals without secondary editing or improvement makes the content less engaging to users.

To improve user engagement, the content on WeChat should offer something distinct from print journals, such as behind-the-scenes insights, author reflections, or multimedia formats like video and audio. Additionally, the WeChat account should provide services like manuscript inquiries, which many currently lack.

2. Content Homogenization

A significant issue in many academic journal WeChat accounts is content homogenization. Most content focuses on journal tables of contents, academic features, or awards related to the editorial board. However, the target audience for these accounts has become fatigued by such repetitive content.

The lack of differentiation and failure to cater to the specific interests of readers within particular academic fields or industries leads to a loss of sustained user interest. Many WeChat accounts post content irregularly, often without fresh material, contributing to audience disengagement. Given the massive amount of information users encounter daily in the era of self-media, merely reposting academic articles without any repackaging or new angles can fail to capture attention.

Furthermore, the lack of images, interactive elements, and compelling topics can cause readers to lose interest. Academic journals are failing to make their content more engaging or diverse enough to keep users returning.

3. Challenges with Editorial Team Expertise

Often, the operation of academic journal WeChat accounts is managed by the editorial teams of print journals. While these editors are highly skilled at handling traditional journal content, they may not be as adept at utilizing social media platforms effectively. The traditional editorial mindset often does not align with the dynamic nature of digital media, which requires innovation and adaptability.

Print publications have fixed elements in their design, with some updates, but their appeal is relatively limited compared to digital platforms. Academic journal editors need to shift toward an internet-driven approach, embracing social media trends to create more engaging, interactive content.

4. Lack of Interaction

Many academic journal WeChat accounts primarily focus on pushing out academic content, without fully utilizing WeChat's interactive features. The menu bars in many accounts offer limited functions such as basic query and browsing services. Some accounts have attempted to build micro-communities or include links to other interactive platforms, but the click rates and user engagement on these features are low.

The fundamental issue lies in the underuse of WeChat's interactive capabilities, which diminishes the user experience. When interaction between users and the account operators is limited, users' emotional and practical needs are unmet, leading to a decrease in subscriber loyalty and engagement.

Currently, many academic journal WeChat accounts offer only basic, one-way communication—such as providing information or auto-replying to user inquiries—but fail to foster meaningful, two-way interactions. The inability for users to interact with one another further reduces engagement, as users are not able to build a sense of community around the content.

Optimizing the Operation of WeChat Official Accounts for Academic Journals in the Social Media Era

To stand out among numerous WeChat official accounts and attract more users, academic journal accounts must adopt unique operational strategies and offer high-quality content. When managing WeChat official accounts, editors should focus not only on content updates and optimization but also on interacting with users to understand their needs and provide relevant content. Furthermore, technical support is also essential for successful operation.

1. Precisely Define Target Audience and Enhance User Engagement

In the social media era, academic journals must precisely define their target audience. The content of their WeChat



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posts should cater to users' reading habits on mobile devices and match their aesthetic preferences. To achieve this:

Use User Data Effectively: By analyzing subscriber behavior, journals can identify what content resonates with their audience. This enables journals to enhance user engagement by offering content tailored to the audience's interests.

Optimize Content for Mobile Reading: Given the limited attention span for long articles on mobile devices, WeChat posts should provide summaries or abstracts of academic articles, accompanied by links to the full text for deeper reading. This caters to users' preference for quick reads while still offering access to full articles for those interested in more detailed information.

Incorporate Multimedia: Studies have shown that WeChat users engage more with image-based content than text alone. Therefore, academic journals should not only push text but also include images, charts, videos, and audio. The integration of these multimedia elements in posts enhances user experience and engagement. A varied and aesthetically appealing layout will capture users' attention, keeping the content fresh and engaging.

2. Strengthen the New Media Talent Pool to Improve Content Quality

Building a professional new media team is vital for effectively running a WeChat official account for academic journals. This team should not only possess traditional editorial skills but also be familiar with the dynamics of digital media and social platforms.

Cross-disciplinary Expertise: Team members should be capable of adapting academic journal content for digital media, engaging audiences via various multimedia formats, and utilizing social media's full potential. This team should also bridge the gap between print and digital platforms, creating content that enhances both formats.

Create Multidimensional Content: Professional teams should be able to repurpose academic articles, turning them into engaging multimedia content that resonates with the digital audience. This includes video summaries, infographics, and interactive elements that appeal to a broad range of users.

3. Enhance User Experience with Interactive Features

Research shows that the use of multimedia in posts directly impacts the level of interaction between academic journals and their users. The more multimedia elements used, the higher the frequency of interaction with users. To foster greater interaction:

Use Interactive Features: WeChat accounts should leverage built-in interactive functions like comment sections, polls, and online surveys. These features allow for direct communication between the journal and its readers, building a sense of community.

Gamify User Experience: By creating a more interactive and fun experience, academic journals can shift the focus from being a purely academic platform to one that engages users in a lively, informal way. This could include offering rewards, discounts, or exclusive content to increase user participation.

Personalized Content: Following the example of the "Cultural Horizon" WeChat account, journals can provide personalized experiences, such as pushing "Reading Selections" or offering "Exclusive New Reader Coupons" to engage new users and encourage subscriptions. Additionally, integrating a WeChat video account or an online store can attract diverse readers and enhance the user experience.

CONCLUSION

Opening and operating a WeChat official account can significantly boost the influence and visibility of academic journals. By actively managing these accounts, journals can facilitate easier access to academic information and resources, achieving better dissemination results. However, challenges such as a lack of user-centered thinking, insufficient use of multimedia, and poor interaction functions must be addressed. To overcome these challenges, academic journals should focus on precise audience targeting, increasing user engagement, building a specialized



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new media team, and enhancing the overall user experience. By adopting these strategies, academic journals can better navigate the complexities of digital communication, allowing them to maximize the advantages of WeChat in their operations.

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