

Reconstructing Local News Innovation Through Livestream Clip Videos: A Case Study of the WeChat Video Channel “Qinchang City”

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Abstract: Against the combined pressure of digital technological iteration and platform operational logic, traditional local news faces development bottlenecks and urgently needs to explore sustainable innovative transformation paths. Taking the WeChat Video Channel *Qinchang City* as the research case, this paper adopts a single-case study approach with multi-source data triangulation, drawing on project proposals, clip video analysis, and in-depth semi-structured interviews to systematically examine its integrated livestreaming-clip slicing production and dissemination model as well as its internal operational mechanisms. The findings reveal that the channel’s journalistic innovation is built on a three-dimensional collaborative integration framework. At the organizational level, it constructs a semi-public and semi-private hybrid operation mechanism, realizing a dynamic balance between government collaborative tasks and independent editorial autonomy. At the spatial level, it breaks the confinement of traditional studio reporting, takes urban physical space as an immersive narrative field, and embeds urban governance goals into daily civic life via a soft politicization narrative strategy. At the dissemination level, it converts livestream raw footage into short clip videos to achieve long-tail cyclic distribution, which not only dismantles the hierarchical labor structure of traditional newsrooms but also reconstructs the temporal logic of local news production. This study verifies that resource-constrained medium-sized local media can strike a pragmatic balance between professional journalistic rigor, institutional coordination, and algorithmic traffic visibility through organizational hybridization, spatial narrative reconfiguration, and cyclic content dissemination. It deepens the theoretical cognition of the spatial embeddedness and iterative evolution of local journalism in the platform era, and provides a replicable practical paradigm for medium-sized local media to reshape civic emotional consensus and realize digital innovative transformation.

Keywords: Livestreaming; Local news; Livestream clip videos; Spatial narrative

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1. Introduction

In the digital age, traditional local news is frequently framed under the “news desert” crisis discourse and

perceived as in decline. Nevertheless, amid the restructuring of China's media landscape, local news outlets in major metropolitan areas have embarked on digital transformation via innovative platform practices. The WeChat Video Channel *Qinchang City* has pioneered a typical livestreaming-slicing integrated operation model, forming a closed-loop workflow that combines immersive spatially grounded livestreaming with modular short video clip production.

This case transcends the traditional binary oppositions such as technological application versus organizational restructuring, and state institutional logic versus market operational logic. It effectively illustrates how medium-sized media organizations with limited resources can respond to the multiple constraints of platform algorithms, professional journalistic norms and audience participation demands through the synergy of organizational hybridity, spatialized storytelling and modular dissemination.

Existing digital journalism research has extensively discussed media automation, emotionalized narration and local identity reconstruction, yet systematic studies taking livestreaming and clip videos as innovative forms of local news remain insufficient. Most extant literature focuses on influencer culture, identity performance, and official visual propaganda, while neglecting how local media integrate livestreaming and clip slicing into a complete production loop, as well as how livestream practice reshapes professional journalistic labor and local civic narrative systems. Against this backdrop, this paper takes *Qinchang City* as a case to fill the theoretical gap and offer practical references for the adaptive innovation of local journalism.

2. Literature review

Digital technology has reshaped the temporal rhythm, spatial boundary, and civic responsibility connotation of local news, placing local newsrooms in the dual dilemma of technological adaptation and platform dependency. On the one hand, digital transformation is often regarded as an institutional discourse conflicting with community public attributes, leading many local media practitioners to adopt silent compromise or even abandon innovation amid economic pressure and organizational rigidity. On the other hand, platform traffic metrics and audience data analytics have rewritten editorial priorities, making journalistic autonomy increasingly challenged by platform power ^[1].

In the Chinese institutional context, genuine local news innovation is not a simple product of technological determinism, but is embedded in local institutional contexts. It is mostly manifested as organizational transformation under the state entrepreneurship model or strategic cooperation between non-traditional media and institutional forces via dependent embeddedness to secure legitimate operational space ^[2].

In terms of digital narrative expression, emotional and visual logics have become the core drivers of journalistic innovation. To address information disorder and rebuild public trust, official media generally adopt a soft propaganda strategy on social media, replacing rigid indoctrination with emotional storytelling and visualized presentation ^[3]. Local short-video media further adopt differentiated emotional strategies such as warmth and anticipation to construct contextualized visual communication. Meanwhile, emerging creators such as grassroots bloggers and livestreamers participate in local information ecology construction with precarious creativity, challenging the traditional labor division and role positioning of news production.

The "local turn" in journalism research further indicates that the connotation of localness in the digital era is no longer confined to physical geography, but jointly constructed by audience media consumption behavior and subjective community identity. Physical urban space, as civic infrastructure, still undertakes

irreplaceable functions in maintaining community connection and democratic communication. Local news innovation therefore needs to break away from single information distribution, tap the narrative potential of urban physical space, and transform local identity into perceivable and participatory digital spatial experience.

Overall, prior studies lack in-depth exploration of the internal mechanism and practical value of the livestream-clip model in local news innovation. This study complements this research deficiency and expands the theoretical boundary of adaptive innovation of local journalism in the platform era.

3. Methodology and data collection

This study adopts a single-case study approach with multi-source data triangulation, and all research materials are obtained through in-depth cooperation with the *Qinchang City* team to ensure authenticity and timeliness. Data collection mainly includes three dimensions:

First, livestreaming project proposals. Seven core proposals covering three development stages—the initial Shanghai Citywalk phase (Exploration Stage), the developmental Campus Walk Series phase (Development Stage), and the mature urban tourism promotion phase (Mature Stage)—are analyzed, recording broadcast schedule, duration, title, content outline, interviewee arrangement, and strategic planning, laying a foundation for analyzing content production logic.

Second, livestream clip videos. A total of 40 representative short clips are selected, with coded data including title, release time, duration, interviewee background, thematic orientation, and communication influence. The corpus covers the whole industrial chain from livestreaming to clip dissemination, supporting the analysis of formal and communicative innovation.

Third, in-depth interview transcripts. Field interviews were conducted with six core team members, including the founder Qin Chang, yielding three complete interview transcripts, which provide first-hand empirical materials for analyzing organizational operation and multi-stakeholder collaboration (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Basic information of interviewees

Interviewee Code	Position/Role	Employment Type	Interview Duration
A1	Founder & Host (Qin Chang)	Part-time (Media liaison in charge)	34 minutes
A2	General Manager	Part-time (Media liaison in charge)	40 minutes
A3	Screenwriter & Clip Editor	Student Intern	30 minutes
A4	Post-production Editor	Full-time Employee	21 minutes
A5	Livestreaming Director	Intern	20 minutes
A6	Camera Operator	Intern	25 minutes

This paper adopts an inductive data analysis method, conducting iterative dialogue between empirical materials and theoretical frameworks ^[4]. Research conclusions are refined continuously based on data patterns, ensuring research interpretation is both evidence-based and connected to mainstream academic discourse.

4. Research findings

4.1. Organizational-level innovation: A semi-public and semi-private hybrid model

In 2024, leveraging Shanghai Media Group's new media exploration policy, senior journalist Qin Chang founded the WeChat Video Channel Qinchang City. The channel adopts a hybrid organizational structure that integrates institutional resources with market flexibility, navigating the tension between government task demands and independent editorial autonomy across three progressive developmental stages^[5].

During the Exploration Stage, the founding team—composed of senior media professionals combining journalistic expertise with new media operational competence—prioritized resource mobilization and model experimentation. Eschewing rigid procedural hierarchies, the team adopted a de-standardization strategy through the minimalist Shanghai Citywalk format, foregrounding the textures of everyday urban life over traffic optimization. This approach cultivated a high-loyalty core audience, establishing the channel's distinctive editorial identity.

The Development Stage was characterized by deepening government collaboration. Through the Campus Walk Series and local tourism promotion projects, the team formalized a “planning–livestreaming–promotion” workflow. The central innovation of this phase lay in reconciling official governance demands with humanistic storytelling: government publicity requirements were met while sustaining public emotional resonance through personalized narration and real-time route adjustments that balanced institutional agendas with audience interests.

The Mature Stage saw the consolidation of stable government-enterprise partnerships and a diversified content portfolio. A comprehensive livestreaming + clip slicing production system emerged, converting multi-camera immersive footage into thematically curated short clips—including highlight compilations and first-person perspective pieces. This system achieves what may be termed “consensual publicity”: the simultaneous fulfillment of official communication objectives, market audience expectations, and professional journalistic standards.

Across these stages, Qinchang City has developed a semi-public and semi-private hybrid model operationalized through a dual-track commission mechanism. Approximately half of its projects are government-commissioned, covering urban revitalization, policy dissemination, and cultural tourism; the remainder are initiated through Qin Chang's editorial discretion and personal networks, encompassing spontaneous cultural explorations and interviews with local figures. These two tracks are not competing imperatives but mutually reinforcing pillars: government commissions legitimate the channel's civic function and secure operational resources, while independently-driven content preserves the editorial depth and affective authenticity that sustain audience trust. Rather than a structural compromise, this organizational hybridity constitutes a deliberate strategic choice—one that enables the channel to occupy the institutional “grey zone” between state-directed and market-driven journalism, offering a replicable template for resource-constrained local media navigating analogous institutional pressures^[6–8].

4.2. Spatial-level innovation: Narrative spatialization and soft politicization

A defining feature of Qinchang City's spatial strategy is what may be termed “soft politicization”—the practice of embedding institutional and governance objectives within experiential, citizen-centered urban narratives, thereby depoliticizing official content without diminishing its communicative reach. Rather than foregrounding policy directives as explicit informational frames, the channel's live broadcasts translate

abstract governance agendas into tangible spatial experiences. Campus walk broadcasts, for instance, foreground student development and campus culture rather than institutional achievement metrics; tourism livestreams emphasize civic engagement with historical sites over promotional rhetoric; and cultural heritage broadcasts privilege personal memory and community identity over administrative framing^[9].

This narrative strategy transforms urban space from a passive geographical backdrop into an active semiotic agent, imbued simultaneously with historical resonance, policy significance, and everyday civic life. By anchoring governance discourse within the experiential texture of familiar urban environments, the channel develops a form of communicative legitimacy that is difficult to achieve within either a purely commercial or a purely state-directed organizational framework. The result is a spatially embedded journalism in which professional rigor, civic relevance, and institutional accountability are organically integrated rather than instrumentally balanced.

4.3. Dissemination-level Innovation: Livestream slicing and long-tail cyclic communication

The spatial narrative approach described above is sustained in practice through a production workflow characterized by what the team itself terms “planned improvisation.” In the *Qinchang City* communication ecosystem, livestreaming is regarded as the source of raw footage rather than the end of dissemination. For instance, the two-hour on-site livestream of the Cherry Blossom Festival was quickly edited into 10 short clip videos of 1–3 minutes each. As a hybrid media form, livestream clips capture emotionally resonant narrative moments, form modular content units adapted to fragmented reading habits, and greatly expand the dissemination boundary of local news.

This practice conforms to the post-broadcast dissemination paradigm: news content is reactivated in digital platform circulation, breaking the linear depreciation rule of traditional livestreaming after broadcast. Its internal logic is reflected in three aspects: adapting civic livelihood topics to lifestyle platform positioning; relying on the fragmentation attribute of short videos to enhance the long-tail exposure of urban spatial symbols; and building a decentralized collaborative team of senior journalists and student interns to break the hierarchical labor structure of traditional newsrooms.

The sustainable operation of clip news is underpinned by the integrated support of three institutional dimensions. In terms of technical infrastructure, outdoor livestreaming entails considerable operational demands: unstable signals, unpredictable lighting and weather conditions, fluctuating crowd dynamics, and the physical strain of prolonged shooting collectively challenge the consistency and quality of post-production output. In terms of quality evaluation, the channel employs a multi-dimensional weighted assessment mechanism that combines editorial judgment with quantitative metrics: the founder’s decades of professional experience accounts for approximately 60% of the evaluative weight, platform traffic data contributes 20%–30%, and audience comment feedback constitutes the remaining 10%. This hybrid standard reflects the channel’s deliberate effort to balance journalistic expertise with platform-oriented performance indicators. In terms of financial sustainability, the channel operates on a dual-track funding structure in which government project commissions and institutional partnerships with media organizations and educational bodies each account for approximately half of total revenue, a balance that safeguards editorial independence while supporting scalable content development.

Taken together, these operational mechanisms constitute what may be described as a rhizomatic innovation system—one that fundamentally subverts the linear temporal logic of traditional news production.

Rather than treating the live broadcast as a terminal communicative event, the model reconceptualizes it as the generative origin of an iterative content cycle: raw livestream footage is continuously segmented, re-edited, and redistributed across digital platforms, extending the civic and informational value of each broadcast well beyond its original transmission. In doing so, Qinchang City constructs a modular, algorithmically adaptive paradigm for local news that reconciles the imperatives of professional journalism with the logics of platform circulation^[10–12].

5. Discussion

The case of *Qinchang City* provides an integrated analytical perspective for local news innovation, proving that media innovation is not isolated technological upgrading or institutional restructuring, but a cyclic optimization process of dynamic allocation of human, technical, and institutional resources. It constructs an interconnected ecosystem of content creation, production workflow, and dissemination strategy, properly resolving the innovation dilemma and platform dependency predicament highlighted in previous studies^[13–14]. It demonstrates that medium-sized media with resource constraints can realize the integration of professional rigor and local public resonance through strategic institutional and operational design.

Organizationally, the semi-public and semi-private hybrid operation enriches the connotation of state entrepreneurship and dependent embeddedness theory in digital journalism. It utilizes the flexible “grey zone” between government and market to undertake official cultural and tourism publicity tasks while maintaining core editorial autonomy, avoiding being reduced to a single propaganda tool and building a smooth communication channel between government and the public.

In content production, it takes urban physical space as the core of spatial narrative, transforming local news from one-way dissemination to embodied immersive experience. The soft politicization narrative embeds governance goals into daily urban life, weakening the rigidity of official publicity without sacrificing audience engagement and professional norms. Rooted in local urban texture, it provides a valuable analytical sample for spatially oriented media innovation research.

In dissemination, the livestream-to-clip workflow reconstructs the temporal dimension of news production, endowing livestream content with long-tail communication value through modular re-editing and cyclic distribution. It alleviates the inherent tension between media public responsibility and platform algorithm dependency, offering a replicable solution for platform-era journalism to balance algorithmic visibility and civic accountability.

Notably, the model has obvious contextual dependence: its success is based on Shanghai’s sound cultural infrastructure, mature media ecology, and the high professional quality of core team members. In regions with strict supervision and insufficient market resources, local media still face the “news desert” dilemma. Even so, the case still proves that medium-sized local media can rely on institutional hybridity and spatial embeddedness to achieve a dynamic balance between professional standards, operational sustainability, and audience participation, and consolidate the civic emotional infrastructure of local news.

6. Conclusion

Taking the WeChat Video Channel *Qinchang City* as a case, this paper explores the sustainable innovative transformation path of medium-sized local media under platform logic. The research finds that its innovative

advantage does not lie in single technological application, but in the synergistic integration of organization, space, and communication in a three-dimensional paradigm: At the organizational level, the semi-public and semi-private hybrid mechanism balances government cooperation and editorial autonomy, forming a self-stable innovative operation ecosystem. At the spatial level, it breaks studio confinement, takes urban physical space as an immersive narrative hub, and embeds governance objectives into daily civic life via a soft politicization strategy. At the dissemination level, the livestreaming-clip slicing model reshapes the de-hierarchized collaborative labor structure, reconstructs the temporal perspective of news production through long-tail cyclic distribution, and realizes the coordinated development of public value adherence and algorithmic platform adaptation.

This study expands the theoretical boundary of local news innovation, revealing the iterative, spatially embedded, and highly hybridized characteristics of contemporary journalistic practice. It confirms that professional rigor, institutional coordination, and audience engagement are not mutually exclusive for resource-constrained medium-sized media, but can be organically integrated through context-adaptive practice. The analytical framework of organizational hybridity, spatial reconfiguration and cyclic communication not only deepens the theoretical understanding of local journalism's adaptive logic in the digital age, but also provides practical enlightenment for local media to reshape civic emotional consensus and explore sustainable news production models.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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