

**The Challenges and Opportunities of Chinese-language Media in Vancouver:
A Case Study of Coast Mountain Publishing
& Media Management Corporation**

**by
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B.A., China Youth University of Political Studies, 2016

Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Publishing

in the
Publishing Program
Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Spring 2018

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Abstract

This report introduces how Chinese-language media based in Vancouver have experienced ups and downs, and how they seized the moment to dominate their market with the developing and expanding ethnic Chinese group.

By taking Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation as an example, this report analyses a typical Chinese-language media's surviving strategies and revenue models in details. Going through the history and observing the existing circumstances closely, this report tries to prospect the outlook of Chinese-language media in Vancouver. Different opportunities are discussed, including cooperating with media in China and building partnership with English-language media in Canada, as well as the challenges, such as the fierce competition and censorship these companies face.

Keywords: Chinese-language Media; WeChat; Mandarin; Editing; Publishing;

Vancouver.

Acknowledgements

I first acknowledge the publishing faculty and staff at Simon Fraser University, especially John Maxwell, Mauve Pagé, and Jo-Anne Ray. I further acknowledge the 2016 Master of Publishing cohort and my friends. And I acknowledge my family, without their understanding and support, I wouldn't have this great chance to be here. I also acknowledge my industry supervisor Robert Zhang, and the entire Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation staff for their warmth.

Most of all, I acknowledge Yanyan Zhang, my dearest friend. She has taken care of me like a real family since we met in Vancouver. It is her who has made my time in this city wonderful.

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Introduction

Summary of the report

During my three-month internship at Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation, I worked as a reporter, an editor, and a graphic designer. I was given a chance to observe how a Chinese media company based in Vancouver operates and survives. Vancouver is a multicultural city with a significant number of Chinese immigrants making up its population, allowing the development of Chinese media including newspaper, magazines, radio stations, television stations, and new media, to flourish. Over 20 Chinese media companies exist in Vancouver, serving more than 400,000 Chinese people living in the Great Vancouver Area. Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation, where I worked, was established in 2009 by immigrants from mainland China. After an eight-year growth, it now has 26 employees—16 office workers and 10 freelancers. Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation's most popular product *West Canada Weekly* is a well-known media company throughout the Chinese community in Great Vancouver Area. *West Canada Weekly* has survived fierce competition. Through practical observation and in-depth interviews with their staff members, I will discuss Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation's struggles and growth; obstacles and solutions; and opportunities and ambitions in this project report.

Introduction of my internship and the company

From May 11 to August 18, I interned at Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation. With the generous support and patient guidance of the

publisher and all my colleagues, I had a pleasant and unforgettable journey, during which I have learned many lessons and achieved countless of accomplishments. I plan on returning to the company and continuing the development of my career in the near future.

West Canada Weekly is a Chinese media company based in Vancouver. In order to satisfy the versatile needs and multiple requirements of audiences and clients, Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation runs media products that cross many different platforms. First, it has two weekly publications: *West Canada Weekly* is published every Saturday and *Canadian Chinese Real Estate Week* is released every Thursday. Second, *West Canada Weekly* owns three websites. Two of them are news and local information websites: *West Canada Weekly* (www.wcweekly.com) and *CAC News* (www.cacnews.ca). The last website, *Vancouver Education* (<http://vancouveredu.com/portal.php>), is still under construction and will address local education information. Third, it has a strong social media presence, Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation focuses on WeChat, the biggest multi-purpose social media platform within the Chinese community both in China and in Vancouver. The company operates four WeChat public accounts that post articles daily: *West Canada Weekly* (WeChat ID: westcanadaweekly), *Vancouver West Canada Weekly* (WeChat ID: west360vancouver), *Canada News* (WeChat ID: cacnews), and *Canadian Real Estate* (WeChat ID: realestateweek360).

When I started working at the company, my job was to edit and design the layout of the entertainment portion of *West Canada Weekly*. It was a pretty joyful experience and a very educational process to write, edit, design, and proofread the content by myself. My previous working experience in traditional media in China came in handy, allowing me to pick up the newspaper work quickly.

However, when it comes to social media, the writing styles and editing strategies

are changed compared to the print publication approaches. As a matter of fact, due to the preference of the Chinese community, WeChat public accounts have become the preferred publishing platform of Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation, and therefore why it didn't take long for the chief editor to finally assigning me to write an article for their WeChat accounts. At first, I was reluctant to write articles for WeChat since the work is known to be pretty stressful: the only criteria used to judge whether an article is of quality is the amount of views it receives. The amount of views appears at the bottom of the article in real time. And yet, even to this day, the key to receiving high numbers of views for a WeChat article is still a mystery within the industry. Some articles may suddenly become very popular when you least expect it, and those where you poured your heart into it may only be viewed by a few readers.

Before I wrote my first WeChat article, the chief editor selected the topic for me and gave me some tips on how to write it. Under his supervision, my first article's amount of views was above average compared to other *West Canada Weekly's* WeChat articles. After that, I was asked to write one article per day for WeChat. I discussed with other editors and the chief editor how to produce highquality and popular WeChat articles. Reflecting on the amount of views for every article I wrote, I pondered over the ways to produce well-received articles. And gradually I became better. Eventually, the chief editor instructed everyone that I was to be the designated person to write each day's first article for the WeChat account. This was a huge honour as the first article of the day is equivalent to the headlining article of a newspaper. In most circumstances, the first article of the day usually receives the highest amount of views among all published pieces on that account for the day. Excited and flattered, I began to take this responsibility even more seriously. In addition, my work became even more interesting as I was allowed to work as a reporter from time to time. The people I interviewed were mostly clients who bought advertisements with the company and I interviewed them and wrote stories in return to promote their businesses. As I will discuss later, advertorials

are becoming more and more popular than hard-sell advertisements.

In the last month of my internship, given that the WeChat articles I wrote received the highest average amount of views compared to other WeChat writers in company, the chief editor made some adjustments to my duties: he reduced my layout design work and interview work, and pushed me to focus on WeChat writing. From then on, I wrote three WeChat articles per day and, because of the burning passion I had to receive large amounts of views, I was able to make my articles very engaging. This was the most fast-paced and most inspiring month I spent at Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation.

Introduction of each sections

The project report is divided into two sections. In the first section, I look at the history of Chinese media in Canada, where I summarize the appearance, growth and expansion of Chinese media, especially in Canada. I then discuss the unique position Chinese media has in Vancouver with its own niche and strength compared with the local English media.

The second section is the Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation case study. First, besides addressing the company's history and its target market, I discuss their survival strategies in the fierce competing market and their revenue model. Second, since the editing and operating principles are different between traditional media and social media, I summarize several tips on new media writing. Third, I highlight Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation's revenue model by introducing the hard-sell and soft-sell advertising techniques, advertisers' preferences on different advertising approaches and platforms, as well as Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation's other publishing businesses. Finally, I address the

opportunities and challenges for Chinese language media in Vancouver. The significant change of the local Chinese immigrants population has resulted in the conversion of dominant Chinese language media, where the rapid development of the media industry in China has led to the tendency of Vancouver Chinese media collaborating with mainland China's media.

Background

History of Chinese Media in Canada

Li Weizui analysed the developing history of Canadian Chinese media in his article “Analysis of Chinese Journals in Canada”, where he divided it into three main phases. First, the early Chinese journals, second, the Chinese journals after the Second World War, and third, the recent Chinese journals. The first Canadian Chinese newspaper was the *Rixin News* which was started in Vancouver in the August of 1903. Earlier than that, Chinese language newspapers *Huayang Daily* and *Zhixin News* were sent from America and Australia, and were popular in Canada.¹ During the 114 years after *Rixin News* was founded, Canadian Chinese media went through the creation of many newspapers, periodicals, radio stations, TV stations, websites, social media, and phone applications.²

Early Chinese journals in Canada were low in quantity and had strong political orientation. The amount of Chinese journals available in Canada has increased since the 1980's: with the continuous influx of Chinese immigrants, most of them from Hong Kong and Taiwan, several big daily newspapers were founded at that time by them. The most successful ones were *Sing Tao* and *Ming Pao* (of Hong Kongese background), and *World Journal* (of Taiwanese background). The situation of tripartite confrontation of *Sing Tao*, *Ming Pao*, and *World Journal* lasted for a long period, and pushed Canadian Chinese media to a new height.

Since 1990's, the wave of new immigrants from mainland China has increased, and with them, new Chinese media appeared in Canada. In recent years, a new tendency has occurred in Canadian Chinese media field that was once dominated

¹ 李未醉(2009), “加拿大的华文报刊论析”, 《八桂侨刊》, 2009(6)

² Chi Min(2015), “Study on the Canadian Free Chinese Newspaper in New Media Age”, 9-10

by Hong Kong immigrants for a long time. Media founded by immigrants from mainland China is expected to have a rosy future.³ *Global Chinese Press* (founded in 2000) and *West Canada Weekly* (founded in 2009) are two of the major mainland Chinese journals.⁴

In addition, new media has become a significant force. A considerable number of websites and other new media platforms in Chinese language arose and have attracted large audiences. Some of them quickly became much more popular than the old Chinese journals that have existed for decades. For example, Chinese website *York BBS*, that offers news, job information, trading information, had more than 654,300 registered members in 2014, 12 years after its launch in Toronto.⁵ It's like a news website combined with all the services that *Craigslist* offers. In Vancouver, websites with similar mandates to *York BBS* also appeared: the most popular ones are *BCbay*, *Vanpeople* and *Vansky*. This new pattern and climate in Canadian Chinese media field is inevitable.

The Unique Position of Chinese media in Vancouver

Currently, there are about 20 Chinese language media in Vancouver, including *Sing Tao*, *Ming Pao*, *World Journal*, *West Canada Weekly*, *Global Chinese Press*, *Dawa Business Press*, *Fairchild Radio and TV*, *Boulevard Chinese Magazine*, *BCbay*, *Vanpeople*, *Vansky*, *Lahoo*, and *Westca*, among others. In recent years, Chinese media in Vancouver has been developing fast.

Compared with media in China, local Chinese media in Vancouver have a lot of advantages and unique strengths in certain aspects. First, they have front-line

³ 糜晓昕 (2013), "中国网络媒体繁荣背景下的加拿大华文媒体", 2013 (4), 10

⁴ 石丹 (2012), "加拿大中文媒体的生存现状与发展策略", *Chinese Journalist*, 2012(4),106

⁵ 徐长安 (2015), "加拿大华文媒体发展综述 (下)", *Super Life*, 2015(9)

Retrieved from:

<http://newstar.superlife.ca/2015/09/01/加拿大华文传媒发展综述下/>

reporters and editors to approach primary sources. Second, they have language advantages to access local news and policies, especially since most practitioners in Chinese media within Canada are fluent in Chinese and English, both in terms of language and culture. As a result, they can choose a feasible reporting and narrating way that their audiences are most used to. And third, local mainstream society has started to value Chinese media and desires to cooperate with them.

For example, politicians don't want to ignore the considerable number of Chinese voters and try in many ways to win the votes from ethnic Chinese. One approach is to make use of local Chinese media. Justin Trudeau, the 23rd and current Prime Minister of Canada and leader of the Liberal Party, has published articles in Chinese media *Sing Tao* and *Ming Pao*, preaching his political views and criticizing the negative viewpoints of his opponents. Likewise, the Conservative Party also has offered Chinese articles, trying to win Chinese voters over.⁶ What's more, in some areas where the government value Chinese community very much, they employ translators who specifically serve local Chinese media, offering information to them every day.⁷ In Ontario and British Columbia, the provincial governments even created positions where employers collect and translate contents from local Chinese media, analyse public opinions of that demographic on what the governments could do better.⁸ Aside from offering information to Chinese media, some Canadian politicians even start to build their own Chinese media platform in order to approach to Chinese community. Jason Kenney, last leader of the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta, the former Minister of National Defence, set up a WeChat public account called 康尼, which is his Chinese name. He published political views, policy change, and political

⁶ 徐长安 (2015), "加拿大华文媒体发展综述 (下)", *Super Life*, 2015(9)
Retrieved from:

<http://newstar.superlife.ca/2015/09/01/加拿大华文传媒发展综述下/>

⁷ 晓理 (2007), "加拿大华文传媒发展新趋势", *中国记协网*
Retrieved from:

<http://marketingmag.ca/media/sun-to-buy-half-of-chinese-language-paper-13684/>

⁸ 徐长安 (2015), "加拿大华文媒体发展综述 (下)", *Super Life*, 2015(9)
Retrieved from:

<http://newstar.superlife.ca/2015/09/01/加拿大华文传媒发展综述下/>

achievements. Justin Trudeau has also set up his own WeChat public account to post Chinese articles regularly. In this WeChat public account, Justin Trudeau has given his best wishes on Chinese New Year day and talked about his journey to Shanghai and Beijing, criticized Harper's plan and promoted himself for the election. On the first page of his WeChat public account, Justin Trudeau says to the subscribers:

“Dear friend, thanks for your subscribing. I hope the work of my Chinese team can make you get to know me better, and know Canada better. Let's build the great future of Canada together!”

In addition, local English language media in Vancouver has always kept an eye on local Chinese language media. For example, when Justin Trudeau published his articles to spread his political opinions in *Ming Pao*, his opponents also took action to stay relevant in the political competition. The Conservative Party immediately published a conspicuous advertisement that occupied half of a page in *Ming Pao*. The advertisement reads in Chinese:

“Do you share the same value as Liberal Party leading by Justin Trudeau? Liberal Party wants to make marijuana a legal drug that can be easily accessible for our children; Liberal Party wants to set up legal drug injection sites around your alley; Liberal Party wants to legalize prostitution and allow it in your community; These messages do not match our value either.”

This whole political back-and-forth drew the attention of local English language media *CTV News*. On October 14, 2015, *CTV News* published the article “Fact or fear? Conservative attack ad raising eyebrows in Vancouver”. In this report, Max Cameron, a political science professor at UBC commented that he thought the Conservative campaigners had done their research and knew the three topics (marijuana, injection sites and prostitution) mentioned in the advertisement were hot button issues in the Vancouver Chinese community. Cameron also commented that the Conservative campaigners

unlikely to place an advertisement of this nature in an English speaking newspaper.⁹

Another example of English media keeping an eye on Chinese media in Canada is from July 28, 2016. Just two days after the British Columbia province announced that they would start singling out foreign buyers with a new 15 per cent property transfer tax to reduce demand for Metro Vancouver real estate, *The Globe and Mail* posted the article “Chinese-Language Media up in Arms over B.C. foreign buyer tax”. In this article, the author apparently read plenty of Chinese reports about B.C. foreign buyer tax. He summarized and translated several reports from Chinese language media, and analyzed their opinions. *Ming Pao*, *Sing Tao*, and some WeChat public accounts were all mentioned in this article. Below is the abstract of the article:

“Vancouver’s surprising new property-purchase tax for foreigners has generated a storm of coverage in Chinese-language media both in Vancouver and in China itself, with articles warning of dramatic new costs, analyzing the political motives of the B.C. Liberal Party and predicting a host of negative outcomes.”¹⁰

Similarly, on August 5 in 2016, *Huffington Post* published the article “Chinese Media Warns Canada’s Housing Crash Will Put U.S. To Shame”, where the author mentioned that Chinese media is important to many people and that Chinese media has covered some interesting points that they had not. The abstract is as below:

“We’re always curious to know how other countries interpret our statistics,

⁹ Shannon Paterson(2015), “Fact or fear? Conservative attack ad raising eyebrows in Vancouver”, *CTV News* Retrieved from:

<http://bc.ctvnews.ca/fact-or-fear-conservative-attack-ad-raising-eyebrows-in-vancouver-1.2610195>

¹⁰ Si Chen, Frances Bula (2016), “Chinese-language media up in arms over B.C. foreign buyer tax”, *The Globe and Mail*

Retrieved from:

<https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/chinese-language-media-up-in-arms-about-bc-foreign-buyer-tax/article31150727/?ref=http://www.theglobeandmail.com&>

political climate and what outside media is reporting about Canada's economy. Since China has been a hot-button subject in Canadian news recently, we thought it was high time we took a look at how Canada is portrayed in China's state-regulated media. While the Chinese media does acknowledge that Chinese buyers are a contributing factor to our prices, and admit they have been capitalizing on it, they also point out some interesting observations that our media has failed to cover. ”¹¹

In other words, given that Chinese people have different media consumption habits, the previous examples show that organizations who want to market to the Chinese community usually use different approaches when it comes to media purchasing. In order to reach those Chinese customers who rely heavily, or entirely, on Chinese language media, organizations always put Chinese media in their marketing plan.¹²

Fierce Competition Among Chinese Media in Vancouver

Despite various Chinese language- and culture-focused websites and WeChat public accounts in Vancouver, there are more than 20 Chinese print newspapers and magazines and over ten Chinese TV and radio channels. The number of Chinese media is significant, especially since the audience is limited. The population of ethnic Chinese in Metro Vancouver is about 450,000.¹⁴ The oversupply of media has resulted in fierce competition in the Chinese media industry in Vancouver. Due to the limited market and the lack of regulation by any

¹¹ Stephen Punwasi (2016), “Chinese Media Warns Canada's Housing Crash Will Put U.S. To Shame”, *Huffington Post*

Retrieved from:

http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/stephen-punwasi/canadian-housing-crash_b_11349292.html

¹² Insights West (2015), “Chinese in Metro Vancouver Heavier Digital Media Users”

Retrieved from:

<https://insightswest.com/news/chinese-in-metro-vancouver-heavier-digital-media-users/>

¹⁴ Douglas Todd (2017), “Douglas Todd: B.C.'s ethnic Chinese far more inclined to vote Liberal”, *Vancouver Sun*

Retrieved from:

<http://vancouver.sun.com/opinion/columnists/douglas-todd-b-c-s-ethnic-chinese-population-far-more-inclined-to-vote-liberal>

industry association, price reduction for advertisements, in order to scramble for advertising clients is now the norm. When they acquire advertisements at a lower rate than their production's operating budget, a media company may face the fact that they are not sustainable. If the revenue cannot meet the needs of its expenditure, the reporters cannot earn money, the employees will receive lower wages, the quality output of the media will then decrease, and advertisement revenues will be further negatively affected. The cut-throat competition does harm everyone.¹⁵

Opportunities

Before 2010, Cantonese was the predominant language spoken within the Chinese community in Vancouver. According to the 2016 census data that was released on August 2, 2017, the number of Mandarin speaking residents in Canada has now surpassed the number of Cantonese speaking residents for the first time in Canada's history. Mandarin has become the most common non-English mother tongue nationwide, overtaking Cantonese.¹⁶ Given that there has been a continuous drop in immigration from Hong Kong, but a steady growth in immigrants from Mainland China, Henry Yu, a UBC professor stated, "Cantonese is a language that is ultimately under threat."¹⁷ Although the dramatic switch in migration patterns in Canada is the main reason for the decrease in Cantonese-speaking households, the Chinese government has also contributed

¹⁵ 北美时报 (2017), "华文媒体的困境", *North America Weekly Times*

Retrieved from:

<http://naweeklytimes.com/2017/01/10/华文媒体的困境/>

¹⁶ Wanyee Li(2017), "More Mandarin than Cantonese speakers in Metro Vancouver: census", *Metro News*

Retrieved from:

<http://www.metronews.ca/news/vancouver/2017/08/03/more-mandarin-than-cantonese-speakers-in-metro-vancouver-census.html>

¹⁷ Wanyee Li(2017), "More Mandarin than Cantonese speakers in Metro Vancouver: census", *Metro News*

Retrieved from:

<http://www.metronews.ca/news/vancouver/2017/08/03/more-mandarin-than-cantonese-speakers-in-metro-vancouver-census.html>

to the assimilation of Cantonese culture by ruling that Mandarin shall be the official language taught and spoken in schools in Hong Kong, where Cantonese is typically the dominant language for conversation. This increases the fear that one day, Cantonese culture will be assimilate into the Mandarin-speaking culture.¹⁸

This shift from a weakening Cantonese culture to a dominating Mandarin culture provides an incredible chance for the Chinese media platforms that were started by Mandarin-speaking immigrants to further invade into the market. The switch of language dominance can be a sign that very soon mainland Chinese media may overtake Hong Kongnese media to be the predominant Chinese media in Vancouver.

Many Mandarin speakers in Vancouver come from mainland China and they are used to reading simplified Chinese characters. Most Cantonese speakers in Vancouver come from Hong Kong and some provinces in southern China, like Guangdong, and they are accustomed to reading traditional Chinese Characters. Due to the different cultural and political backgrounds, immigrants from mainland China possess very different media preferences compared to Cantonese immigrants. The two biggest and most well-known Chinese language media, *Sing Tao* and *Ming Pao*, are still printing in traditional Chinese characters as both were set up by Cantonese immigrants from Hong Kong. Nowadays, the media platforms that are used to focus on Cantonese speakers are now having a hard time adapting to increasing numbers of Mandarin speakers while also keeping their existing Cantonese audience. Joseph Chan, the President of Fairchild Media Group (a Cantonese TV and radio company) states that “there is definitely a shift happening. The Mandarin audience has a lot of potential. If we want to grow, we need to attract this audience.” Chan is now adding Mandarin-language TV shows

¹⁸ Wanyee Li(2017), “More Mandarin than Cantonese speakers in Metro Vancouver: census”, *Metro News* Retrieved from:
<http://www.metronews.ca/news/vancouver/2017/08/03/more-mandarin-than-cantonese-speakers-in-metro-vancouver-census.html>

and radio Channels to Fairchild Media Group line-up.¹⁹ This change, in favor of local mainland Chinese media, is both a challenge and an opportunity.

With the rapidly developing media technology in China, collaborating with media in China could also be an opportunity for local Chinese language media.²⁰ *West Canada Weekly* has been collaborating with *Xinmin News* for the last 8 years. For example, they share the copyright of some articles and pictures, they send and receive original content from each other to better serve their audiences' reading preferences, and they help promote one another's content on their own platforms. This collaboration means the companies' expenses are reduced and the profits increase. Recently, *West Canada Weekly* has been invited to set up collaborations with different partners in China, including *Renmin Daily*. Other representative Chinese-language newspapers like *Sing Tao* and *Ming Pao* in Canada, are both owned by their head media group located in Hong Kong. Therefore they both have access to original content from China as well. This type of collaboration can be a good opportunity for other media entities struggling for affordable content.

¹⁹ Weiyong Xiong, Farah Tarannum(2015), "Vancouver's Chinese media looks to growing Mandarin audience", *The Thunder Bird*

Retrieved from:

<https://thethunderbird.ca/2015/04/07/vancouver-chinese-media-looks-to-growing-mandarin-audience/>

²⁰ 石丹 (2012), "加拿大中文媒体陷入经营困境: 集团化将是出路", *新浪中心*

Retrieved from:

<http://news.sina.com.cn/m/2012-04-10/155924248575.shtml>

The Case Study of Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation

History and Context

Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation was founded by Robert Zhang and Hua Cai in July 2009. The first issue of *West Canada Weekly* was published on October 10, 2009. Graduated with a master in Information and Library Studies from UBC, Zhang has always been interested in the media industry. During his stay in Vancouver, he found that there was a market opportunity of free pick-up Chinese weekly publications. In 2009, there were two successful mainland Chinese newspapers based in Vancouver, *Global Chinese Press*, which published twice a week, and *Dawa Business Press* that published three times a week. After doing in-depth research, Zhang found that most of the existing Chinese newspapers only reported news: none of the journals had similar features of magazines—longer and more readable articles, diversified topics including entertainment, lifestyle, and family stories. Zhang realized that the Chinese newspapers were lacking in the supplementary features that a daily newspaper would usually cover. “Chinese residents were far fewer in Vancouver at that time, but a significant portion of them were jobless. Some of them were housewives, mothers who were accompanying their studious children, investment immigrants and skilled workers who could not find a job in Vancouver. They all shared the experience of spending plenty of time at home.” Zhang continues, “People could not use their cell phones to surf the internet conveniently like we do now, when they stayed at home with nothing to do, they needed long, in-depth,

and readable articles to read.”²¹ At the same time, the immigrant population from mainland China was growing. Newspapers like *Sing Tao*, *Ming Pao* and *World Journal* had the writing, narrating, and styles catered to Hong Kongese and Taiwanese immigrants, which was hard to get used to for mainland China immigrants. As a result, Robert Zhang came up with the idea to produce a journal that can fill this market void: *West Canada Weekly*.

West Canada Weekly is devoted to creating an influential media brand in western Canada. Since 2009, *West Canada Weekly* has been delivering to Chinese readers high quality and relevant content. With over 4 million copies distributed since the first issue, *West Canada Weekly* has proved to be a trusted news and information source for Chinese immigrants and is recognized as a must-have staple for readers who depend on reliable reporting. *West Canada Weekly* covers topics such as current events, personal finance, real estate, health, lifestyle and entertainment. Its target audience are Chinese people living in Vancouver, who are affluent, educated, family-oriented, with reading habits formed in mainland China.

At the time of writing, Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation has 16 full time employees and 10 freelancers. The circulation of *West Canada Weekly* is 13,000 per week. Currently, the publisher is trying to cut down the pages count of each issue, while continuing to increase the circulation of the publication. In terms of digital media, the three WeChat public accounts owned by the company reach more than 40,000 views every day, while the websites reach an average of 5000 views daily.

In addition to its print and online presence, *West Canada Weekly* has built a relationship of cooperation with *Xinmin Evening News*, a daily newspaper that was established in 1929 with the longest history in China. *Xinmin Evening News* is

²¹ Interview with Robert Zhang, on September 1, 2017

one of China's most valuable newspaper brands. Its daily circulation is over 1,100,000 in China. Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation has collaborated with *Xinmin Evening News* for the last 8 years, and they continued to do so. Now they have diversified this collaboration, taking many forms. First, *West Canada Weekly* has a column specifically for *Xinmin Evening News*, where the editor picks up what might interest *West Canada Weekly's* audience. The *Xinmin Evening News* column occupies 8 pages. Second, when it comes to WeChat public accounts, *West Canada Weekly* and *Xinmin Evening News* also have an established collaboration of mutual promotion. Every day, both *West Canada Weekly* and *Xinmin Evening News* post a piece of news reported by the other WeChat public accounts, and give the brief introduction to each other's media platform in that article. Third, *Xinmin Evening News* has its own app that possesses a large number of users, where *West Canada Weekly* has a column on it, providing readers in mainland China can access to the stories from Vancouver. According to Robert Zhang, there will be further collaboration in the future: "People living in mainland China have increasing interests in overseas Chinese group. The need of overseas ethnic Chinese information is huge. What we are producing has a market in mainland China." Robert Zhang said.

Strategies and Platforms

Traditional Media

West Canada Weekly has the highest circulation count of 13,000 copies as an independent Chinese weekly newspapers in Metro Vancouver, maintaining one of the most extensive free newspaper distribution network. It invests a lot in expanding this network, purchasing newspaper rack licenses in high-traffic Chinese supermarkets and shopping malls: there are over 370 pick-up spots

across Metro Vancouver; 131 in Richmond; 101 in Vancouver; 51 in Burnaby and New Westminster; 28 in Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, and Port Moody; 26 in Surrey and White Rock; and 21 in West Vancouver and North Vancouver. The newspaper is available also in all T&T supermarkets across Metro Vancouver.

The other newspaper belonging to Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation is *Canadian Chinese Real Estate Week*. Most of the readers are new immigrants that are of either middle or upper-class status.²² *Canadian Chinese Real Estate Week* serves the unique group who seeks for a new home for professional information of the real estate market and for personal finance services information.

Nowadays, digital media become more and more popular. Printing newspaper has been a costly choice. Some media company stopped printing newspaper and completely transformed to new media company. For example, 51 Canada started its newspaper *51 Weekly* but shut it down in 2016, while keeping its websites and WeChat public accounts.²³ However, *West Canada Weekly* still keeps newspaper as its major media product. The most important reason is that newspapers are still relatively reliable and authoritative in most readers' opinion. Zhang has stated in a previous interview that "you can't tell nonsense in printed newspaper, that's how most people think. In China, it's called 'black characters on white paper.' With such tangible evidence, you need to be more careful and responsible. If you post something wrong or inappropriate online, you can make modification by editing or deleting it, but once it's printed, it's permanent."²⁴

In 2001, there was a publishing accident that will be definitely engraved in the history of *West Canada Weekly*. Due to an editor's careless fault, a fatal error

²² Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation (2017), *West Canada Weekly Brochure*

²³ 龙人 (2016) "媒体思考 (4): 不要和钱过不去", 社区网

Retrieved from:

<http://www.chinesecanadianvoice.ca/88252/>

²⁴ Interview with Robert Zhang, on September 1, 2017

appeared in one page of the newspaper. Zhang only discovered that mistake after thousands of newspapers were already printed. He was not going to allow this error to be seen by his readers, but there were not enough funds to reprint the newspaper. Zhang came up with a solution: all the employees work extra hours that Thursday evening tearing off the page with the error from the newspaper.

WeChat Public Accounts

WeChat is the most popular mobile social media app in China. It is a combination of Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype, Apple Pay, and Uber. Due to its strong and convenient functions, it has gained over 889 million users.²⁵ Chinese media in Vancouver has flock to it to attract new immigrants from mainland China, as they know the Mandarin-speaking population in Vancouver is growing. In Metro Vancouver, there are over 200,000 immigrants from mainland China that are using WeChat to contact with friends and read articles from WeChat public accounts. Since 2015, to remain relevant with the digital era, local Chinese media have been setting up their own WeChat public accounts one after another and post daily feeds to attract subscribers.²⁶ Today, most Chinese media in Vancouver have their own WeChat public accounts. “WeChat is a great platform for us to build brand awareness and maintain a competitive advantage. It has many users that can become our potential audience,” said Michael Mai, chief editor of the local Chinese news website Lahoo.²⁷

²⁵ 三易生活 (2017), “2017 年微信用户数据报告: 活跃用户达 8.89 亿”, *Sohu*

Retrieved from:

http://www.sohu.com/a/136382735_184641

²⁶ Wen Yang(2017), “Local Chinese media flock to WeChat to attract new immigrants from mainland China”. *The Thunder Bird*

Retrieved from:

<https://thethunderbird.ca/2017/03/29/local-chinese-media-flock-to-wechat-to-attract-new-immigrants-from-mainland-china/>

²⁷ Wen Yang(2017), “Local Chinese media flock to WeChat to attract new immigrants from mainland China”. *The Thunder Bird*

Retrieved from:

<https://thethunderbird.ca/2017/03/29/local-chinese-media-flock-to-wechat-to-attract-new-immigrants-from-mainland-china/>

Jie Zheng is one of *West Canada Weekly's* subscribers. In 2010, she moved to Vancouver from her hometown Tianjin. Every day, Jie Zheng uses WeChat to contact her friends and families and to acquire news updates from public accounts she is subscribed to. "WeChat greatly helped me to integrate into the city. I just need to open WeChat to go through various accounts, and then find news stories and local events that interest me. I participated in several events and made some friends," said Zheng.²⁸

During the three months at *West Canada Weekly*, I wrote over 100 articles for *West Canada Weekly* WeChat public accounts, and the accumulated views of my articles exceeded 800,000. After in-depth interview with the chief editor of *West Canada Weekly*, combined with the experience I gained during my internship and previous research on WeChat writing, I summarized some tips on how to produce a good and popular WeChat article, from selecting a topic, settling the title, to writing the copy.

Tips on WeChat Non-fiction writings

- Follow the Trending Topics

If you write an article talking about wedding ceremonies, there might be 5000 clicks at ordinary time. But if you publish the article during the famous star couple Angelababy and Xiaoming Huang, the views could reach up to 50,000. You need to be sensitive to trending topics and have a sharp eye for them. When the trending topic appears, you must be as fast as possible. The topic can fade away in two days. If you do not follow the trend in time, you will have lost that chance forever.

²⁸ Wen Yang(2017), "Local Chinese media flock to WeChat to attract new immigrants from mainland China". *The Thunder Bird*
Retrieved from:
<https://thethunderbird.ca/2017/03/29/local-chinese-media-flock-to-wechat-to-attract-new-immigrants-from-mainland-china/>

In July 2017, a Chinese show *The First Half of My Life* started to broadcast in China and be available to watch on YouTube. It soon became popular amongst Chinese people living in Vancouver. Everyone was watching the show and talking about the characters and plots. The Chinese media in Vancouver became excited and ready to chase this hot topic. *Vanpeople* was the first Chinese media to publish an article related to this hot topic. It turns out, this TV show was adapted from a novel written by the famous Chinese writer Yi Shu, who has immigrated to Canada and now lives in West Vancouver. *Vanpeople* published an article talking about Yi Shu's life in Vancouver and her literature works, which tells stories that takes place in Vancouver. That article received impressive views. People who knew or watched this show were surprised by the fact that the author of this fantastic work lived in their neighbourhood and that she loved the lifestyle of Vancouver just like they did. The readers loved to read the articles and shared it on their Moments (the users' personal profile feeds of WeChat), showing their friends that life in Vancouver is wonderful. One reader said "Wow. Comes out this big name is my neighbour!" in the post where he shared the article. Many more related articles followed this hot topic, such as some reviews and comments based on the show.

Following trends goes beyond just reporting them, but also making connections with other genres. On August 11, 2017 *West Canada Weekly* published a short novel on their WeChat public account, which told a story of a woman who was abandoned by her lover in Beijing and moved to Vancouver to restart her life. In the show *The First Half of My Life*, the heroine suffered a similar experience. At first the author of the short novel gave it a the title *After Being a Mistress for 5 Years, Beauty got Dumped*. However, the chief editor changed it into *The First Half of My Life in Vancouver: After Being a Mistress for 5 Years, I got Dumped*. The chief editor and the author knew that anyone who has watched the show would be interested in the short novel, seeing that it was related. As predicted, the

new and polished title gained the short novel high amounts of views.

- Take a Unique Perspective

When a trending topic comes out, all the media jump on the bandwagon to write about it. What else can be done when the topic is already discussed? You cannot simply repeat something others have covered already. Unique ideas and opinions will be necessary to attract readers.

How can you consistently come up with new unique perspective? You can start by thinking about the most common views and list the first three points that occur to you. Avoid them at all cost and keep thinking about something else. In July 2017, one of the biggest news in the Chinese community in Vancouver was the murder case of Marrison Shen. The 13-year-old girl from mainland China was murdered after 6 months of moving to Vancouver. Her body was found in Burnaby Central Park, just steps away from her house. Her parents were devastated and the whole Chinese community in Vancouver was shocked and enraged. Eight days after Marrison Shen's body was found, the police still had no suspects, only reporting that the murder was a random attack. For this news, *West Canada Weekly* did not assign reporters to interview anyone at the scene; all the information accessible to the editors were from English Canadian news sources such as *CBC News*, *Vancouver Sun*, and *Global News*. Had they just translated the English news into Chinese, the articles would have nothing to differentiate themselves from other Chinese media. At that point, what was needed was a unique point of view. One editor raised his opinion that "the scariest part of this case is, according to the police, the murderer killed an innocent girl for no reason. He or she has not been caught and controlled yet. No one knows where the murderer is and what he or she could do next. People may worry if it is possible that they also be attacked randomly by the murderer." Another point was that even eight days later, the police still had not made any further progress with the case. People who were

concerned about this case were increasingly worried: will this murder remain unsolved like the homicide of Wendy Lander eight years ago? *West Canada Weekly* eventually published an article highlighting the two points above, comparing this case with Wendy Lander case, with the title *The Scariest Details of Marris Shen's Case: Getting Killed for no Reason, Murderer Hidden in the Dark Side and Might Never be Found.*

- Write a Title that Arouses Curiosity

When WeChat users browse through the Moments feed, they can only see the titles of articles their WeChat friends have shared. The time they pay attention to each title is only a few seconds. In order to intrigue the audience enough to click on the link and view the article, it is necessary to grab their attention quickly and evoke their curiosity with the title. You have multiple ways to arouse curiosity. For example, leave the sentence unfinished and on a cliff hanger. After Trudeau interrupted a woman and corrected her for saying “mankind” not “peoplekind” at a town hall event, *West Canada Weekly* published the article *He Has Gone Too Far: Trudeau Infuriates People All Over the World This Time. Even Canadians Can't Put Up with Him...* For some Chinese readers who hadn't heard of that news, when they saw this title, they were curious about what Trudeau had done, and wanted to read the article to find it out. Another example is the title: *A Tragedy in a Chinese Canadian Family: Daughter Stabbed Mother. Before Death, Mother said...* This story is about a murder case that happened in Montreal: a Chinese Canadian woman with mental issues killed her mother after they had a fight. After getting injured, the mother called the police and told them she was stabbed by her daughter, and later she died in the hospital. With *West Canada Weekly's* “unfinished” title, people were eager to know, what was the last word the poor mother said. If the title had been *A Tragedy in a Chinese Canadian Family: Daughter Stabbed Mother. Before Death, Mother called the police*, it would have been less intriguing. “If you have told the whole story in the title, why would

readers bother to read the article?” said Robert Zhang, always emphasizing the importance of leaving a cliff hanger in the title.²⁹

This principle only applies to some specific topics. When it comes to breaking news like terror attacks or plane crashes, you don't need to arouse curiosity, because the news itself is eye catching enough. In the title, all you need is to clarify what exactly happened and how serious it is, for example, *Breaking: Mass Shooting in Las Vegas; 50+ Dead, 500+ Sent to Hospital*.

- Keep the Writing Style Relaxed and Interesting

The type of reading that usually occurs on WeChat is fragmented reading. Readers spend only a few minutes on a WeChat article before moving on. What most readers are looking for is a relaxing experience, without having to think much, while still absorbing information. If the article is dull, they will leave quickly and definitely will not share it. You must make sure the article is interesting enough to keep them reading from the start to the end. Plain, serious, and boring words are the biggest enemy to new media.

At the same time, remember to keep close to your readers. Interaction is the significant feature of new media. An amiable tone is therefore important. Make your reader feel like a friend is talking to him while reading your article.

- Be the Voice of the Readers

Today, in terms of WeChat reading, what readers expect is not how you express yourself, but how you express their thoughts and ideas. They want to see themselves reflected in the published article. People share articles on their Moments feed because they identify with the content: “That is me and that is what

²⁹ Interview with Robert Zhang, on September 1, 2017

I think. The author said exactly what I wanted to say.” Due to the social media nature of WeChat, people share articles on their Moments, not just in order to show their friends what they found interesting, but also to show who they are and their views on certain topics, and to express some kind of feeling or mood. Good WeChat writers and editors can produce articles that can evoke readers’ emotional reaction.

Yet, everyone wants to look decent in their Moments feed. They may read or watch some vulgar content on WeChat public accounts, but they will not share that on Moments. They will only share an article if they feel that article can represent their acceptable personal values to a public audience. Consequently, articles that are not only interesting, but also thoughtful, are more highly rated.

WeChat Fiction Writing

Many people usually have the weekends off, but not for *West Canada Weekly* WeChat public accounts. The company has its own strategy and system for publishing articles on the weekends—the articles are usually written in advance. As mentioned earlier, the newspaper comes out every Friday. The editor-in-charge will pick five articles from the newspaper, copy and paste them on to the WeChat account and set a timeframe for the articles to be published over the weekend. Compared with what is published on the account on weekdays, the Saturday articles are much more in-depth reports, comments, or features, and they are usually much longer. On Sundays, original novels will be published on the WeChat public account. Two authors provide original stories for *West Canada Weekly* and I am one of them. No limits are imposed on the kind of topics to write about: as long as the author thinks it will attract its target audience, the editor will approve. The novels are more like a supplementary feature of the WeChat public account.

In China, a few successful WeChat public accounts have already been publishing novels regularly. However, *West Canada Weekly* is the only Chinese media WeChat public account in Vancouver that publishes original novels on WeChat while other companies are choosing to report mainly on current events. This pioneer action in Chinese media in Vancouver has proven successful for *West Canada Weekly*. The click-through rates of novels published on Sundays often exceed that of news published on weekdays. For *West Canada Weekly*, this is one of its unique features and keep it competitive in the market.

West Canada Weekly has dominates the WeChat novel reading market among the Chinese community in Vancouver because neither traditional nor digital publications publish Chinese novels regularly in Vancouver, and this could be due to the fact that fiction writing is a high-cost activity. For the authors working at *West Canada Weekly*, they are given four to eight hours to compose a short novel, ranging between 2500-5000 words. In contrast, a news article usually can be completed within one to two hours and range between 600-2000 words. With a similar investment, the media company makes less profit. Therefore, most Chinese media in Vancouver choose not to publish short stories for their readers.

In addition, only a few of people can write well Chinese novels in Vancouver. Most Chinese novel lovers tend to read online novels on WeChat public accounts that are based in China since many greater and more professional writers publish often there. In other words, although there is not a lot of competition locally, there is some from Chinese media. Yet *West Canada Weekly* discovered this gap in the Canadian market and decided to fill it. Their perfect way to differentiate themselves from the WeChat public accounts in China is by customizing the *West Canada Weekly* novels to their local readers. All the published digital novels have the same feature: the stories take place in Vancouver and the protagonists are Chinese people living in Vancouver. Chinese people immigrate to Vancouver for several reasons, including a superior educational system, better job opportunities,

and a higher quality in the standard of living. Every immigrant has their own story. With the deep understanding of the Chinese community in Vancouver, *West Canada Weekly* authors write novels that can strike a chord in the Chinese immigrants' hearts, as they find themselves living the stories being reflected in the novels. The readers will see themselves in the love stories of Chinese students at UBC or SFU, or in the stories of struggling Chinese mothers accompanying their studious children in Vancouver while being separated from their husbands in China. Every novel published on Sundays in *West Canada Weekly* garners about 10 comments from readers on average. Many will ask if the stories are based on true experiences as they were able to relate to them so strongly. "Is this a true story?" "Great article. *West Canada Weekly* should keep this author." "Haven't read such a romantic article for a long time. So touched!" "This story reminds me of my first love. I was moved to tears." "Looking forward to the sequel!" "I think the heroine will rethink her life and her relationship with her husband years later, and maybe by that time she will make a different choice. For the authors, it is a great experience to know immediately how many people read the work, who the readers are, and how they feel about it. For the editors, the readers' feedback gives them a sense of the topic and theme preferences, which influences the decisions for the next topic.

Compared to printed novels, WeChat novels have specific strengths. First, WeChat novels have a more targeted and narrowed audience. The users' loyalty is stronger and therefore the author can decide on the topics freely based on what they think will suit the audiences' specific preferences.³⁰ Second, WeChat public accounts are a multimedia platform. With many different choices of layout design, in a WeChat article, you can insert images, gifs, audios, and videos.³¹ For a love story between two young people, the editor can insert a piece of pleasant and

³⁰ 欧阳友权 (2015), "微信文学的存在方式与功能取向", 《江海学刊》, 2015 (1), 199

³¹ 冯卫东 (2016), "老牌媒体倒闭裁员潮纷现, 加拿大传统媒体艰难转型", 《科技日报》

Retrieved from:

http://www.ce.cn/culture/gd/201603/24/t20160324_9771546.shtml

melodious audio track, as well as upload artistic illustrations or photographs that will match the contents of the novel. In a book or magazine, the amount of illustrations and photographs are limited due to the cost of printing. While on WeChat, this is no longer a problem. An editor can insert as many pictures as they want, as long as they believe that the added photos will provide a better reading experience to the readers. Imagine reading a short novel in a café, with graceful music playing in your earphones and enjoying both the brilliant writing and beautiful pictures. The WeChat novels with additional graphics and audio clips provides a more engaging experience than reading a printed book. With the help of pictures, audios, and videos, the WeChat novels are able to provoke strong emotions and deliver information more directly and sufficiently compared with plain black words on a white page. This is the unique charm of multimedia and a vital strength of WeChat literature (See Figure 1). One piece of novel is approximately 20-30 screens in length with default type size (See Figure 2).



Figure 1. Screenshots of WeChat novels published on *West Canada Weekly's* account showing incorporated paragraphs and illustrations.



Figure 2. The entire “I left my first love to immigrate to Vancouver” novel published by *West Canada Weekly* WeChat public account is 24 screens.

Revenue Model

Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation, just like many other Chinese-language media company in Vancouver, distributes its content both in print and digitally, for free. As a result, the entire revenue comes from advertising. Clients can choose to advertise their product or service in print media and digital media. Choosing to do both means reaching different group of potential customers. Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation mainly offers two different advertising strategies for its clients, hard-sell advertising and soft-sell advertising.

Hard-Sell Advertising

Hard-sell advertisements are extremely direct: they contain a forceful, loud slogan to grab buyers' attention. Hard-sell advertisements focus on the quality of the product and why the viewer should purchase the product. This type of advertisements supply a lot of details to the buyers so that they can know as much information as possible about the perks of the product.³² The ultimate goal is to create a large incentive to purchase the product. Currently, most clients choose to buy the hard-sell advertising in *West Canada Weekly*. One major reason is that soft-sell advertising is much more expensive. In terms of platforms, most clients choose to buy a whole package, meaning Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation will advertise the brand or product on every platform, including newspaper, websites, and WeChat public accounts. This way, the clients can reach a wider range of potential customers.

- Print Advertisement

Besides newspapers, the *Vancouver Tourism Handbook* is also one of the publishing businesses of Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation. It is the first Chinese language tourism handbook in Vancouver. The company publishes the *Vancouver Tourism Handbook* twice a year and it reaches about 20,000 copies for each issue. Several advertisers, including restaurants, tourism companies, and hotels advertise in this tourism handbook. This publication has also garnered appreciation from Chinese tourists. Upon learning about the success of the *Vancouver Tourism Handbook*, some well-known organizations such as the Trump Tower and the Wild Whale Watching have asked Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation to put the tourism handbooks in their hotels and ships. For clients who want to advertise on

³² Okazaki, Shintaro; Mueller, Barbara; Taylor, Charles (2010). "Measuring Soft-Sell Versus Hard-Sell Advertising Appeals". *Journal of Advertising*. 39 (2): 5–20

newspapers, they can choose to display their advertisements in 2 pages, full page, half page, a quarter page. (See Figure 3). In other words, businesses can still reach a wide international audience with their hard-sell advertisements in all the print publications of Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation.

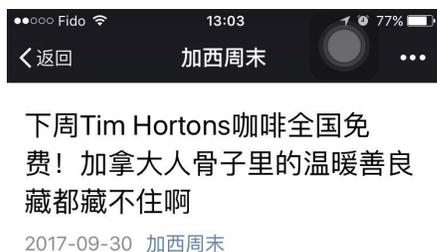


Figure 3. Two full-page advertisements on page two and page three in an issue of *West Canada Weekly*.

- Online Advertisement

According to Janet Fang, the Account Manager of Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation, people have different reading habits for newspapers and online media. One problem with online advertisements is that when they read on their smartphones and tablets, they tend to read very fast and roughly. The audience is able to easily ignore banner advertisements that are

inserted into the article. Meanwhile, people that read newspapers usually take their time flipping through every page paying attention to more details, including advertisements. For clients who want to advertise on WeChat public accounts, they can choose to put their banner advertisements at the beginning, middle, or end of a WeChat article. Different position has different purchase price. Typically, the beginning of an article is the best and most expensive position to insert banner advertisements. The middle position is cheaper and the end is the cheapest. This threetier pricing is because not all readers will finish reading the whole article; some just read several paragraphs from the beginning and leave. Thus the earlier an advertisement appears in an article, the more times it will be viewed (See Figure 4,5,6,7).



下周Tim Hortons咖啡全国免费! 加拿大人骨子里的温暖善良藏都藏不住啊

2017-09-30 加西周末

Title



稳坐咖啡业头把交椅, 占有加国62%的咖啡市场, 让屈居第二、份额仅占7%的**星巴克望尘莫及**。遍布全加的3千余家Tim Hortons一天能卖450万杯咖啡, 这意味着每7个加拿大人中就有一人每天都会去Tim Hortons买咖啡。

Article



1

2

3

Figure 4. Three banner advertisements inserted after the title in the beginning of a WeChat public account article.



1

2

怪不得有人说, **加拿大人的血管里, 流的是Tim Hortons。**

Article

Figure 5. Two banner advertisements that are inserted in the middle of a WeChat public account article.



Figure 6. Part of the banner advertisements in the end of a WeChat article.



Figure 7. The last banner advertisements in the end of a WeChat article.

Another problem for online advertising is that when an article reaches 200,000 views, only 20,000 readers might be from Vancouver. The other readers, who do not live in Vancouver, will not be interested at all in the local advertisements. As for traditional media, the 13,000 newspapers go exactly to the audience the advertisers want to target, and one newspaper can be read by a whole family.

In addition, due to the restriction of size, the graphic advertisements posted on smartphones and tablets cannot contain a lot of information. In contrast, graphic advertisements in newspapers can contain much more information. It is especially bothersome when advertisers want to show their potential customers visual

details of their products, like real estate, or jewellery, but are unable to due to the restrictions on electronic media platforms.

Although there are drawbacks to advertising on electronic media platforms, it does also have its advantages. Online media is capable of tracking up-to-date statistics on the amount of views and clicks each article and advertisement have received. The more an article is viewed and shared, the more likely the article will begin trending, and thus the more likely it will reach an even bigger audience than it would have been capable of reaching through the company's own followers. Readers that share articles that they find interesting will help increase the amount of views on an article, thus generating more possible customers to the advertisers.

Soft-Sell Advertising

Compared with hard-sell advertisements, soft-sell advertisements, or advertorials, are indirect and more emotionally focused. They attempt to trigger buyers' emotions. The subtlety avoids letting buyers realize they are reading an advertisement.³³ The ultimate goal of soft-sell advertisement is to create a mood or image that will appeal to buyers and make them want to purchase the product, all without buyers noticing that this is happening. David Ogilvy, the father of advertising once said "it has been found that the less an advertisement looks like an advertisement and the more it looks like an editorial, the more readers stop, look, and read."³⁴ That is why soft-sell advertisement is valued more and more today. We are now in the age of content marketing and promotion. Banner

³³ Okazaki, Shintaro; Mueller, Barbara; Taylor, Charles (2010). "Measuring Soft-Sell Versus Hard-Sell Advertising Appeals". *Journal of Advertising*. 39 (2): 5–20

³⁴ Cat Mooney(2016), "Native Advertising – 2017 Digital Marketing Trend", *Studio93*
Retrieved from:
<http://studio93.ie/native-advertising/>

advertising has been proven to be less and less effective over time.³⁵ According to Solve Media, people are more likely to survive a plane crash than click on a banner advertisement.³⁶

A tendency to prefer on soft-sell advertising in Vancouver's Chinese media is also occurring. Janet Fang explains that "people have learned that although the soft-sell advertising is more expensive than hard-sell advertising, it does have a better effect. As more companies are becoming aware of the banner blindness issue, there has been an increase in advertisers who are willing to pay more for soft-sell advertising."

Mi Meng, a very famous WeChat public account, had a very successful soft-sell advertising campaign one day before Valentine's Day in 2017. *Mi Meng* published an article talking about all the strange and ridiculous gifts girls have received from their boyfriends. Examples included a USB flash drive that looked like a BMW car key, a red flag with "Happy Valentine's Day. I love you, Darling" and a globe for a girl who had once mentioned to her boyfriend she would love to go out and see the world. At the end of the article, the author wrote "there are so many beautiful and exquisite gifts that boys can choose from and girls will be crazy about." When women read the article, they sympathized with the author's feelings. The advertisement reveals itself at the end. It is not only a supper funny article to make one laugh, but it is also an article that is meant to be shared with the boyfriends so that they can realize what they had done wrong and give them a chance to make it right the next time, in this case, for the next day for Valentine's Day by buy the right gifts from the advertised online shopping mall. This kind of advertorial can also be informative and entertaining.

³⁵ Caitlin Dickson(2011), "You Are More Likely to Survive a Plane Crash than Click a Banner Ad", *The Atlantic* Retrieved from:
<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2011/06/you-are-more-likely-survive-plane-crash-click-banner-ad/352323/>

³⁶ Caitlin Dickson(2011), "You Are More Likely to Survive a Plane Crash than Click a Banner Ad", *The Atlantic* Retrieved from:
<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2011/06/you-are-more-likely-survive-plane-crash-click-banner-ad/352323/>

Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation once did soft-sell advertising for a taxi service company. The editor planned and wrote an article with the title: *You Can Enjoy the Whole Vancouver City within Just One Day*. This article introduced several fun spots in Vancouver and talked about how to enjoy yourself for the full day, from early morning to the late evening, with exquisite writing and pictures. At the end of the article, the taxi service was mentioned, which was described as a big help to save money and time, and make the perfect day happen. The article was published on *West Canada Weekly* WeChat account and had a high amount of clicks. Most readers shared this article in their Moments feed because the travelling tips were very practical and useful. Less than 20 percent of the article was spent on trying to sell a service. This was a far more engaging way to advertise a product than flat out pushing the readers to use the taxi service throughout the entire article. Even though the author mentioned the product and she was clearly advertising, the readers did not mind a very minimal sales pitch on the taxi service, since she was able to provide additional quality content.

Some people believe that soft-sell advertising misleads and deceives audiences with false information. Advertisements with false information do truly exist, but they are frowned upon and are usually very unsuccessful. False information will eventually drive audiences away from the advertised brand. Good soft-sell advertisements will not make the audience feel uncomfortable or interrupted when reading the sales pitch. It can be true, smart, interesting, and enjoyable. At the same time, it can also inform, educate, and entertain the readers while successfully advertising the service or product.

Challenges and Reflection

Censorship by the Chinese Government

Like other media in China, WeChat is under strict censorship by the Chinese government and this can prove to be a challenge for Chinese media. Chinese media in Vancouver that are looking to open a WeChat public account and publish articles for China-based audiences must use a Chinese business license to register. This is the only way for the Chinese government to continue the strict monitoring and censorship they have in China.

In 2015, a series of explosions in Tianjin killed 173 people and injured hundreds, *BCbay* posted an article explaining how Americans had successfully avoided a similar disaster. The article went viral in the Chinese community. It got more than one million views in two days, but it was deleted on the second day by the WeChat administrators because, at that time, the Chinese government had banned unofficial media from writing anything about that specific explosion.³⁷ Similarly, CAC website, the subordinate to Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation, once published articles discussing China's political figures. Those articles were forbidden to be shared on WeChat.

When it comes to sensitive topics, digital editors of Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation are very careful. Sometimes, the WeChat platform will forbid editors from posting an article because the system had detected forbidden key words. Even if an article is published successfully, the

³⁷ Wen Yang(2017), "Local Chinese media flock to WeChat to attract new immigrants from mainland China". *The Thunder Bird*
Retrieved from:
<https://thethunderbird.ca/2017/03/29/local-chinese-media-flock-to-wechat-to-attract-new-immigrants-from-mainland-china/>

WeChat administration can still delete the post anytime if they were to find something they deem inappropriate. As a result, when the editors of Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation find certain topics that are valuable, but also “risky,” they will choose to work on those topics and publish the articles through traditional media platforms.

In contrast to online media, traditional media published in Canada, such as newspapers and magazines, are able to show their advantageous positions over social media during times of heavy censorship by the Chinese government. It is hard for Chinese government to track printed publications in paper in Canada. As a result, some topics that are forbidden by Chinese government can be published and distributed to the public through printed newspapers and magazines in Vancouver.

Fierce Competition

Fierce competition is another challenge facing Chinese media in Vancouver and has caused some of them to report news unscrupulously. On September 11, 2017, Yu Linhai, a 17-year-old student in Vancouver who came from Weihai, Shandong province, China, was reported missing. In the beginning, a friend of Yu found that Yu could not be reached. She proceeded to ask for help by posting on WeChat Moments. News about Chinese people in Vancouver is always a favourite for local Chinese media. Almost all Chinese media noticed this incident and published reports. Soon, the boy’s personal life was revealed. While other Chinese media released pictures of him, pointing out that the clothes and shoes he wore were very expensive and some media companies claimed that he disappeared because Yu had been rejected by a girl he liked. Another company even posted photos of Yu Linhai’s bedroom and drew a portrait of him. All media claimed that they were helping to look for the missing boy, yet the reports had nothing to do with finding him. They were trying to grab readers’ attention by using catchy, but

irrelevant details. Indeed, those articles gained high volume of views and in the following days, there were people saying they witnessed someone looking like Yu. Eight days after Yu's disappearance, *West Canada Weekly* WeChat account published an article urging that the media keep calm and silent on this topic. In that article, the author pointed out that if Yu Linhai was still hiding somewhere in Vancouver, he might not be willing to come back because his private life had been exposed to everyone in this city. On September 20th, 2017, having read the article from *West Canada Weekly*, Yu Linhai's parents released a claim, asking the local media to stop reporting on this issue. On September 23, 2017, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police reported they had found a body of a missing teenager. Considerate of the family's wishes, the police did not publicly identify the body. Yu Linhai's parents later confirmed to local Chinese media that the police had indeed found Yu Linhai and that they were taking him back home. Yet, even after requesting the media to remain silent out of consideration for the family, many Vancouver Chinese media still reported the death of Yu Linhai the next day.

Taking into consideration the extenuating circumstances of the situation, Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation firmly followed their ethical principles and decided against publishing articles on Yu Linhai's death. Similarly, several years ago, two Chinese people were murdered in a McDonald's restaurant. A friend of the dead shared many things about the deceased to the chief editor Robert Zhang, including a lot of interesting details, that could grab the readers' interest and attention. However, Zhang chose to discard all the obtained information out of respect for the deceased. Silence can put a media company in a very disadvantageous position, but Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation would rather give up the chance to garner more attention than to give up on their moral principles. What Chinese language media in Vancouver need is the regulation of market to get rid of vicious competition. In Vancouver's Chinese media circle, under the fierce competition, sticking to moral principles costs a lot.

Reflection

Corporate combination and resource integration is a workable way of thinking. On one hand, Chinese media can cooperate and even merge. On the other hand, local Chinese media can seek to collaborate with local mainstream English media. Although there has not been any successful attempts of Vancouver's Chinese media company merging with another local Chinese media company, there has been successful examples of Chinese media collaborating with English media.

In 1998, the biggest stock holder in *Sing Tao*, Hu Xian, sold his equity, which was 55% of the enterprise, to a Torstar Corporation, a mainstream newspaper group, which started the precedent of overseas Chinese language media held by local mainstream media. It is commonly believed that, after *Toronto Star* stepped in and bought a large share of the company, the operation and management became better. *Sing Tao* became more competitive in the market and has used media resources in a more effective way. According to Peter Li, general manager for *Sing Tao's* Eastern edition, the subsequent infusion of resources from *Toronto Star* also brought a considerable production change to *Sing Tao*, such as adding more colors to the newspaper, and improving the editing quality. He said that *Toronto Star* has helped change *Sing Tao's* image, making the newspaper look more contemporary and light-hearted in terms of style and content.³⁸

In August 2006, one year after *Today Daily News*, a Chinese Language media that was founded in Toronto, the mainstream English language media *Toronto Sun* agreed to become business partners and collaborate in various aspects, including editing, advertising, printing, and marketing. During that time, they shared news, stories and pictures, they sold advertisements in bundles with each

³⁸ Wendy Cuthbert, "Ming Pao leading the other newspaper war", *Strategy Online*
Retrieved from:
<http://strategyonline.ca/2001/05/21/ming-20010521/>

other, and they worked together on promotional events. In other words, they shared resources and markets. After nearly two years of effective collaboration, in April 2008, the company that runs *Toronto Sun* acquired 50 percent stock of *Today Daily News*. Kin-Man Lee, *Toronto Sun* publisher and executive vice-president of Sun Media, explained that the “venture created a strategic partnership with a well-respected newspaper in the Greater Toronto Area which would allow for increased synergies in distribution services, editorial content, advertising opportunities, and promotion and marketing.”³⁹ Herbert Moon, president of *Today Daily News* claimed that the partnership between *Today Daily News* and Sun Media will create a win-win situation, enhancing the growth potential of the Chinese-language daily newspaper and providing better services for the Chinese community in Toronto.⁴⁰

Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation is currently collaborating with York BBS, an online Chinese media company based in Toronto. The two companies agreed that they can share each other’s articles and pictures. Under the collaboration, Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation can get the quick and exclusive news reports from Toronto. However, Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation could make more partnerships with English media like *Richmond News*, *Vancouver Sun*, and *CBC*. Both *Vancouver Sun* and *CBC* once published Chinese-language articles. While *Richmond News* are hiring Chinese-speaking reporter to help the company gather more news from Chinese community. If these English media build a collaboration with *West Canada Weekly*, they can get Chinese-language content for free, and the cost on employment will be reduced. Besides, when it comes to Chinese community and Chinese culture, Chinese media has natural advantages that are indispensable to reach that audience. The benefits that *West Canada Weekly* can

³⁹ Canadian Press(2008), “Sun to buy half of Chinese-language paper”, *Marketing Magazine*
Retrieved from:

<http://marketingmag.ca/media/sun-to-buy-half-of-chinese-language-paper-13684/>

⁴⁰ Canadian Press(2008), “Sun to buy half of Chinese-language paper”, *Marketing Magazine*
Retrieved from:

<http://marketingmag.ca/media/sun-to-buy-half-of-chinese-language-paper-13684/>

gain from the collaboration is also obvious. Compared with Chinese language media, local mainstream media in English language has the advantages of capital, influence, and news gathering. There is no doubt that the communication and cooperation between Chinese-language media and mainstream English-language media is a good strategy that benefits both sides by making use of each other's strengths and reducing their own weaknesses. For Vancouver's Chinese media and Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation specifically, it is a chance that they break through the existing limits and exploit new opportunities.

Conclusion

Vancouver, a multiracial and multicultural city, has given Chinese-language media the chance to grow. As a non-mainstream media, Chinese-language media has experienced their ups and downs, but with the developing and expanding ethnic Chinese group, the ambitious Chinese-language media companies have spared no effort to seize the chance to dominate the market.

By going through the history and observing the existing circumstances closely, this report explored the outlook of Chinese-language media in Vancouver. As we have seen, different opportunities available for them include cooperating with media in China and building partnership with English-language media in Canada, to make better use of resources and create a win-win collaboration.

By taking Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation as an example, this report analysed in details a typical Chinese-language media's surviving strategies and revenue models. In this case study, WeChat public accounts were discussed as a particularly effective major platform of today's Chinese-language media in Vancouver. Compared to print media and websites, WeChat public accounts are a relatively new form of media that has gained considerable market share and is still growing at a significant speed. In the past two years, Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation has shifted its focus and priority away from newspapers forwards WeChat public accounts. Furthermore, it has also made an innovative step to publish original short novels on weekends, which has become an exclusive part of Chinese-language media landscape in Vancouver.

This report discussed some of the major challenges faced by most Chinese-language media in Vancouver, specifically Chinese censorship and the

fierce competition pushing some media companies to compromise their principles, which in the long run, will cause irreversible damages on a media's reputation and credit. Thankfully, Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation is overcoming these challenges. After eight years of growth, Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation has gained the favour, praise, and trust from its readers. The greater the influence a company has, the greater is their responsibility. While trying to fix existing problems, Coast Mountain Publishing & Media Management Corporation is still on its way to explore new operation strategies and to expand in order to dominate the local Chinese media market.

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