Research on the Status Quo and Development Prospects of Payment for Knowledge in the Era of Internet Knowledge Economy

-- Taking Zhihu and Himalaya FM as Examples

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Abstract

The first year of the payment for knowledge industry in China is 2016. After the exploration period, growth period and maturity period of the industry, the payment for knowledge platform in 2021 has shown the characteristics of diversified development. Zhihu and Himalaya, as the two influential leading platforms in the payment of knowledge, have their own unique product positioning and service models. The article will deeply study the business models of the two, analyze the current problems of the knowledge payment platforms represented by Zhihu and Himalaya from multiple aspects, and put forward feasible suggestions for their future development.

Keywords

Payment for Knowledge; Zhihu; Himalaya.

1. Introduction

Since the first year of the paid-for-knowledge economy in 2016, Zhihu and Himalaya App have been standing on the top of the paid-for-knowledge economy as the industry's leading platforms, relying on their unique operating model to continuously attract user groups and expand market share. The question-and-answer knowledge platform represented by Zhihu has both social networking and knowledge interaction functions. This makes Zhihu an important way for young people to relax, answer questions, and find groups of belonging, thus allowing them to have a high level of users. Stickiness and rapidly growing user scale; Himalaya uses its unique positioning of its mobile audio analysis platform to rescue users from today's flooded by pictures and text, and cooperates with emotional and flexible auditory products and services to become a payment for knowledge One of the leaders in the industry. However, with the continuous expansion of the market size, some hidden problems of the knowledge payment platform and the products themselves have gradually emerged in recent years. At present, studying these problems and seeking solutions are of great practical significance to the future development of China's knowledge payment industry and series of products.

2. Industry Status and Trends

2.1. The Rapid Development of the Knowledge Payment Industry

According to data from the China Sharing Economy Development Report (2020), the knowledge and skills sector ranked second among all sharing economies in 2019, with an increase of 30.2% over the previous year; the transaction scale ranked third with 306.3 billion yuan. Among them, the payment for knowledge industry has shown a trend of rapid development in recent years.

The scale of the payment for knowledge market in China in 2019 has reached 2,780,200 yuan, which is about twice that of 2018. It is expected to exceed 39.2 billion yuan in 2020.

2.2. Users' Willingness to Pay for Knowledge is High

With the continuous expansion of China's knowledge payment market, the number of users has also achieved rapid growth. The number of users has reached 130 million at the end of 2018. According to data from Analysys, 63% of respondents expressed their willingness to pay for high-quality content, hoping to use fragmented time to accept information on the knowledge payment platform to better adapt to the current rapidly changing social environment and fully reflect This has helped most people's high willingness to learn.

2.3. Diversified Forms of Payment for Knowledge Products

At present, the product form of the knowledge payment platform in China can be roughly divided into the audio sharing mode represented by Himalaya and Get; the video course mode represented by Netease Cloud Class and the MOOC of China University; the knowledge question and answer mode represented by Zhihu and Baidu Zhizhi ; The live broadcast mode represented by Qianchao and Litchi micro-classes and the offline appointment mode represented by online and online behaviors, etc., have various types of modes.

3. Platform Introduction

The payment for knowledge industry is developing rapidly with a wide variety of products. Therefore, this article will take the two most popular payment knowledge platforms "Zhihu" and "Ximalaya" as the research objects to further analyze the current position of the payment platform, product services, production methods, etc. The overall development status of the industry, and put forward certain improvement strategies for some of the problems and limitations of the industry.

Zhihu, the largest knowledge quiz community on the Chinese Internet, users from all walks of life gather on this platform to share their knowledge and experience. Focusing on the positioning of a high-quality content community, Zhihu has gradually evolved into a platform that integrates community sharing and knowledge payment in the continuous version changes. It has successively created Q&A, articles, columns, Zhihu University, paid consultation, and Diversified core functions such as HuLIVE and Zhihu Bookstore to better improve user experience and increase user activity.

Himalaya has created IP products in multiple fields such as audio, knowledge, and audiobooks, and is a representative platform for the development of a new "ear economy". It not only leads the innovation in the field of mobile audio, but also attracts a large number of people from the media to join the product platform. Since Himalaya founded the first "123" Knowledge Carnival in December 2016, after 4 years of development, the total consumption of this marketing festival in 2019 has reached 828 million yuan, an increase of 90% from 2018.

4. Platform Analysis

Zhihu has further introduced professional knowledge paid services such as the salt selection column, Zhihu LIVE, and "one-on-one" paid consultation in order to meet the basic knowledge question and answer exchange needs. Zhihu expands Zhihu's content through diversified paid content production models, such as one-time payment Zhihu LIVE and paid consultation, high-quality Q&A and article column appreciation functions, and various e-books that can be read for free by opening members. UGC content makes the transition of its paid content production model from the early PGC to UGC, and finally forms a comprehensive social knowledge community that combines PGC and UGC to meet the diverse needs of users.

Himalaya brings together hundreds of millions of audio files in many fields, and is committed to let users feel "love every second of company." The platform cooperates with publishing institutions, owns the audio copyright and audio adaptation rights of a large number of books, invites experts from various industries to record audio content, further builds a professional anchor team, and enhances the platform's PGC capabilities and the competitiveness of paid audio products. At the same time, Himalaya also provides UGC users with simplified recording audio channels, a large number of recording materials and other recording services. Audio sharing platform.

5. Current Problems in the Industry

5.1. Anxiety about Selling Knowledge, it is Difficult to Fulfill Advertising Promises

The rise of the knowledge-paid economy is closely related to China's current era of knowledge-based economy. Most of the middle class in contemporary society have received higher education and enjoyed the dividends of the era of knowledge realization, but they are dissatisfied with the status quo and look forward to climbing. Under the real anxiety of the middle-class group moving to the upper class, the knowledge economy just came into being. Various payment platforms for knowledge use the anxiety of today's people to misinterpret and exaggerate "modern success" in the process of propaganda. Directly link people's cognitive progress with modern success, create a social atmosphere of knowledge anxiety, and use this as a gimmick to sell their knowledge products and services to users. However, most of these products only rely on the formation of fragmented and popular scientific theories, and lack of macroscopic and systematic methodology, thinking logic, and cognitive system construction, making it difficult for users to truly learn dry knowledge. As for the specific service content, its marketing is also suspected of exaggerating publicity. Many paid courses are for eye-catching, and they do not hesitate to use the "screaming effect" on the title: such as the "60 Seconds of Taobao Class" in the paid audio compilation and the "One Hour Solving Men's Skin Care Troubles" in Zhihu LIVE and other title party courses , These products and services are contrary to the propaganda of "Massive knowledge and dry goods in the Himalayas" and Zhihu "build a new (knowledge) world". The advertisement seems to give users a real promise of effectiveness, but in fact, users often "forget 7 after reading the course" after learning the course. It is difficult to apply the knowledge of the course in real life, let alone improve their own cognitive realm. .

5.2. Good and Bad Contents are Mixed, and Products are Cross-duplicated

Whether it is Zhihu, which is monetizing paid Q&A and LIVE course modules, or Himalaya, which implements a paid audio subscription model, the relevant knowledge products launched are basically non-fictional and supported by corresponding theories. It is precisely because of this that the depth and richness of its product content is inversely proportional to the frequency of production. However, in order to meet the needs of users, the frequency of updating fresh knowledge products remains high. According to the marginal utility of output, the platform cannot fully guarantee the quality of all its products. At the same time, due to the low entry barriers for most of the current paid knowledge products, it is easy for some bad and vulgar content and illegal users to get into it, causing pollution to the platform and community environment, which may lead to negative consequences such as affecting user experience and misleading.

In addition, the course content in each category of LIVE lectures in Himalaya and Zhihuzhong is highly repetitive. For example, Zhihu LIVE has electronic audio books related to online bestsellers. However, according to the survey, it is found that the audio e-books in Zhihu LIVE and Himalaya-related products and services are highly overlapping in content. These

homogenized and cross-content products and services are not only easy to differentiate the market share of their own brands, weaken the core competitiveness and unique advantages of the company, but also cause users to choose difficulties and fatigue, and seriously reduce the user experience.

6. Platform Development Suggestions

6.1. Improve Content Quality, Improve Review and Classification Mechanisms

First of all, all kinds of knowledge payment platforms should appropriately raise the threshold of creators and strictly screen their identities, such as adding identity verification procedures, establishing a creator's accountability system, and increasing penalties for bad creations. Secondly, the platform should reasonably cross the use of manual and machine algorithm review modes, comprehensively screen the content of submissions, and make detailed assessments and classifications according to the situation: low-quality products and services should be removed from the shelves in a timely manner, and the authors should be ordered to modify or modify them. Deletion; For vulgar and illegal information, the author must be quickly banned and held accountable for legal responsibility; for deviant and misleading content, warning labels can be marked, such as referring to Twitter's "Disputed Content Cautionary Reference" label to warn users that information needs to be carefully screened .

6.2. Improve the Algorithm Recommendation Mechanism and Break through the Information Cocoon Room

Knowledge payment platforms continue to improve the algorithm technology of big data and artificial intelligence to capture user interests and provide more accurate and intelligent content push. At the same time, they should also consider their own products, the long-term development of the industry and the perspective of social ethics, and recommend algorithms The mechanism is optimized and perfected, content quality and services are strengthened, and a benign product ecosystem is created to avoid big data killing and user information bias. The platform should get rid of user information narrowing and value polarization, make users interested in products in multiple fields, and diversify the user's network identity circle, which is conducive to users to promote the platform in a wider range and enhance the product's own IP reputation . In addition, the platform should increase the research and development of new algorithm technologies, in-depth development of collaborative algorithm recommendation and other new technologies that can broaden user information choices, integrate multiple algorithm mechanisms with each other, and associate a larger data combination recommendation system to integrate and optimize the platform. Recommendation, dissemination and promotion, to make up for the shortcomings of traditional algorithmic capabilities, to achieve more accurate predictions of user preferences, while collaboratively recommending other related information in a variety of content and fields, thereby breaking the shackles of user groups' information cocoon rooms.

6.3. Innovate Business Models and Expand Business Operations

Although Zhihu relies on the knowledge interaction community function of the UGC model to gain a foothold in the market, most of the successful practices in the knowledge payment module are the application of the PGC model. At present, Zhihu has launched services such as the salt selection column and Zhihu LIVE, but compared with its traditional Q&A community section, there is a problem of low visibility. Therefore, the platform as a whole needs to organically integrate PGC and UGC production methods and integrate different The functional modules, innovative business operation mechanism. Currently Zhihu is aware of this problem and has adjusted it. For example, in August 2019, it launched the MCN agency to recruit outstanding authors from various industries to create. Zhihu will also be able to separate high-

quality creators from ordinary users in the future, package and train them, and make greater efforts to promote the PGC+UGC dual-integrated production model. Himalaya is currently facing impacts from 5G technology updates and the rise of short video software led by Douyin and Kuaishou. In the face of these threats, while differentiated and diversified its own product content and services, Himalaya can also appropriately expand its own business areas. On the basis of ensuring its core competitiveness in its audio business, it will expand its products to short video and Internet of Vehicles. And other fields.

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