

A Simple Analysis of the Development of Media Tools in Contemporary China

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Abstract

Following the dramatic media development in contemporary China, new media tools such as the Internet, WeChat, and QQ have offered numerous possibilities for people to communicate and establish relations, which leads to multi-communication rather than one-way communication of information. Essentially speaking, media tools are cognitive media. Despite a great influence on information communication, contemporary media tools fail to guide and restrain human relations effectively, resulting in the ambiguous boundary between active and passive information reception. As an integral part of dialectical materialism, Marxist theory of knowledge has always been regarded as a scientific theory to study human relations. This is because such philosophical relation may serve as a practical basis and the essence of the boundary between humans and things can be perceived only by seeing through the appearance. In view of this, this paper will, based on Marxist theory of knowledge, delve into the forms and existing problems of the media tools in contemporary China and put forward suggestions on the development of such media tools.

Key words: contemporary media tools; existing problems; Marxist theory of knowledge; development

1 Explore the significance of the media tools in contemporary China based on Marxist theory of knowledge

Information resources are indispensable for people to know about and understand

society. In the past, few media tools such as newspapers and letters could help people receive information. But things are different now: new media tools have strengthened the connections between human and human, between human and society, and between human and objective knowledge. This change stems from the establishment of the Internet and use of mobile phones.

What media tools communicate are information resources, while the receivers of such communicated information are accompanied with communication and they are social existence in essence. Just like Marx said, “the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations.” It is logically practicable to study the relations between humans and information resources, between human and human, and between human and society in modern society from the philosophical relations among the subject of cognition, the object of cognition, and cognitive media.

Humans have strong subjective initiative and information demand. In face of vast information databases, people will have greater expectations and needs and in most cases they will search and expand the ways to acquire information, in which situation new media tools play a decisive role. Contemporary media tools draw close the distance between people, but interpersonal trust is greatly weakened in the massive communication platform which is virtual and glutted with false information. In recent years, more and more fraudulent crimes have been committed in China by utilizing contemporary media tools, which manifests the problems and drawbacks of contemporary media tools in their use and application. If the negative impact of media tools on social background and environment cannot be removed in time, the information communicated through such tools will lose its value and even worse will cause greater damage.

Social inequality complicates social environment, the conceptual explanation of which can be found in Marxist theory of knowledge. People are core elements of a social group, so the differences between people partly and objectively mirror the differences between individual elements in the society. This is unavoidable in the communication and exchange of information. China is now undergoing comprehensive reform and active development, and the society is increasingly stratified. Therefore, it is of great significance to establish a stable, safe and reliable communication platform for China to get rid of the constraints of the inequality and insecurity during its rapid development, and to analyze the development and reform of the media tools in China by applying Marxist theory of knowledge.

2 “Human-centered” information communication forms of contemporary media tools

Marxist theory of knowledge explains the communication function and influence of

humans in a social group and highlights that the communication forms of media tools will directly change the value of public opinions. In short, the communication modes of contemporary media tools are human centered, while Marxist theory of knowledge emphasizes “the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations.” Therefore, to figure out the communication modes of contemporary media tools, the approach should be human centered. In a society, a person may be connected with other persons, with the public, and with his organization. To sum up, the communication modes of contemporary media tools can be divided into interpersonal communication, mass communication, and organizational communication.

2.1 Interpersonal communication

In terms of interpersonal communication, new media tools in contemporary China are enticing and promising. Computers and mobile phones are the most basic information communication tools for modern people, through which people can realize various forms of information exchange. For instance, if friends want to play together, they can notify each other of the time and place via such media tools as mobile phone, WeChat, or email. Because interpersonal communication has no fixed requirements and behavior standards, it is convenient, effective and timely. Unconstrained by fixed media tools and communication models, interpersonal communication is also more flexible and freer. However, it is precisely such advantages that lead to some disadvantages. Due to the lack of standards, supervision and restrictions, interpersonal communication is likely to deteriorate objective things. By way of example, WeChat’s “Shake” function can retrieve and exchange the information about unknown “friends”, which is highly insecure. Because of this, some people have been swindled, blackmailed, and even abducted and murdered for money. In conclusion, interpersonal communication has the closest relationship with contemporary media tools which are the most flexible to use and also the most problematic.

2.2 Mass communication

Media platforms exist and grow in the public opinion environment, and any new media tool can be used for mass communication. At present, basic media platforms available for mass communication include television, the Internet, and the press. As important carriers, media tools are burdened with the duties and obligations to edit, manage, and lay down the contents of mass communication. In other words, under the public opinion environment, mass media tools are only allowed to communicate and convey correct, positive, rational, objective, authentic and reliable information resources to the public. Generally speaking, mass communication is one-way. Although people can give feedback on information communication by making comments on forums and websites, mass communication only plays a role in helping

people have a correct, rational and objective understanding of social things, patterns and legal systems. Besides, considering the large information media cluster of mass communication, the contemporary media tools used for mass communication must be rigorous, serious, correct and scientific. Otherwise, any wrong information would be known to the public and cause a baneful influence on the society.

2.3 Organizational communication

Organizational communication is purpose-guided and interest-oriented, which is to obtain the communication system formed by the value of information resources. For example, an organization will publicize the marketing information of its products by advertising, WeChat promotion, Internet marketing, and microblog posting to make more people know its products. Once such information is accepted by the public, people with purchase intention will conduct consuming behavior, and the interests created by media tools will be acquired by the organization. Therefore, the objects of organizational communication are more like one-to-many. An organization takes information sources as basis and media tools as platform to spread information outwards for purchase benefits and product value. This is the most comprehensive manifestation of the benefit value of media tools. Meanwhile, organizational communication is also manifested in inter-organization exchange and communication of opinions. For instance, government organizations in different provinces cooperate with each other on a certain project. When performing tasks, they are bound to exchange information and opinions. At this time, organizational communication needs to be realized via media tools so that organizations can know each other's needs and ideas more effectively, truly and objectively to transform, optimize and adjust the inherent form and development direction of objective things.

3 Problems existing in the communication process of the media tools in contemporary China

3.1 Short of innovative communication contents and modes

In China, although new media tools such as the Internet, WeChat, QQ and microblog are developing rapidly, and media platforms, institutions and information communication paths are quite different from each other, their communication principles and modes are not upgraded and optimized along with the technological innovation of media tools. For example, the Internet has replaced TV media to become the main force of timely information transmission to the public. In terms of information verification, editing and processing, however, the Internet still follows the innovative development of media technology to randomly adjust and change its communication modes. At present, the information published on websites, forums and video browsers is largely "uniform", and sometimes even the quoted photos, words

and titles are all the same. Communication modes are dominated by posts, network information and webpage contents. The forms are monotonous and the contents are superficial. Even worse, the authenticity of communicated contents remains to be verified. In the long run, the interactive effect between media tools will cripple the performance of information resources in the new media environment on the whole. In the end, media will treat media information in a perfunctory way, the public will lose faith in media information, and media information itself will become low-quality, insecure, inauthentic, communicated in monotonous forms, and promoted without specific plans.

3.2 Disorderly media environment

In the virtual space of the Internet, new media tools barely have the ability to protect information resources. Moreover, the existing computer technology can change the contents of information resources tracelessly and specifically. It seems new media tools draw close the distance between social objects – humans, but it is not really the case. In fact, the media background and environment constructed by new media tools alienate humans from each other psychologically. For instance, when a person needs to retrieve a piece of information, he may have access to tens of thousands of information of the same kind, which is either true or false, necessary or unnecessary, and it takes time and energy to screen, process and use such information effectively. In case of any improper treatment or biased thinking, information communication and exchange will produce enormous reverse effects. New media tools contribute to diversified information and opinions and inevitably aggravate the fragmentation and controversy of social cognition. Once such new media communication forms and elements infect the entire media context and age, the ensemble of social relations will become exaggerated and one-sided as a result of information expansion and media supervision will become indirect and hysteretic, which are both to the disadvantage of shaping and controlling the public opinion environment.

3.3 “Knowledge gap” of media communication

First proposed by Titchener and several other American scholars, the knowledge gap hypothesis is strikingly similar to Marxist theory of knowledge in the understanding of mass media and the explanation of the nature of information resources. The hypothesis maintains that when acquiring media information, people of higher social status will have access to more diversified media tools, media channels and information types, and the information acquired by them will be more authentic and scientific. However, people in a society have their own wishes and ideas about knowledge exchange and idea communication, and such subjective ideas will not be changed by media tools, channels or the forms and contents of information. As a result, new media tools can hardly get mixed with the communication needs and ideas

in current society. Under the new media environment, the equalized status between communication subjects and objects, enhanced feedback mechanism of receivers, diversified social context, cognitive differentiation of social groups are challenging the traditional top-down media publicity modes. Furthermore, since the use and application of new media tools are insecure and unclear, it is difficult for information resources to realize their value even if they can be mixed together. This is because the ensemble of the social relations of humans does not change along with information resources, and new media technologies can do nothing but complicate the phenomenon of knowledge gap.

3.4 The communication of dominant ideology is impacted

The updating and upgrading of media tools disturb the working rules and procedures of traditional media system. The argument “the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In reality, it is the ensemble of social relations” in Marxist theory of knowledge no longer holds as a result of the rapid information communication effects of contemporary media tools. The change and stratification of the social relations of humans severely impact the prevailing social ideology which is dominated by mass communication and organizational communication, and enable contemporary media to provide a platform for the public to speak out freely. This manifests democracy. However, speaking from the perspective of public benefits and public opinion environment, contemporary media tools set too many unprecedented frameworks and restraints on public media. Because of social transformation, qualitative changes happen to the time-and-space background of communication and the relations of impartment. Inevitably, communication differentiation, and even communication imbalance and conflict take place during the popularization of Marxism in China.

4 A simple analysis of the development of the media tools in contemporary China based on Marxist theory of knowledge

4.1 Strengthen the innovative application of new media tools

At present, new media tools are facing difficulties in transformation. The prevailing social networking software like QQ, WeChat and microblog enables people to share the public information of social media, but the original top-down communication mode still remains unchanged. Next, to strengthen their innovative application, new media tools should define characteristic media modes according to their information media modes and contents. For instance, QQ and WeChat can use their convenient platforms to collect and integrate surrounding resources and convert those resources into the validation set of individual resources. Under a secure and reliable background, humans can collect and identify information quickly according to their specific needs

and information retrieval standards. However, such information is exclusive to the specific person without being disclosed in public. When vertically communicated information resources become horizontally communicated, the new pattern defined by new media can satisfy what is mentioned in Marxist theory of knowledge: man is not abstract object; instead, the capital value and nature of the information resources possessed by man can be changed through their social relations. At the same time, once new media tools start to transform or change their application modes, the forms of information communication will get closer to people's life and information will be spread to wherever people communicate. People can make use of the unique platforms of new media tools to make phone calls, chat via WeChat, make new friends, and establish QQ groups to integrate and optimize resources. Besides, new media tools can also convert and transfer information by taking advantage of each other's strengths.

4.2 Optimize and perfect the information environment of new media

New media tools serve as the criteria of social progress. To perfect the communication environment and background of new media and maintain the essential influence value of information resources on the basis of sharing, it is necessary to establish a unique feedback, evaluation and verification mechanism for new media tools and platforms. To be specific, the creators and publishers of information resources, as well as communication channels and media tools should apply the real-name system or have a clear communication chain. In case of any problem, the public can utilize the overall retrieval technology to remove or delete bad information resources and cleanse the harmful information in individuals' social relations. In addition, the evaluation mechanism for the feedback information provided by receivers should follow the scientific, objective and dynamic principles to check, by analyzing such feedback information, whether the security, effectiveness and sociality of media information live up to the standards of individuals' social relations.

4.3 Fill up and rectify the "knowledge gap"

During mass communication and organizational communication, as the object relations between man and man are weakened, the strengthening of the whole and the weakening of the individual can greatly change the complexity of information exchange and communication. To fill up and rectify the knowledge gap, firstly it is necessary to introduce new media tools to the working system of mass communication and organizational communication in different stratifications. Instead of being afraid to limit the communication effects of information, new media tools should provide authentic and reliable basis for spreading information resources based on the principles of examination and supervision. As time passes, the new information

resource set formed by virtue of new media tools will become increasingly secure, scientific, and reliable. Interpersonal communication can rely on media tools because the information resources they accumulate and store are uniform, correct, and safe. In homogenous social groups, people have common needs for and complement the information received. Due to similar cognitive ideas and life background, people can reach through discussion and consultation a consensus on the information received. The proper application and understanding of new media tools can also enhance and change the effects and performance of information communication.

4.4 Scientifically inherit the traditional media ideology

Without relying on traditional media, new media can hardly stabilize and even die out in the end. Therefore, existing new media tools need to consider how to excavate their own advantages, and integrate effective resources by editing, managing and exchanging information resources, so as to stabilize the total capacity of human-society relations. Specifically speaking, new media tools need to motivate the transformation of traditional media pattern and system, take television and the Internet as two basic platforms, television in charge of mainstream media groups while the Internet for integrating, verifying, editing, and sorting out information, to spread information to the public in a divergent manner by use of multiple media tools. In addition, media tools can also be used to develop the functional advantage of “electronic integration information”, and combine numerous elements like sound, image, animation and video to explain the true nature and contents of information resources. If disagreement arises between television and the Internet about the same kind of information, instead of complete eradication, we should set up scientific media feedback channels and information verification procedures and make use of relevant legislations and regulations to further expand the development channels of contemporary media tools in a standardized fashion.

5 Conclusions

The above careful research on the media tools in contemporary China based on Marxist theory of knowledge indicates that, media tools as cognitive media are problematic in such aspects as information communication modes, communication environment, reasonability, security, and the essential value of communicated information resources, and such problems go against the communication and development of humans. In order to reasonably avoid the said problems and effectively play a role in cognition, contemporary media tools should be used by following Marxist theory of knowledge so that people can understand and transform objective things more effectively.

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