

Ideological Development and Evolution of Constructive Journalism and Its Value in China

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Abstract: Constructive journalism is a kind of current operational news thought or form in the West, which is the latest development of journalism communication theory research and journalism practice. Constructive journalism has made up for the shortcomings of China's development communication theory at the action level, and also embodies the socialist journalism with Chinese characteristics, having important reference significance for Chinese journalism communication research and media practice.

Constructive journalism is a kind of current operational news thought or form in the West, which is the latest development of journalism communication theory research and journalism practice. At present, domestic journalism and communication academics rarely have any research on constructive journalism. What is constructive journalism? What are the characteristics, ideological development and theoretical background of constructive journalism? What is the theoretical and practical value of constructive journalism for China's development journalism and socialist journalism? These are the issues studied in this paper.

1 The Concept and Characteristics of Constructive Journalism

In 2015, American scholar Karen McIntyre and Danish scholar Cathrine Gyldensted formally proposed the concept of "constructive journalism" to the academic community, and "constructive journalism" finally evolved from a long-term vague news idea to a more explicit theoretical concept. Since then, Western academic circles have continued to conduct constructive journalism research and practice, for example, School of Journalism, Windsheim University in Holland, incorporates constructive journalism into its teaching curriculum, Aarhus University in Denmark establishes a constructive research institute and the United States constructs a constructive journalism research network.

Constructive journalism in Wikipedia is interpreted as news highlighting reporting solutions rather than focusing on negative and conflict-based news. Journalists not only report issues, but also guide news audiences through constructive news and promote the corresponding social action. While playing the core function of news, constructive journalism applies the theory of positive psychology to the practice of news reporting and creates a more efficient and compelling form of news. And this concept has been widely recognized. Constructive journalism has following three basic characteristics. The first is the emotion of reports. The news avoids editorials with too much conflicting, opposing and pessimistic emotions, but it is not a kind of soft news ignoring negative problems. It does not advocate radicalism, and does not determine the best solution to the problem. The second is the theme of reports. Constructive journalism focuses on social issues, pays attention to the democratic function of news in social self-correction feedback mechanism. The third is the purpose of reports. Constructive journalism inspires public discussion and guides social emotions and actions by reporting on the solutions to social problems[1]. Constructive journalism is qualified

with report practicality. As a general term, it uses theory of positive psychology as a standard for news reporting, identifies four specific types of news, namely, resuming narrative, peace news, solution news, and future expectation news, and stresses the responsibility of news reporting in supporting constructive development of society.

2 Ideological Evolution of Constructive Journalism

2.1 Evolving from Advocacy Journalism to Constructive Journalism, the Development and Renovation of News Ideology. Originating from the advocacy journalism in the period of political party newspapers and periodicals, constructive journalism has been refined by social responsibility theory, and integrates the various news forms, forming into an emerging news reporting type. The origin of advocacy journalism can be traced back to the period of political party newspapers and periodicals. It has a clear position, for it does not evade its own tendency in the factual reports. Its purpose is to propose issues related to society or politics in the public sphere, thus attracting public attention, leading to discussion and then promoting the solution of the reported problems [2]. This is consistent with the ideas advocated by constructive journalism, the promotion of communication on public social issues and solution to problems. However, advocacy journalism abandons the objective neutrality of news, with obvious positional tendencies, which is contrary to the basic principle that constructive journalism commits to.

At the end of the 19th century, the media normative concept of news reporting gradually focused on the professionalism and objective principle of journalism, and the thoughts of advocacy journalism were marginalized. In the middle of the 20th century, confronted with double challenges, the defects of the liberal theory prevalent in the West and a series of problems appeared in the practice of news communication, a new media normative theory was urgently needed, so that social responsibility theory stepped on the stage of history. In the late 1960s, in the context of “anti-tradition, anti-authority and anti-mainstream”, the mainstream media and its false objectivity dogma were criticized by non-mainstream media, forming a unique advocacy journalism, namely the wave of “new journalism”. However, as new journalism introduced literature into news reports, it was widely criticized by academic circles for fictionalization and imaginative creation. By the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, along with the rise of public news movement, the media incorporated the public into news reporting process, giving play to the communication mechanism of media information in the social public domain, and strengthening the social responsibility theory of media. As American journalist Jay Rosen (1996) mentioned in the book *Getting the Connections Right: Public Journalism and the Troubles in the Press*, public news should use constructive news to stimulate public communication and motivate the public to participate in the solution of the social problems demonstrated. And it should report constructive viewpoints and explore problem solving on the basis of adhering to the principle of journalism professionalism[3]. Constructive journalism originates from existing forms of news reporting, such as advocacy journalism, investigative journalism and citizen journalism, and has become a new process in the evolution of journalism professionalism and media social responsibility theory under the historical condition of the democratic function decline of media.

2.2 Constructive Journalism in Developing Countries Is Rooted in the Theoretical Basis of Development Journalism. Development journalism is based on the concept of development, exploring the spiritual relation between news communication and national development. Its research aims at promoting national and social development. It is divided into two stages based on the time range of the late 1990s. At present, it is in the reconstruction period of development journalism and its theoretical research has entered the stage of pluralistic paradigm from modernization paradigm and dependency paradigm [4]. Constructive journalism attracts public attention through program suggestions and constructive news reports, and promotes the audience to conduct heated discussions to provide positive contribution for social problems solution, becoming an important part of the current pluralistic paradigm. Constructive news is rooted in development journalism, and has a profound realistic background in developing countries. As a currently evolved theoretical paradigm of development journalism, it is an extension of journalism practice.

2.3 Constructive Journalism Ideology and Positive Psychology. American positive psychologist Martin Seligman discovers and verifies that after undergoing repeated failures and setbacks, people will have a mental state and behavior pattern of feeling powerless when faced with problems, which is called “learned helplessness”. In order to change this kind of psychology, Martin Seligman discovers through a series of studies that people can become optimists by cultivating and learning optimism, and overcome the feeling of incompetence, so that he proposes the concept of “learned optimism”. Constructive journalism draws on this core concept from positive psychology and uses it as the spiritual connotation of constructive journalism to introduce positive forces into news reporting. News reports take positive emotional tone and propose five major paths “PERMA” to achieve human social well-being, namely, positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment, providing a solid reporting framework for constructive journalism. News reports balance media values and social feelings. Journalists pay attention to the positive forces in the process of solving social problems, deeply explore factors such as achievement, growth, meaning, good relationship, participation, positive emotions and trauma recovery, and positively guide social emotions to conduct social mobilization.

3 Chinese Value of Constructive Journalism

3.1 Theoretical Value: Promoting the Progress of Development Journalism Research in China.

At present, related research on development journalism in China still mainly focus on theoretical discussions and ideas construction at the macroscopic level. The research applying Marxist view of journalism and socialist journalism with Chinese characteristics as the guiding ideology, conducting macroscopic and microscopic examination on the development journalism in China by combining with the new historical environment and the nature of China’s media, and focusing on the construction of journalism practice are still blank. The research on development journalism lacks the practicality of a specific action. The journalism practice is based on the theoretical guidance of development journalism in China, and what it needs to do at the moment or how to do is the problem worth attention.

The ahead theoretical research and lagging practical exploration lead to the top-heavy state of development journalism in China. This situation is largely due to the lack of a clear definition of specific journalistic practice of development journalism in academic research. What kind of news belongs to development journalism? It is not clear how to develop news reports in development journalism, a clear news form is urgently required in journalism to combine development journalism theory with specific journalistic practices, and constructive journalism is opening up new ideas for the construction of development journalism in China. Constructive journalism is a more operational news form, and the research focuses on the media practice and social effects of constructive journalism, which can make up for the shortcomings of macro-theoretical level in the face of micro-action level, and summarize theoretical experience from constructive journalism practice in China to promote the progress in the theoretical development of development journalism and socialist journalism in China.

3.2 Practical Value: Strengthening the Constructive Consciousness of Journalism in China.

Traditional journalistic practice focuses too much on conflict, opposition and negative emotions, and lacks the expected social warmth and human care. Simply conforming to the logic of media value may cause the change of news value selection and the neglect of journalistic ethics, thus gradually creating a hidden media bias. The media reports lose truth, objectiveness, fairness and comprehensiveness, the news norms that journalism professionalism observes, creating a “third reality” between reality and falsehood, which confuses the cognition, judgment and action of social members. At present, the journalism industry urgently needs to strengthen the constructive awareness of journalists, abide by journalism professionalism, exert the role of media to mobilize public participation enthusiasm in social affairs, and pay attention to the emotion and content of news reports. Confronted with the challenges to journalism principle from the imbalance of media value judgment and the trend of news communication socialization, constructive journalism can

solve the current difficulty of journalism, and help journalism get rid of the dilemma of excessively negative news ethics in the report with a constructive and all-round news form.

For China's journalism industry, constructive journalism is the development direction of journalism and the common direction of journalism professionalism in the post-truth era, having deep ideological accumulation and good construction foundation in China. Chinese culture always emphasizes the ideological tradition that writings are for conveying truth. For the news "conveying truth", the media must assume social responsibility and inject news communication power into national and social development. Therefore, constructive journalism has a natural sense of belonging and conceptual foundation under the background of Chinese culture. The Marxist view of journalism and socialist journalism with Chinese characteristics provide useful theoretical guidance for constructive journalism practice. News media in China has the dual attributes of cause nature and industry nature. The news media, as public device and "mouth, eyes, throat and tongue" of the society, serves for the interest of country and people. The vigorous development of China's news media industry has cleared the way for the practical exploration of media practice, and the news communication technology innovation has provided more media practice platforms. Based on the four news forms proposed by western academic circles, respectively solution news, restoration narrative, peace news and future expectation news, China's journalistic practice has great potential in the fields of public welfare, poverty alleviation, social construction and cultural inheritance, which can enrich the connotation of current constructive journalism, and also open up a field of journalism suitable for China's national conditions.

4 Conclusion

The development of constructive journalism is in the ascendant, and has gradually attracted the attention of journalists from all over the world. A wave of constructive journalism is sweeping from Europe and North America to North Africa and Asia. Some scholars in China have noticed this new force from the Western press, and have made some introductions on construction journalism to the domestic academic community. Since the reform and opening up, the rapid rise of China, the largest developing country in the world, has created a "Chinese miracle", and the "Chinese-style experience" presented has attracted worldwide attention. One of the unique manifestations of "Chinese-style experience" lies in using the theoretical framework of development journalism to drive China's development through news communication. Constructive journalism develops naturally and prosperously in China, and can enrich the theory and practice of development journalism in China. In the future, based on the theory of development journalism, journalists in China will definitely contribute to the study of news communication in the world with theory construction of constructive journalism and experience of journalism practice.

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