

Article

Media ecology of citizen journalism

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Abstract: The development of everything is closely related to its ecological system. To be exact, it should be the eco- logical environment of things that gives birth to and promotes its growth. This rule also applies to citizen journalism. To study citizen journalism, it is necessary to make a systematic analysis of its ecosystem and explore the factors in the ecosystem affecting its formation and development. Only by clarifying the ecological background of the emergence and development of citizen journalism can citizen journalism be better applied.

Keywords: citizen; news media; ecology

Whether it is from the times of social development, the development trend of media technology itself or the environment of media ecological development, it is rational and inevitable for the emergence of citizen journalism. It is widely known that with the help of micro-blog, blog, podcast and other self-media forms, citizens' journalism develops quickly, and better shows its strength. The origin of citizen journalism is to abandon the limitations and complicated procedures of traditional media to produce news [1]. The news producers and publishers concentrate on citizens themselves. With the help of media technology, producers of citizen journalism send out the first-hand information they have, and then publicize it widely.

1. Problems of media ecology of citizen journalism

1.1. Problems in citizen journalism under the media ecology

Since civil rights such as the right to speak and the right to approach the media have been put on the agenda one after another in recent years, the pattern of media communication seems to have changed. In terms of class differentiation and media control and use rights, Professor Duan Jingsu divided the main classes and their control and use of media into three categories: the powerful class who has the control of media and the main right to speak, leads the development trend of media, and determines the trend public opinion; the middle class who has the ability to use the media, has an active sense of getting access to media, and is good at using the media to meet their own needs; the underprivileged class who passively get access to media, is unable to accept media information, lack of basic conditions and ability to use media, and basically excluded from the content of media expression. However, from the reality, the middle class and the underprivileged class, who occupy the majority of social citizens, passively accept information in most cases. Although the middle class has the conditions and ability to actively screen information facing information flooding and overloaded, they are disappointed and helpless as many ecological environment backgrounds, such as lack of truth information and important information, are not conducive to media survival and citizens' information acceptance.

First of all, information is flooded and overloaded.

It is the innate duty of the media system to transmit information. Without the transmission of information and the dissemination of news, a media organization cannot be called media. Information, as a product produced by media, is invisible and soft, and of different quality like other products in the market [2]. Corresponding to the supply and demand in the market, ignoring the market demand, the overproduction of media information will inevitably lead to the overflow and overload of information.

Secondly, there is a lack of truth information and important information.

The so-called lack of information means that there is a serious lack of valuable information needed by the audience, which can understand the truth of the matter and is useful to themselves[3]. Among them, the lack of truth information and important information are the main manifestations. On the one hand, with the rapid expansion of information, the audience is surrounded by numerous redundant information; on the other hand, with the information explosion, the lack of information makes it impossible for people to choose valuable information.

The contents reported by the mass media tend to be shallow, superficial and explicit information, while the deep and implicit information is gradually abandoned. The information that can make people shine and cheer up at the moment is rushing to the fore, and the mass media is unwilling to deeply explore the truth information behind the event in order to make people better understand it. Coupled with the clustering and modernization of media reporting equipment and the imbalance of one-to-many publicity by audiences, and driven by interests and inertia, it is not difficult to understand why information explosion and lack of information coexist. Media organizations, whose mission is to disseminate authentic information and important information, are faced with the media ecology mixed with false information and redundant information when the information they disseminate encounters people's trust crisis. Under this pattern, the emergence of citizen journalism provides a solution for many audiences. In return, the media ecology also gives birth to the development of citizen journalism [4].

Finally, the expression of words is without modification.

Citizen journalism is undoubtedly the most personal form of communication since the birth of the media, which greatly expands the definition of media news and really guarantees people's right of discourse expression. However, because the main body of citizens journalism is not a professional communicator, it is different from professional communicators in professional ethics, reporting level and reporting form. In addition, the virtual society and the real society can never be separated from each other. As a means to avoid the troubles of the real society, it is possible for citizens to express their words without modification, and excessive behavior and cyber violence may even produce.

1.2. Lack of reality in media ecology of citizen journalism

First of all, discourse highlands are occupied.

The media was once concentrated in the control of a few elites from the beginning. With the rapid development of science and technology, communication and media technology, and the widespread application of Internet, mobile phone, blog, micro

blog, etc., the popularization trend of media has become a law of media development. Seemingly, the audience gradually enters the media field of vision and is valued by the mass media: more and more audiences appear on the interview programs, and those on the spot can participate in the programs instantly, although this interaction does not account for a large proportion. Listening and watching a program on radio and television depends on whether the audience turns on the switch and tunes to a certain channel, and on the audience's preferences and needs. Reading books and periodicals and newspapers lies in the audience's choice and contact with them. Only when the audience turns on the computer switch and connects to the network independently can the content on the network media be available. Audience ratings and reading rates have now become the key indicators of mass media assessment.

At present, citizens journalism mainly publishes information through new media network platforms such as blogs and microblogs. The rankings of the click-through rates clearly shown in the websites indicate that the elites in entertainment and academia are always far ahead. They use their authority and persuasiveness to influence the public's views on events and form a certain cohesion[5]. Therefore, on the surface, it is the ordinary people who have realized their right to express themselves through the network media, and also promoted the peer-to-peer communication among citizens. But in fact, it is the elites in all fields who can influence people's views and behaviors through discourse.

Secondly, the disadvantaged groups are marginalized.

Disadvantaged groups, as its name implies, refer to those who are lower than other groups in economic status and social status because of their physiological or social deficiency compared with the mainstream groups in society. The disadvantaged groups mentioned here mainly refer to those lack of sociality, which are mainly caused by the gap of economic power, the remoteness of geographical areas and the asymmetry of information, etc. For example, in remote areas, the communication signal is not smooth, the local economic base is weak, and the education level is relatively backward, which will form differences in the degree of receiving, consuming and using information. This is the inevitable result of natural operation of ecological system. Mainstream groups and disadvantage groups coexist, compete and constantly change their strengths.

The effective activities of citizen journalism depend on the popularization and application of media technology, and the network is the channel to realize citizen journalism release [6]. Although there is no detailed research and classification on the subjects of citizen journalism release at present, it is undeniable that urban netizens have become powerful promoters of this activity. Netizens are not equal to citizens; they are just a part of citizens. Due to various restrictions, the proportion of citizens participating in journalism is unbalanced, which is bound to make disadvantaged groups more marginalized.

Finally, there is a lack of supervisors.

In the process of news production by traditional media, the publication of a news usually goes through the process of field collection by reporters themselves, editing and proofreading, and finally submitting it to the director of the center for review. In this process, the false, extreme and unsuitable contents for broadcasting are screened out layer by layer. The news will be "checked" and supervised every time it passes

through a threshold, thus ensuring that the rest of the news is true and valuable. Citizens journalism is released directly through the network, and the convenience of various information terminals bypasses the “supervisor”, which makes people receive citizens journalism more immediately. Of course, as netizens don’t have to think too much about social responsibility in the online world, this provides soil for the publication of false news. At this time, the authenticity and reliability of citizen journalism can only be “checked” by disseminators themselves. They choose and publish information by virtue of their own knowledge structure, values and even ethics, which explains why people keep questioning the authenticity of citizen journalism.

2. Optimization and construction of media ecology of citizen journalism

2.1. Cooperate and seek to maximize benefits

First of all, with the help of new media, establishing a public opinion and feedback platform for citizens.

An open communication platform should be provided for citizens, so that they can participate in public discussions, that is, citizens can supplement, comment or criticize the contents of professional reports [7]. Through the establishment of this platform, the editors of mass media reporters can understand the audience’s attitude towards the published information and the existing problems, which also provide reference for subsequent reports. In addition, the public can check the feedback and opinions of citizens in the public opinion platform, find out and fill in the gaps. In addition, they can catch the possible sources and news topics based on audiences’ interests, so as to supplement the media reports.

Secondly, achieving quality communication by use of traditional media.

With the help of the development and application of media technology, citizen journalism is slightly superior to traditional media in terms of communication timeliness and communication scope because of its grassroots nature. Then, at the present stage, how to make citizen journalism overcome its own shortcomings and continue to maintain its superiority, becomes a benchmark to consider the development trend of citizen journalism.

Taking advantage of the traditional media, that is, citizen journalism is published through the release channel of traditional news, which can not only ensure the value of citizen journalism and conform to the law of news dissemination, but also spread at the fastest speed, ensure the credibility of citizen journalism and improve its acceptability to the social audience. In addition, in a series of reports, citizen journalism can continue to cooperate with traditional media, dig deep into the background behind the events, and seek to maximize the benefits between the two.

2.2. Strengthen the awareness of network operators’ responsibility

Although network operators have appeared on the stage in China, the identity of virtual network operators is still vague in government policies. In the complicated market, the competition between virtual network operators and basic telecom

operators, and the complete competition between virtual network operators, etc., lead to the further expansion of homogeneous and heterogeneous competition.

At present, the main publishing channel of citizen journalism still depends on the network operators and the technical support and carrier provided by the merchants. Therefore, it is necessary to make the citizen journalism movement run effectively, construct a good environment for the development of citizen journalism media and strengthen the responsibility consciousness of the network operators [8].

Firstly, strengthen government control and policy enforcement.

(1) Reform the licensing system of traditional business classification.

Traditional telecom license system should be changed to subject license, and license issuing should be changed from business management to managing market subject to simplify supervision.

(2) Establish an independent service regulation.

In the regulation of virtual network operators, the regulatory power should be brought into an independent regulatory body, so as to ensure that the regulation is not affected by all its stakeholders.

(3) Standardize market order and industry style.

It is necessary to crack down on harmful information service behaviors continuously and vigorously, and improve the supervision mechanism for comprehensive management of various departments. Together with continuously introducing supporting regulations that meet the development requirements of the virtual network operation market, the virtual network market order and industry style can be standardized.

Secondly, improve the relevant legal system, to achieve legal compliance.

In the network environment, network operators provide technical, hardware, server and other support for users' legal or illegal behavior. Usually, network operators need to undertake the following obligations:

(1) It is responsible for monitoring the information transmitted through it.

According to the particularity of the network and the role of the network operator in the network operation, the network operator has the actual monitoring ability for the information passing through its system or network. It is necessary to legislate to set reasonable monitoring obligations for network operators, which can not only ensure the normal order of information network dissemination and safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of rights holders, but also encourage network operators to establish a self-discipline system and take active and effective measures to prevent and stop infringement in time. At the same time, legislation should also fully consider the reality and technical possibility of network operators to fulfill their monitoring obligations, and try to make the set monitoring obligations purposeful and economical.

(2) It is responsible for assisting in investigation.

The duty of network operators to assist in investigation means that the network operators have the obligation to assist the right holders or relevant authorities to collect evidence of infringement. The person who directly implements the infringement is generally the registered user of the network operator. Usually, the server of the network operator stores the personal information of the registered user, as well as the log-in, read-write records and other contents within a period of time. There is a considerable amount of evidence to establish whether the infringement can

be established for the user. When infringement occurs, it is easier for network operators to grasp the evidence of infringement than others.

2.3. Citizen journalists to consciously improve their literacy and social responsibility awareness

Citizen journalist is the publisher and disseminator of citizen journalism. The quality of citizen journalism and the audience's trust in citizen journalism depend on citizen journalist's accomplishment and social responsibility consciousness to a certain extent [9]. Therefore, in order to expand the continuity and universality of citizen journalism influence, citizen journalist should consciously improve his own accomplishment and social responsibility consciousness.

First of all, construct a good social ecological atmosphere.

The Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Several Major Issues Concerning the Construction of a Socialist Harmonious Society, which was reviewed and adopted at the Sixth Plenary Session of the Sixteenth CPC Central Committee, pointed out that it is necessary to adhere to the correct orientation and create a positive and healthy ideological and public opinion atmosphere: it is necessary to extensively carry out activities to create harmony and form a situation in which everyone promotes harmony. This is an important exposition focusing on the dialectical relationship between people and social environment in the process of social development, which is of great guiding significance for mobilizing all social forces to participate in the construction of a harmonious socialist society.

The harmonious development of a society not only shows the improvement of the overall social atmosphere, but also reflects the physical and mental Jennifer of every member of society. In a good and harmonious social atmosphere, people treat themselves, others and society correctly with a social mentality of self-esteem, self-confidence, rationality, peace and positive progress, and treat difficulties, setbacks and honors correctly. They can unite, love and live in harmony with each other.

To create a good and harmonious social atmosphere, it is better to coordinate the interests of all parties, properly handle social contradictions and form friendly interpersonal relationships. People are the main body of social relations, and getting along well with each other is the foundation of social harmony. Due to the differences in economic conditions, social status and ideas, some contradictions and conflicts will inevitably occur between people. In order to resolve and avoid conflicts to the maximum extent, the development and changes of China's social structure and interest pattern must be correctly analyzed, along with building various forms of communication platforms, and forming a scientific and effective interest coordination mechanism, appeal expression mechanism and contradiction handling mechanism.

Secondly, give full play to the propaganda function of mass media.

Contemporarily, mass communication can be listed as an indispensable part of social structure. Without this component, the modern society will not continue. Mass communication will not only affect the daily operation of society, but also make some contribution to the social balance. In short, the media has penetrated the core of the social system, which has become an indispensable force for the normal operation of the social system.

It is widely known that the mass media has the function of propaganda, which mainly plays the role of a bridge to exchange feelings of all classes and publicize them widely. Therefore, in order to make citizen journalists consciously improve their literacy and sense of social responsibility, the mass media should give full play to the propaganda function and guide citizen journalists' thoughts and behaviors.

For example, in the publicity of government public policies, the orderly operation of public policy system depends on the active participation of mass media, including the links of the smooth implementation of public problems, the opportunity of establishing public policy agenda, the basis of legalization of public policies, and the implementation and regulation of public policies. Through the interpretation and analysis of public policies, mass media provide direction and guidance for further specifying policy points and forming people's thoughts and actions.

2.4. Give full play to the role of “supervisor”

With the diversification of media and communication channels brought about by the development of communication technology, the original audience of traditional media is increasingly dispersed. Especially in recent years, with the rapid rise of online media and the emergence of new media such as mobile phone short messages and podcasts, the communication environment faced by traditional media “supervisor” is constantly updated. Facing the ever-changing environment, under the new pattern of media convergence and competition, the difficulty of the original “professional supervisor” has increased, and the supervision methods need to be adjusted and strengthened accordingly.

Firstly, establish a standardized and advanced website management assessment mechanism.

For online media, it is necessary to improve the awareness of website managers, establish a long-term development assessment mechanism, establish the credibility of online media, and create online media with brand influence. At present, there are still many websites with pornographic pictures, violent news and unhealthy links, including some famous portal websites, which have caused many adverse social impacts [10]. Therefore, the website staff should make it clear that using vulgarity as a selling point and unhealthy information to create an “attention economy” can only attract the “eye- ball”, but it will damage the long-term development of the website. A strict inspection system should be established for online media. Editors and managers should check it before publication, and special personnel should check and review it after publication. It is the long-term way for the healthy development of online media to have supervision before and after surfing the Internet, improve the click-through rate and improve the quality hand in hand, and build an influential economy.

Secondly, implement the access mechanism to identify the identity of citizen journalists.

Citizen journalism in China is still in the primary stage. At present, most of the mass media in China still use news clues provided by citizens or occasionally use news reports provided by citizens. Although all media should actively create conditions so that every citizen can participate in the publication and dissemination of news and information, this does not mean that they can let themselves go unchecked. Therefore,

in the face of such a large and complex contingent of citizen journalists, each media can set up a special management system of “special citizen journalists” after assessment. It can establish a relatively stable and diversified news information source, and help citizen journalists to conduct interviews smoothly and improve the reporting quality. To treat citizen journalists effectively, the practice of some foreign media, like giving them reasonable rewards, can be adopted. At the same time, when setting up a “special citizen journalist”, the media can ask the citizen journalist to show corresponding certificates or pass the examination according to their own needs, and finally determine the candidate for the citizen journalist.

3. Conclusion

At present, citizen journalism is still in the initial stage of development in China. Although many problems have been exposed, it cannot be denied that the emergence of citizen journalism is a great progress in journalism. Citizen journalism is the manifestation of the public’s self-awareness and rights awareness, which represents the progress of society and the improvement of citizens’ personal quality and social responsibility. Of course, under the complex and ever-changing network background, the future development of citizen journalism in China still needs constant practice and testing, and also needs the help and support of the network, professional media from all walks of life and relevant state departments. Then a good environment conducive to the healthy development of citizen journalism can be created and the harmony and stability of the public opinion environment in the whole country can be ensured.

Conflict of interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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