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**CHINA'S JOURNALISM VALUES IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

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## **Introduction**

Values are an essential element of the professional thinking of journalists, determining the direction and formulation of news information. They belong to the category of basic values that form the value system of society and act as a kind of framework for decision-making in the process of news activity.

Information dissemination has changed from “timely reporting” to “instant dissemination,” from “chasing new content” to “chasing Internet traffic metrics,” from “fourth estate” to “peasant journalist” (nongmingong), etc. All these new changes require researchers to appropriately reassess traditional journalistic values, without which it will be difficult to adapt to the new communication system.

### **The relevance of research**

The rapid development of digital technology has brought many new changes to society, and journalism is no exception. Today, journalism is faced with changes in news topics, audiences, and news structure. Китай добился определенных успехов в области цифровых технологий, что делает данное исследование актуальным, с учетом особенностей китайского общества и культуры, в частности, в области теории журналистики.

In the process of transforming traditional journalism, it is easy to see the advantages of modern technologies in terms of convenience, interactivity and efficiency. However, while there has been a change in traditional journalistic norms, new journalistic value norms have not yet been established, which leads to a number of problems.

**The purpose of this study** is to identify patterns of evolution of Chinese journalism and research trends in the context of the digital era. Based on the results of research in sociology, economics and ethics, this paper provides a comparative

analysis and interpretation of the characteristics, problems and research trends of the value orientations of journalism in China at present.

### **Tasks**

- Describe the features of Chinese journalism in the digital age;
- Analyze the challenges and risks of modern Chinese journalism and its value guidelines in terms of communication channels and content;
- Describe the evolution and formation of the concept of digital journalism in China;
- Describe the social organization arising from issues of value orientation in China in the digital age;
- Outline research directions and ethical trends in Chinese journalism in the digital age;
- Provide development and ethical advice to those working in media in the digital age.

### **Object of study**

Chinese Journalism Value System.

### **Subject of the study**

Transformation of China's journalism values in the digital age.

### **Research methods**

- 1) Study materials that contain information about digital age journalism in China and other countries;
- 2) Structural-functional method;
- 3) Comparative analysis method;
- 4) Situational analysis;

- 5) Content and data analysis based on media texts published by Chinese officials and organizations;
- 6) Analysis of news literature from major news sites over the past 5 years.

### **Hypothesis**

With the advent of the digital era, the development of journalism in China has undergone dramatic changes. Our hypothesis is that the reform of journalistic work will continue in the future under certain conditions: 1) approval and full support of the leadership of the Communist Party and the Chinese government; 2) further updating and development of modern technical devices; 3) continuous improvement of the Code of Ethics for Journalists of China.

In order to make sure that these are the trends in the development of the media in the country, we intend to analyze the structural features of modern journalism in China, summarize changes in the value orientations of journalism, the problems that have arisen in connection with this and possible ways to solve them.

### **Theoretical and methodological basis**

This study uses the results of research work by Chinese, Western and Russian scientists who have developed and applied theories of value orientations. It also examines the mechanisms of information from the communicator's perspective, the communication perspective and the audience perspective in the context of the digital age, as well as practical needs in the context of globalization. Social issues arising in the context of technology in the digital age are also actively explored, and the future development of technology after its application is discussed.

In the “Big Encyclopedic Dictionary” the word value is interpreted as “the positive or negative significance of objects of the surrounding world for a person, a social group, society as a whole, determined not by their properties in themselves,

but by their involvement in the sphere of human life, interests and needs, social relations ; criteria and methods for assessing this significance, expressed in moral principles and norms, ideals, attitudes, goals. There are material, socio-political and spiritual values; positive and negative values."<sup>1</sup>

In the philosophical and social (social) sciences, the term value is used to indicate the human and cultural significance of certain phenomena of reality<sup>2</sup>. The concept of “value” can be perceived as an element of the philosophical categorical apparatus that determines a person’s ideological attitudes.

The values that determine the image of social life of modern man and the manner of his behavior are considered as a special world of autonomous spiritual entities that are outside of time and space, existing independently of man and society. They seem to be eternal and unshakable norms that cannot be substantiated empirically<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, it can be assumed that the formation of value guidelines is a subjective choice under the influence of the environment.

At the same time, values can have positive or negative significance for a person or group of people, since they are closely related to the life of the society in which they are located.

The criteria and methods for assessing this significance are expressed in moral principles and norms, ideals, attitudes, and goals. There are material, socio-political and spiritual values; positive and negative values.

In order to better understand the subject of this study, we studied some classic works of Western scientists on the value guidelines of journalism. We have studied the works of S. J. E. Ward; D. Vine; K. Batty; R. Mura, S. Zizek, S. Allana, S. Carter,

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<sup>1</sup> Big Encyclopaedic Dictionary. M.: AST, Astrel, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Lingua, 2009. 936 c.

<sup>2</sup> Avraamov D. S. Professional ethics of a journalist: textbook, Moscow: Izd-vo Mosk.un-ta, 2003. ISBN: 5-211-04706-0. C. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Rostovskaya T. K., Kaliev T. B. The world of values of the young generation of Russians and Kazakhstanis // Values and Meanings 2018. no. 1 (53). C. 78-90.

S. Cushn, L. Dencik, I. Garcia-Blanco, D. Harris, R. Sambrook, C. Wahl-Jorgensen, E. Williams, G. Bona, M. McLuhana<sup>4</sup>.

A. Ya. Kanapatsky believes that the value of “the highest rank, accumulating in itself the entire “realm of values” of the Universe,” is spirituality, the elusive nature of which permeates the entire value space of modern society<sup>5</sup>.

Journalistic values are the beliefs that guide journalists based on their understanding of the practice and general characteristics of journalism. They are the basis for the formation of a unified journalistic community and serve as a tool with which journalists protect their professional independence and enter into discussions with colleagues and other participants in the media environment.

With the development of digital technology, media is becoming an increasingly important factor in people's lives. And new technologies can have a huge impact on values, and not only positive ones, which causes noticeable concern in society.

Changes in technology lead to changes in the environment. According to A. V. Rossoshansky, media frames represent one of the “soft” and effective forms of manipulative communicative influence, which are constantly adapted, on the one hand, taking into account changes in the global situation in the information space, and on the other, in accordance with internal political, socio-economic and socio-cultural needs. However, this adaptability can, in its functionality, both have a socially constructive orientation and lead to socially destructive consequences as a result of the use of these technologies<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Kanapatsky A. Ya. Ontological truthfulness of spirituality: author's thesis. ... Dr. philos. sciences. Ufa, 2004. C. 30.

<sup>5</sup> Ward, Stephen J. A. Philosophical Foundations for Global Journalism Ethics // *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*. 2005. March. Vol. 20 (1). P. 3–21. DOI: 10.1207/s15327728jmme2001\_2; Vine, Josie; Batty, Craig; Muir, Rilke. A question of ethics: the challenges for journalism practice as a mode of research // *Journal of Media Practice*. 2016. July. Vol. 17 (2/3). P. 232–249. DOI: 10.1080/14682753.2016.1248193; Žižek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London, 1989; Allan, Stuart; Carter, Cynthia; Cushion, Stephen; Dencik, Lina; Garcia-Blanco, Inaki; Harris, Janet; Sambrook, Richard; Wahl-Jorgensen, Karin; Williams, Andy. *The Future of Journalism: Risks, Threats and Opportunities*. Routledge, 2020. ISBN 978-0-429-86846-7.

<sup>6</sup> Rossoshansky A. V. "News values" of the Russian media // *Izv. Sarat. un-ta: nov. ser. Ser. Sociology. Politology*. 2013. № 4. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/novostnye-tsennosti-rossiyskih-smi>. address: 06.05.2024.

Exploring value orientations in Russia, O. N. Savinova writes about the changes that have occurred over the past decades. Modern society, she argues, has been at a crossroads over the past few years: having abandoned the traditional moral guidelines of the past, it has not come to develop new unified standards.

Although digital technologies have brought enormous progress to modern media by providing viewers with richer and freer information, they can still create certain problems for the media and society. Therefore, some scientists have expressed concern about this.

Modern media not only record a violation of the hierarchy of family value priorities, but, unfortunately, they themselves often contribute to the process of their devaluation. A paradoxical situation has arisen: in a state with the richest traditions and culture, information is provided every day that is harmful to the spiritual health of Russians, and primarily children and youth<sup>7</sup>.

It must be said that journalistic values in China and Russia differ due to historical factors. Judging by the results of the study by O. V. Smirnova, S. B. Steblovskaya and Wang Fan, in China, in the value-semantic aspect, they clearly appeal to the Confucian civilizational code; its dominant meaning is the ideas of the value of the state, patriotism and national unity. In Russia, they proceed primarily from the dogma of universal human values and focus on responsibility to society, the primacy of freedom of private opinion and the right to express it.<sup>8</sup>

Due to the specific nature of the development of journalism in China, various cultural and political factors are at work. Due to this, some scholars have limited understanding of the context of Chinese journalism. Thus, among researchers there

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<sup>7</sup> Savinova O. N. Value orientations in the mirror of modern mass media // Vestn. NNGU. 2013. № 4-2. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/tsennostnye-orientatsii-v-zerkale-sovremennyh-smi>.

<sup>8</sup> Smirnova O. V., Steblovskaya S. B., Wang Fang. Value orientations of journalists in Russia and China: a comparative analysis of professional ethical codes // Voprosy teorii i praktika journalistiki. 2022. № 3. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/tsennostnye-orientatsii-zhurnalistov-rossii-i-kitaya-sravnitelnyy-analiz-professionalno-eticheskikh-kodeksov>.



is an opinion that “Chinese mainstream media remains tightly controlled, while social conflicts intensify and nationalist sentiments escalate.”<sup>9</sup> In fact, such analysis ignores factors such as the structural features of Chinese journalism and its differences from Western journalism, the features of communication methods in China, and the differences in audiences in this country. On the other hand, with the advent of the digital era in the development of the media industry, new changes in production factors have occurred in the objective conditions of production. Under these conditions, the values of Chinese journalism also differ from Western ones.

We can identify three main distinctive features of Chinese journalism that are ignored by these researchers.

Firstly, there is a peculiarity of the dominance of the Marxist view in Chinese journalism, which differs from the Marxist concept adopted in other countries. The development of Marxist journalistic values is seen as an important component of the process of sinicization of Marxism and is closely related to the worldview and life views of journalists. Defining “news values” and establishing Marxist journalistic values are necessary prerequisites for the successful implementation of socialist journalism in China, taking into account national characteristics, especially in the market environment and in the context of new media. Journalists and news media should consciously become the “eyes, ears and mouthpiece” of the party and the people. At the same time, Chinese scholars are conducting research into new theories that are more in line with contemporary Chinese characteristics within the framework of the Marxist view of journalism. Such research, for example, is carried out by Y. Baojun, H. Yu, F. Yuanyuan, Y. Weiwei<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Xin Xin. The Impact of «Citizen Journalism» on Chinese Media and Society // Journalism Practice. 2010. 4:3. P. 333–344. DOI: 10.1080/17512781003642931.

<sup>10</sup> Ya Baojun. News values and news value creation [J] // International journalism. 2003. No. 03. P. 45–50; Yang Baojun, Wang Min. On the typical characteristics of Chinese Marxist journalistic values [J] // Journal of Shanxi University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition). 2018. No. 41 (06). pp. 63–71. DOI:10.13451/j.cnki.shanxi.univ(phil.soc.).2018.06.009; Hao Yu. Construction and practice of news values in the system of Chinese discourse [J] // Young Journalists. 2022. No. 09. P. 9–12. DOI:10.15997/j.cnki.qnjz.2022.09.033;

Secondly, economic and technological advances that have occurred since the start of reform and opening up play an important role in Chinese journalism. With the development of labor productivity, the field of journalism in China is changing rapidly. With the advent of the digital age, both journalism itself and its values have undergone new changes. Chinese scholars are actively exploring the transformation of journalism values in the digital era against the backdrop of innovative digital technologies. Such studies include G. Henan, H. Qian, H. Yiqing, L. Zichao, D. Junfei<sup>11</sup>.

Third, Chinese philosophy and traditional culture continue to influence the values of modern Chinese journalists. Although the concept of journalism originated in China in the 20th century, Chinese culture has a rich tradition of disseminating information that has evolved over thousands of years. Under the influence of information exchange with the West, Chinese scientists began to study the Chinese language of communication and Chinese communication theory. Among them, it is worth mentioning Y. Jingyun and S. Peiren, who suggest that, unlike the modern Western tradition of “transmission” in communication, the Chinese pay more attention to the concept of “receiving subjectivity”<sup>12</sup>.

Today, Chinese journalism theory is developing its own unique theoretical framework. The development of digital technologies will contribute to the renewal of the theory of Chinese journalism. Chinese scholars are focusing on data journalism, immersive journalism, and algorithmic journalism. With their help,

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Hao Yu. Marxist journalistic values: structure, meaning and practical feasibility [J] // China Publishing. 2022. No. 12. P. 17–21.

<sup>11</sup> Guo He Nan, He Qian. Deconstruction and reconstruction of news values in China from the perspective of algorithmic recommendation [J] // Journal of Southwest University for Nationalities (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition). 2020. No. 41(06). pp. 150–156; Hu Yiqing, Li Zichao. Rethinking the value of news: Reflections from the philosophy of technology[J]. Young Journalists. 2017. No. 552 (04). pp. 11–13. DOI:10.15997/j.cnki.qnjz.2017.04.008; Du Junfei. Journalism is a person, journalism is anthropology [J] // International Journalism. 2018. 40 (02). pp. 22–29. DOI:10.13495/j.cnki.cjjc.2018.02.004.

<sup>12</sup> Yao Jingyun, Shao Peiren. An experimental study on the construction of Chinese communication theory: from the “transmission view of communication” to the “reception view of communication” [J] // Zhejiang Social Science. 2018. No. 264 (08). pp. 120–128+159. DOI:10.14167/j.zjss.2018.08.014.

China can develop a new theoretical framework for the digital age and further structure the thinking of Chinese journalism.

C. Jun, C. Haisun and S. Hui<sup>13</sup> note in their studies that digital technologies are a reciprocal process. On the one hand, new technologies have increased the efficiency of information dissemination and changed the inherent way of transmitting information; on the other hand, modern technology has also created a number of new problems. There is a potential danger in terms of the morals, ethics and values of journalism. Изучив вышеперечисленные концепции, мы также сопоставили проблемы, возникающие в журналистике в реальности. Они преимущественно исходят с точки зрения коммуникатора, канала коммуникации и аудитории.

### **Characteristics of empirical material**

The information presented by the author is based on the analysis of materials received from official Chinese institutions (Internet Society of China; China Academy of Information and Communication Technology; China Internet Information Center, etc.)<sup>14</sup>, as well as from international research institutes Pew Research Center<sup>15</sup>, World Internet Conferent<sup>16</sup>, McKinsey Greater China and others.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Zhou Jun. Journalistic misconduct [M] // People's Daily Press. 2013; Zhu Haisun. Fragmented microblogging communication[M]. Guangdong Economic Publishing House, 2013; Shao Hui. Exploring the ethical failure of online journalism during a period of media transition[D]. East China Normal University, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> URL:<https://www.isc.org.cn/> (accessed 15.04.23); <http://www.caict.ac.cn/> (accessed 15.04.23); <https://www.cnnic.com.cn/> (accessed 15.04.23).

<sup>15</sup> URL: <https://www.pewresearch.org/> (date of access: 15.04.23)

<sup>16</sup> URL: <https://cn.wicinternet.org/> (дата обращения: 15.04.23).

<sup>17</sup> URL: <https://www.mckinsey.com.cn/> (дата обращения: 15.04.23).

The experience of scientific institutions was also analyzed, represented, for example, by the “Fake News Research Report” published annually by the Journalism Innovation Laboratory of Nanjing University in China.<sup>18</sup>

In addition, information was examined from Chinese government websites, official Chinese news agencies (Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, Quyi, Central People's Broadcasting Station, etc.) and four major Chinese online news websites (Tencent News, Netease News, Sina News, Sohu News, etc).

### **Hypothesis**

It is expected that the research will be conducted in the context of the development of the digital age. The digital age is the age of disseminating information through electronic means. Although information has become faster and the mode of communication has become more interactive, people's dependence on technology has further increased a number of changes in journalistic values and ethical lapses that need to be clarified in this study.

The focus is expected to be on the development of journalism in China in the digital age. Due to technological advances in digital information technology and the differences between China, developing under a socialist market economy, and the West, new models of journalism development will be built and new consequences will emerge.

### **Main scientific results**

1. Digital technologies have also brought new changes to the structure of Chinese journalism and have influenced its development, leading to new characteristics. However, because economic and technological development often outpaces the development of scientific theory, the theory of journalism in the digital age is still

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<sup>18</sup>URL: <https://jil.nju.edu.cn/> (accessed 15.04.23).

in the research stage. This issue is discussed in sections 1.2 and 1.3 of the article "Characteristics of Chinese Journalism in the Digital Age."<sup>19</sup>

2. The digital age is evolving against the backdrop of China's rapid economic transformation, where the traditional propaganda model is increasingly influenced by market economy concepts and gives rise to numerous ethical issues in journalism. These issues include the information monopoly of large internet companies in a market-oriented context, as well as changes in labor relations brought about by changes in productivity and production tools. This issue is examined in sections 2.2 and 2.3 and discussed in the article "Issues of Modern Professional Standards in Chinese Journalism."<sup>20</sup>

3. By analyzing the documents "Ethical Norms for Chinese Journalists" issued by the All-China Journalists Association from the 1990s to the present, it can be concluded that the values of Chinese journalists are shifting from a formerly singular political orientation to becoming increasingly diversified. This also reflects that Chinese journalism is facing an increasing number of new issues. This conclusion is analyzed in section 3.2 and published in the article "Creating a Value System in Chinese Journalism."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Zhang Shixuan. Characteristics of Chinese journalism in the digital era // MNKO. 2021. No. 4(89). pp. 427 - 429. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/harakteristiki-kitayskoy-zhurnalistiki-v-epohu-tsifrovoytehnologiy> (from the list of publications of the author of the dissertation).

<sup>20</sup> Zhang Shixuan. Problems of modern professional standards in Chinese journalism // MNKO. 2022. No. 3(94). pp. 316 - 318. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/problemy-sovremennyh-professionalnyh-standartov-vzhurnalistike-kitaya> (from the list of publications of the author of the dissertation).

<sup>21</sup> Zhang Shixuan. Creating a system of values in Chinese journalism // Modern science: current problems of theory and practice. Ser. Humanitarian sciences. 2023. No. 7(183). pp. 168 - 174. URL: <http://nauteh-journal.ru/files/e1c841a3-b6fb-4587-8b3c-5960b90e1268> (from the list of publications of the author of the dissertation).

4. In response to the widespread integration of digital technology and media, the new trends in the development of Chinese journalism in the digital age and the areas of focus for Chinese scholars have been summarized. This issue is elucidated in sections 3.1 and 3.3 and published in the article "Analysis of the Evolution of Value Orientation in Chinese Journalism in the Context of Digital Reform."<sup>22</sup>

### **Scientific novelty**

In this study:

1. presents new characteristic features of the development of journalism in the digital era in China;
2. ethical problems and value changes that have arisen in Chinese journalism in the process of its development are considered;
3. describes new developments in digital journalism affecting organizations, educational institutions and individuals in China;
4. the direction of digital journalism research in China is being shaped;
5. demonstrates the development of journalism theory in China in the digital era.

This study provides new evidence and proposes new ideas.

### **Work structure**

The dissertation consists of three parts. The first chapter outlines the development achievements of Chinese journalism in the digital era. The prerequisites for the development of digital journalism in modern China are clarified. The structural characteristics of China's new media in the digital era and the features

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<sup>22</sup> Zhang Shixuan. Analysis of the evolution of the value orientation of Chinese journalism in the context of digital reform // Modern scientist. 2023 No. 2(44). pp. 31-36. URL: <https://sujournal.ru/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/su-2.pdf> (from the list of publications of the author of the dissertation).

of journalistic expression are analyzed. These characteristics not only depend on the influence of Marxist journalism theory, but also demonstrate the influence of China's reform and opening-up policies based on the market economy.

The second chapter, based on media analysis, identifies the challenges facing Chinese journalism in the context of the information technology revolution. In this context, the values of Chinese journalism have changed radically and have given rise to a number of problems. The author analyzes these value issues from the perspective of communication science, in particular from the point of view of content, communicators, channels of information dissemination and audience.

The third chapter compares Chinese scholars' approaches to understanding journalism in the digital age. The values of digital journalism in China are presented in terms of the values of organizations, schools and individuals. In addition, the author analyzes the problematic issues and directions of development of journalism research in the digital era in China.

### **Practical significance**

The findings of the work described in this dissertation will contribute to a more systematic understanding of the development of journalism in the digital age in China. Also, a generalization of the problems that have arisen and prospects for the development of digital journalism in China will help solve future problems associated with value orientations that digital technologies bring.

### **Provisions for defense**

1. The concept of “value guidelines” does not have a clear definition; in the scientific literature there are various definitions of it, which do not always coincide in meaning with how it is used in China. In this context, these concepts are analyzed mainly from the point of view of journalistic ethics and the functions of journalism.

Researchers focus on the following aspects: firstly, the discussion mainly takes place from the point of view of freedom and responsibility or the correspondence of the rights and responsibilities of journalists; secondly, from the side of responsibility that the media must take on, often more specific, not deep, in order to form a clear and unified idea.

2. The next few decades will be a key period for the development of China's digital technology. China's economic development creates better conditions for the development of digital technologies. Thus, China began to lead the world in the development of new media. However, economic developments often outpace cultural and scientific developments, and research into value-based journalism in the digital age is still in its infancy.

From the structural characteristics of modern Chinese journalism in the digital era, it follows that it is in its infancy, but can already share its experience with other countries. On the one hand, Chinese journalism contributes to the development of social management and social economy, on the other hand, it constantly provides new opportunities for disseminating information about China both within the country and abroad.

3. From internal motivation it follows that the value orientation of journalists in the digital era is lost by itself.

The value orientation of Chinese journalists was accompanied by three stages of history: the period when the Chinese intelligentsia was dominated by values associated with publishing newspapers to educate the people, opposition to feudalism and calls for national liberation; the period after 1949, when journalism served as the “mouthpiece” of the Chinese government and party; a period when a sense of freedom arose under the influence of the spirit of Western commercial journalism after the introduction of reform and opening up in China.

Currently, Chinese journalism is undergoing a rapid transition to the digital age, and the traditional propaganda model is increasingly influenced by the idea of a



market economy. Amid these changes in journalism, commercial competition and the desire for profit again and again force journalists to choose between money and ethics.

On the one hand, the gradual monopoly of large Internet platforms in recent years has made news distributors worry about capital and power; on the other hand, dependence on artificial intelligence algorithms has led to changes in the way news is produced, which in turn has led to changes in the social responsibility of journalists.

4. Value orientation refers to the values reflected in the choice of news content by the subject of news communication in the process of news communication. Therefore, the characteristics of digital journalism have also reconstructed the traditional values of Chinese social journalism.

On the one hand, digital technologies contribute to greater diversity of news content. For a long time, news in China tended to be propaganda for a single political cause. However, in the new generation, journalism is no longer the only tool for political propaganda, but at the same time offers a wider range of functions. In particular, with the advent of the Internet as a new media, the meaning of journalism becomes more diverse in terms of public information and cultural knowledge, and its functions become more diverse as it becomes more connected to its audience.

On the other hand, there is a greater democratization of journalism. In the new era, journalism is becoming more closely connected with the people and is not one-sided propaganda. Since ancient times, Chinese texts have been more about retelling history from the point of view of the emperor, the hero of the story, the family, or the state. This approach has resulted in Chinese news reporting focusing more on macro-level information about society and not enough attention on individual lives.

In the digital age, closer connection with audiences has led to news content becoming more focused on the fate of the individual. More vital news content and greater accessibility to news content have led to a more democratic and pluralistic

approach in journalism, not only because of the changing relationship between the communicator and the audience, but also because the audience has become a decisive force in shaping the fate of the media.

5. Digital journalism, as a new way of researching journalism, criticizes, rethinks and inherits the value orientations of journalism.

Although digital news has its roots in the development and continuity of traditional journalism, it challenges journalism theory and journalistic research methods.

The emergence of new realities will inevitably have an impact on old thinking. China's digital journalism in the new era pays more attention to the aspects of reflection and criticism, and its theoretical research work should consider the discourse of technological optimism. Thus, a necessary premise of digital journalism is that journalism gives new meaning to technology.

The author of the dissertation research has 10 published scientific works reflecting the main provisions of the dissertation; among the places of publication there are three recommended publications from the list of the Higher Attestation Commission. The main results of the study were presented at international conferences.

1. Характеристики китайской журналистики в эпоху цифровых технологий // МНКО. 2021. № 4(89). С. 427–429. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/harakteristiki-kitayskoy-zhurnalistiki-v-epohu-tsifrovyyhtehnologiy>.
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## Chapter 1. Characteristics of Modern Chinese Journalism

The digital era, as a phenomenon caused by a higher level of economic development, traceable after the agricultural and industrial economies, is an object of study that requires attention and understanding within the framework of academic analysis. It is generally accepted that in the digital era, knowledge and information are key production factors, innovation in digital technology is the main driving force, the modern information network is an important carrier, and digital technology is deeply integrated into the real economy. At the same time, we are upgrading the digital level of traditional industries in society and accelerating the reconstruction of new era economic development and social management models.

In our life, the digital age is coming, and at the same time, new media is becoming an increasingly serious force, and a huge amount of information fills people's life through new media every day. For this reason, the new media system in the digital age is not only an important part of society, its internal operation has become a complex structure. Note that in the China Internet Development Report 2020 ("China Internet Development Report 2020").<sup>23</sup> indicated that in 2019, the scale of China's digital economy reached 35.8 trillion yuan, accounting for 36.2% of the country's GDP, and the overall scale and growth rate of China's digital economy was also among the best in the world<sup>24</sup>.

Therefore, before studying this issue, we need to get a full understanding of China's development in the digital age. Due to the fact that China is characterised by socialism, the value orientation of Chinese journalism is different from that of

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<sup>23</sup> Ding Hanqing, Yang Ya, Yu Guo-ming. Ten characteristics and development trends of China's 2020 Internet advertising market - based on the analysis of China's Internet advertising data report (2020) [J]. *Journalism*, 2021(02):34-39. DOI:10.15897/j.cnki.cn 51-1046/g2.2021.02.005.

<sup>24</sup> Xinhua: "The scale of China's digital economy has reached 35.8 trillion yuan." URL: [http://www.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2020-11/23/c\\_1126776832.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2020-11/23/c_1126776832.htm) (date of access: 1.12.2020).

Western journalism. Thus, it is important to investigate the status of new media development in China in the digital age.

### **1.1. Values as a research direction in China**

The study of value orientations in journalism is an interdisciplinary study of the professional ethics of news journalism, the study of the nature of journalism, the law of development, social value and other aspects. In the process of research, the following issues are considered: principles and norms of journalistic ethics, moral obligations and moral responsibility of journalists, moral choice and moral assessment of behavior when disseminating news, journalistic ethics: laws and rules, moral self-discipline of journalists, moral qualities and moral education of journalists, etc. d.

The study of journalistic values and ethics first began in the United States of America. This was largely due to the adoption in 1787 of the First Amendment of the US Constitution, concerning freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Since this amendment prohibited censorship in the press, and journalism was rapidly developing, in order to prevent the possibility of abuse in the work of journalists, proposals arose to develop a special professional code of ethics.

In 1914, Walter Williams formulated the Journalist's Creed, which was an attempt to formulate a comprehensive code of ethics for the journalist<sup>25</sup>. With the development of modern journalism, after the Second World War, more and more countries around the world began to formulate ethical standards of journalism in accordance with their own characteristics of its development. In 1924, the first monograph on journalistic ethics, Nelson Antrim Crawford, *The Ethics of Journalism*, was published in the United States<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Farrar, Donald T. *A Creed for My Profession: Walter Williams, Journalist to the World*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998. 264 p. (Missouri Biography Series). ISBN 0-8262-1188-7.

<sup>26</sup> *The Ethics of Journalism*: Nelson Antrim Crawford. Johnson Reprint, 1924.

In 1954, the International Federation of Journalists (FJ) adopted the Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists, the main content of which concerns the independence of journalism, objectivity in the presentation of news, freedom of journalists and the integrity of justice. Today, many of these principles are accepted by journalistic consensus in different countries.

In China, there is ongoing debate regarding the definition of the object of study of journalistic ethics. According to one point of view, journalistic ethics is “a science that studies the emergence and formation of professional ethics of journalists”<sup>27</sup>; “a discipline that studies the formation of professional ethics and behavioral norms of journalists and their laws”<sup>28</sup>. According to another point of view, journalistic ethics is the study of the phenomenon of journalistic ethics as an object. This is a doctrine that clarifies the origin, development and social role of journalistic ethics, revealing the nature of journalistic ethics and the laws of its development; this is a science that solves the problem of human moral relations and behavioral norms in journalistic practice and the social and moral function of the media on the basis of the principles of general ethics; is the study of the moral qualities and moral education of practicing journalists<sup>29</sup>.

The focus of these two opinions is not the same and is still controversial. In the first case, we are talking only about the professional ethics of journalists, in the second – about two subjects of study: the professional ethics of journalists and the social and moral function of the media, which is more consistent with the concept of “journalistic values” in Russian.

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<sup>27</sup> Brief Dictionary of Journalism / ed. Yu Jiahong, Ning Shufan, Xu Peiting, Tan Qitai. Hangzhou: Zhejiang People's publishing house, 1984.

<sup>28</sup> Gan Shifen, Qian Xinbo, Cheng Yi, Hong Yilong. Dictionary of Journalism. Henan: Henan people. publishing house.1993

<sup>29</sup> Zhou Hongshu. Outlines of journalistic ethics. Xinhua: Xinhua Publishing House, 1995.

The study of value orientations of journalism in China touches on journalism, ethics, sociology and psychology. In Chinese studies of the value orientations of journalism, two important dates should be noted: 1918 and 1949.

In 1918, the Journalism Research Society was established at Peking University, which marked the beginning of modern journalism studies in China. It published the *Weekly News* magazine (《新闻周刊》), the first professional journalistic publication in China.

In 1923, the first monograph on journalism in China, “The Century of Applied Journalism” (《世纪应用新闻学》), was published, in which its author Shao Peiping defended the values of Chinese journalism. On the one hand, she should inherit the ideal personality and moral qualities characteristic of Chinese scholars, which included honesty, patience, hard work, courage, etc. On the other hand, Shao Peiping's views were different from the views of Chinese journalists, and were closer to Western concept of journalism: he put forward the concepts of “overcoming class” and “independent personality”. He believed that the closer human society is to culture, the higher the requirements and responsibility of journalism. Therefore, journalists must strengthen their moral culture, have a sense of social responsibility and strive for truthfulness of facts<sup>30</sup>.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the country's communications institutions were largely nationalized as a result of the revolution, and newspapers, radio stations, and other means of communication became state-owned. During this period, the development of journalism education in China was slow, and there was little research on journalism theories. The main theory of journalism was the Marxist theory of journalism, which emphasized the instrumental nature of journalism.

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<sup>30</sup> Shao Peiping. *Essays on journalism by Shao Peiping*. Beijing: Peking University Publishing House, 2008.



The second phase of research occurred mainly in 1978, after the Chinese reform, when some new theories about journalism studies came to China from abroad. Then Chinese scholars began to conduct their research from the perspective of journalistic ethics and journalistic functions. For example, in 1984, Yu Jiahong et al compiled the Concise Dictionary of Journalism<sup>31</sup>; in 1995, Xinhua Publishing House published "Outline of Journalistic Ethics" by Professor Zhou Hongshu<sup>32</sup>; in 1997, the Fudan University Press published the textbook "A Course in Journalistic Ethics,"<sup>33</sup> edited by Chen Guilan, and in 2000, the Xinhua Publishing House published "Journalistic Ethics" by Coral Huang<sup>34</sup>; in 2001, China People's University Press published "A Short Course in Journalism Ethics" edited by Lan Hongwen<sup>35</sup>, Hubei Education Publishing House published "Color Balance: A New Study on Media Ethics" by Chen Chaonan<sup>36</sup> and others.

During this period, Chinese journalism researchers began to analyze more the press freedom that media should have in the process of market relations, and draw on Western theories of social responsibility to explore how to limit press freedom within the framework of responsibility, so that the media could become a social force for good. Chen Lidan introduced two Western media theories in the book *Liberal Theory and Social Responsibility Theory*<sup>37</sup>.

Ethics researchers, for their part, have thought deeply about why and what moral responsibilities news communicators bear, drawing on philosophical theories and resources. Huang Fufeng begins his analysis with the dialectical relationship

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<sup>31</sup> A brief dictionary of journalism: decree. op.

<sup>32</sup> Zhou Hongshu. Outlines of journalistic ethics. Xinhua: Xinhua Publishing House, 1995.

<sup>33</sup> Chen Guilan. Journalistic ethics course. Fudan: Fudan University Publishing House, 1997.

<sup>34</sup> Huang, Coral. Journalistic ethics. Xinhua: Xinhua Publishing House, 2000.

<sup>35</sup> Lan Hongwen. A short course in journalistic ethics. Renmin: Renmin University Publishing House of China, 2001.

<sup>36</sup> Chan, Chao-Nam. Colored scales: New research in media ethics. Hubei Education Press, 2001.

<sup>37</sup> Chen Lidan. Liberal theory and social responsibility // Modern communication. 2003. No. 3. P. 4–5.

between moral obligation and moral right and believes that “without moral freedom, the media loses its subjectivity, without moral responsibility, the media loses its connection with other factors in society. Freedom is the internal basis of the moral rights of the media, and responsibility is the external condition for the media to enjoy moral rights.”<sup>38</sup>

## **1.2. Achievements of Chinese SMCs in the digital age**

The digital age opens up a new field for the media, with the development of technology, a complete system is built up, and its unique modern cultural system is gradually formed. Today, a number of new cultural symbols emerging in the digital age are increasingly becoming the expression of modern culture and technology. At the same time, the emergence of the Internet and new media technologies in the digital age has given culture a new way of expression in the virtual space. Therefore, in terms of historical development trends, the future digital culture is bound to influence the real society and human perceptions through the development of new media.

According to China CNNIC's 45th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China in 2020, as of March 2020, the number of Chinese Internet users has reached 904 million, exceeding the total number of Internet users in the EU and the US<sup>39</sup>. In comparison, according to social network Tik-Tok, the number of active users of their platform, recently surpassed 400 million.

At the same time, according to the China Internet Development Report 2020, at the end of 2019, the number of China Mobile's internet users reached 1.319 billion, accounting for 32.17% of the world's total internet users; the total number of 4G base stations reached 5.44 million, accounting for more than half of the world's total

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<sup>38</sup> Huang Fufeng. A study in media ethics. Beijing: China Social Science Press, 2009. P. 149.

<sup>39</sup> "The 45th China statistical report on internet development." URL: [http://www.cac.gov.cn/2020-04/27/c\\_1589535470378587.htm](http://www.cac.gov.cn/2020-04/27/c_1589535470378587.htm). Date of reference: 15.05.2.

4G base stations; the e-commerce transaction volume reached 34.81 trillion. RMB, ranking first in the global e-commerce market; online payment transaction volume reached 249.88 trillion yuan, and mobile payment volume is at the leading level in the world; domestic digital economy with an added value of 35.8 trillion yuan, firmly ranked second in the world.

Back in 2017, McKinsey's report *China in the Digital Age: Building a New Competitive Economy* stated, "Today, China is already a global leader in the digital economy [...] and a major global leader in the adoption of digital technologies in the consumer sector. And it will be the main investor country and digital leadership country... In the future, China's economy will become more dynamic and more Chinese companies will be able to participate in global competition, export digital business experience and play an important role in globalisation"<sup>40</sup>.

In 1994, China connected to the Internet, and since then, China's digital era has begun. After more than 20 years of development, Chinese digital technology has reached the highest level in the world. On the one hand, China has benefited from the progress of Chinese economic culture under open economy and socialist commercialisation. This phenomenon in China is referred to as socialism with Chinese characteristics or Marxism in China. 2017 has become an important year for China in the field of Internet and digital technology development. During this period, C.Jinping first proposed: "We should deepen the innovation and development strategy of the Industrial Internet, systematically promote the construction of the Industrial Internet infrastructure and data resource management system, play the role of core resources and innovation data engine, and accelerate the formation of a digital network led and supported by the innovation economy."

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<sup>40</sup> Hua Qiansen, Cheng Zhengmin, Wang Wei, et al. *China in the digital age: building a new globally competitive economy* [J.]. McKinsey Global Institute. 2012. 12to 1-17.

Since 2017, the concept of "Industrial Internet" has been continuously featured in the Chinese government's development reports<sup>41</sup>.

Let's trace the chronology of these changes:

In 2018, for example, an industrial internet platform was developed. In 2019, the Smart+ system was expanded to ensure the transformation and modernisation of the manufacturing industry.

By 2020, the country has come to develop the industrial internet and promote smart manufacturing. In 2021, the system developed, common platforms for technology research and development were established, and the innovation capacity and specialisation of small and medium-sized enterprises were enhanced. In 2022, there was a significant acceleration in the development of industrial internet, cultivation and development of digital industry, production of integrated circuits and artificial intelligence, and enhancement of technological innovation and supply capacity of key software and hardware.

Meanwhile, starting from 2017 World Internet Conference, "China Internet Development Report" and "World Internet Development Report" are published at the World Internet Conference. In November 2022, the "China Internet Development Report 2022" and "World Internet Development Report 2022" are published at the World Internet Conference 2022 in Wucheng at the highest level. The statistical reports (created with the support of China Institute of Network Research, Internet think tanks and research institutes around the world.) are supported by China Institute of Network Research, Internet think tanks and research institutes around the world<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Industrial internet gives new impetus to China's economic development <http://xinhuane.com/techpro/20220316/39559b8158b2422d94d64ab004c56e72/c.htm> | Date accessed: 03.16.2023

<sup>42</sup> Release of the "blue book" report on internet development in China 2022 and the report on internet development in the world 2022 [http://www.cac.gov.cn/2022-11/09/c\\_1669622017232374.htm](http://www.cac.gov.cn/2022-11/09/c_1669622017232374.htm) Date of access: 06.02.2023

The World Internet Development Report 2022 assessed the development of the Internet in 48 countries and regions of the world, reflecting the achievements and development of Internet construction in various countries around the world. It indicates that the global information infrastructure is being optimised and upgraded, the commercialisation of satellite internet is accelerating, digital technology is further developing the application of artificial intelligence, and the digital economy is helping the global economic recovery. On the other hand, the report also pointed out that the digital divide between countries is widening, the construction of digital government is accelerating, but the gap between countries in the world is becoming more and more obvious. Social media is becoming the main battlefield of public opinion and information warfare; cybersecurity loopholes often appear, thus the need to regulate the digital market is increasing. Competition in cyberspace between countries is also increasing.

The "China Internet Development Report 2022" points out: China's information infrastructure construction is leading the world, the layout of the integrated big data centre has been completed; the advantages of digital technology for the market, economy, public services and social culture are becoming more and more obvious, and the Chinese government is gradually improving the legal construction and management of the Internet. Using the DEDI (Digital Economy and Society Index) indicator system, this report evaluates the development level of various regions in China (excluding Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) in four aspects: digital infrastructure, digital economy industry, digital governance and data value. Among them, Guangdong, Beijing, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Shanghai, Shandong, Tianjin, Sichuan, Fujian and Hubei are among the top ten. The overall analysis shows that the strength of the digital economy in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area and the Yangtze River Delta Metropolitan Area is currently in the most important position and continues to grow

steadily. The Chengdu-Chongqing area and the middle reaches of the Yangtze River Delta urban agglomeration are developing faster.

Currently, China's computing power accounts for about 27% of the world's computing power, ranking second after the United States. With the construction of eight national computing centres and ten computing clusters, China's computing power will continue to maintain a growth rate of 30%, and is expected to become the world's largest computing power by 2025.

Overall, in the digital era, the scale of China's network users is steadily increasing, the network infrastructure is becoming more complete, the effect of industrial digital transformation is noticeable, and innovation capabilities are constantly improving. The environment for the development of informatisation is constantly optimised, the digital economy is booming, and the gradual improvement of network management provides strong support for the development and change of China's news and communication industry.

### **1.3. Structural Characteristics of Chinese New Media**

#### **The effect of the "Flying Geese Paradigm" in China's digital age.**

The model proposed by the Japanese economist K. Akamatsu, called the "Flying Geese Model", is a theory about the transfer of industrial structure to the international level, especially between countries located in the Western Pacific region. Its essence is that the economic development of the various countries in the region has an ordered structure similar to that of geese: the United States and Japan are the leading geese, the four Asian dragons are the second tier, and countries such as Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia are the third tier.

This model can be applied to media in China. With the development of digital technology and the popularisation of the Internet, Internet platforms are rapidly emerging in China. Internet media bring many conveniences to people's lives, reduce

the cost of communication between people, and promote the development of society. However, the promotion environment of Internet media inevitably becomes oligopolistic and monopolistic, which not only negatively affects fair market competition and social governance, but also affects the public's access to information platforms, which are imperceptibly monopolised, which in turn leads to problems such as violating the audience's personal privacy and creating fake news.

Note that the China Internet Development Report 2020 indicates that in 2019, China's digital economy reached 35.8 trillion yuan, accounting for 36.2% of the country's GDP, and the overall scale and growth rate of China's digital economy was also among the best in the world.

Table 1- Data on value added in the tertiary sector in China's ten cities with the largest GDP in 2020.

Rank	City	2020/Billion yuan	2019/Billion yuan	Increment/Billion yuan	Increase/%
1	Beijing	3027.9	2954.3	73.6	2.49
2	Shanghai	2830.8	2775.3	55.5	2
3	Guangzhou	1814.1	1692.4	121.7	7.19
4	Shenzhen	1719	1640.6	78.4	4.78
5	Chongqing	1320.7	1255.7	65	5.18
6	Chengdu	1164.3	1115.6	48.7	4.37
7	Hangzhou	1095.9	1017.2	78.7	7.74
8	Suzhou	1058.9	990.9	68	6.86
9	Wuhan	965.6	985.5	-19.9	-2.02
10	Nanjing	930.7	870	60.7	6.98

Today, China's digital economy is reaching a high pace and scale, but we found that Chinese digital media companies mainly use BAT platforms. BAT is the combined platforms of Baidu, Alibaba, and Tencent. Chinese platforms use BAT as their main platform, thereby creating a huge digital structure. More than one-fifth of China's leading digital startups were founded by BAT or former BAT employees, with 30% of the companies receiving investment from BAT.

Today, China's digital economy is reaching a high pace and scale, but we found that Chinese digital media companies mainly use BAT platforms. BAT is the combined platforms of Baidu, Alibaba, and Tencent. Chinese platforms use BAT as their main platform, thereby creating a huge digital structure. More than one-fifth of China's leading digital startups were founded by BAT or former BAT employees, with 30% of the companies receiving investment from BAT.

The economic differences between China's east coast and mainland China also have a similar structure to China's internet industry.



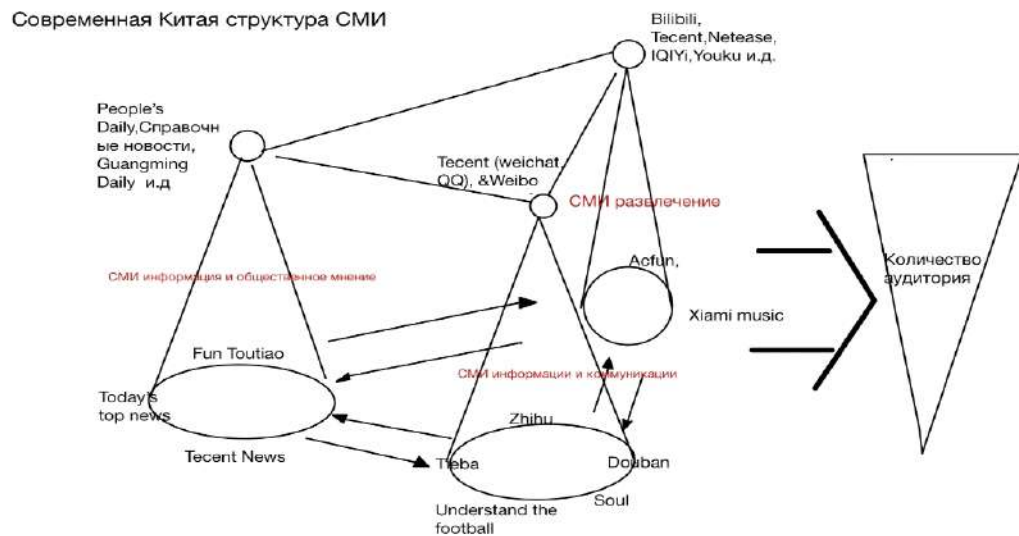


Figure 1- Share of service industries in major cities in China. <sup>43</sup>.

In the digital era, traditional journalism has begun to strive for new media and intelligent media, and the "flying geese paradigm" is becoming more and more obvious in the PRC. Under the influence of strong Internet companies BAT and other companies, many media companies have consciously joined the media structure of the digital age.

In addition, China's new media include well-known internet companies such as Tencent, Baidu and Alibaba, as well as new media forces such as Qutoutiao, etc. The reason why they can develop new media products and commercialise them quickly is not only due to the significant formation of new media operating system, but also to support the complex and relatively stable social condition.

As a result of the "goose model" of Internet media development and the monopoly of Internet media development, Internet news media exhibit the "Matthew

<sup>43</sup> Audience size in the Flying Geese Paradigm: 1. The higher the top level, the larger the audience volume; 2. The lower the level, the more accurate the classification of media and relevant target users; 3. The audience classification of low-level media is clearer, and the influence of professional media and professional news is stronger.

effect", and some new characteristics of the news industry emerge under the monopolised market.

Retention of old users with the help of big data is taking place. In today's society, a large amount of information is distributed through digital media platforms, and companies using the Internet and digital media as platforms can easily collect all kinds of information about users through technologies such as big data, cloud computing and artificial intelligence. The media platforms then categorise different users into different groups according to their data, allowing for the pinpointing of relevant information that can interest users and generate revenue.

There is a situation in which Internet platforms control the information provided to users. As dominant media or Internet platforms take advantage of their own users, they restrict user access to other features. At the same time, due to market competition, information search results on a platform may be reflected according to the interests of that particular platform, while hiding or downgrading those search results whose presentation to users would only benefit the competing Internet platform. This has resulted in users utilising different types of software on the Internet, mostly by intelligently choosing a platform. Consequently, media conglomerates in the digital age can utilise new ways to promote products more accurately, thereby further strengthening their own monopoly.

As new media continue to grow, traditional media continue to weaken, forcing journalists to become increasingly involved in the production of news content on new media platforms. Unlike traditional journalistic communication organisations, online platforms are starting to chase faster and more attractive news content. On the one hand, the labour rights of journalists are being infringed upon by the monopoly of the market, and on the other hand, news content is more often presented in the form of more convenient videos or short articles, while content that takes viewers longer to read and watch is being reduced to quick, condensed information.

China's anti-monopoly law states that it is not allowed to have related products without appropriate examples or to impose transaction terms. Currently, many media outlets or information dissemination companies push viewers to watch adverts while watching the news. And these forms will become increasingly evident in the future as media platforms monopolise.

However, the above-mentioned characteristics of news using the Internet as a platform will naturally cause a number of new challenges, such as: the decline of traditional media, the transformation of journalistic identity and the change of audiences from "passive groups" to "active individuals", which makes new media even more challenging. Also new media easily become a personal "tool for expressing anger". These aspects will be further analysed in the second chapter of this paper.

### **Stock competition and audience shrinkage in new media development in China**

The China Networked Audiovisual Conference released the "Research Report on China's Networked Audiovisual Development in 2021", noting that in 2020, the scale of China's networked audiovisual industry exceeded RMB600 billion, of which the short video market accounted for the largest share, accounting for RMB205.13 billion. As of December 2020, the number of Chinese networked audiovisual users has reached 944 million, with the user consumption rate of short videos being the highest, currently approaching 90 per cent.

However, L. Xuelin, founder and CEO of Yunhe Data, said that in 2020, long-form video playback dropped 17 per cent year-on-year<sup>44</sup>.

In recent years, the KOL (Key Opinion Leader) era has dawned for Chinese media. By utilising technological advances, they have entered the digital age, and at the same time, the technological integration of the media and media industry has

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<sup>44</sup> Tencent, Tik-tok enter stiff competition in video inventory market URL: <http://tech.china.com.cn/internet/20210607/377908.shtml>. Date of reference: 20.3.2021.

been further strengthened. Also, new media platforms such as bilibili and Douyin (mainland China's version of TikTok), and Toutiao further fuelled the emergence of the fan economy era in China.

It can be seen from the development of new media in China in recent years that the audience dividend in the Chinese market is gradually decreasing and media outlets are competing for the declining market. This term, often used in the Chinese media, describes the markets of small towns and rural areas where the majority of the Chinese population lives. In addition to the 49 major cities, the rest of China, where people earn less money than in major cities and prefer more economical or cheaper goods, can be included. It is also important to understand that China has a concept that categorises Chinese cities according to their level of economic development. First-tier cities refer to four cities, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen; second-tier cities include eleven cities, including Chengdu, Xi'an, Nanjing, Hangzhou, etc.

Decreasing audience size has become a new trend in the development of the new media industry in recent years. This means that the Internet has entered the stock market era from the era of growth, the demographic dividend is gradually declining, the growth in the number of users is gradually slowing down, the Matfee effect in the media industry has become more prominent, and competition for the market has become more fierce.

For example, the competition between media companies for audiences in China's digital media market is now no longer fought in large cities and among young audiences. This is because in order to survive in a highly competitive industry, the audience media industry is forced to open up new markets for digital media companies, focusing on smaller cities below the third tier. New media continue to move towards older and younger audiences, with a gradual increase in size and consumer capacity. In terms of commercial potential, they may become the largest share of the media mix of the future.

It can be argued that the "stock competition" of Chinese media in the digital era is mainly reflected in competition for media resource allocation, competition for audience market allocation, competition for content entrepreneurship and competition for data resources.

### **Accelerated development of media convergence and new media in Chinese journalism**

The advent of the digital age has become a milestone and a challenge for the media industry. On the one hand, traditional media faced a huge crisis. With the development of technology, the dissemination of information has begun to exhibit features such as fast connectivity, immediacy of information, and low media costs.

Against this background, traditional media should be restructured and merged with modern digital technology. In this case, even China Central Television, which is controlled by the Chinese government, is constantly trying out new media and various forms of cooperation with other media.

In general, changes in Chinese news media depend on three factors: the development of media technology, the influence of government policies, and changes in the aesthetic tastes of the audience, or changes in viewing styles. Thus, with the development of Internet technologies in China, the weakening of Internet media policy, as well as the diversification and diversity of information needs of the Chinese audience, new reforms are taking place in Chinese news media.<sup>45</sup>

Against this background, the promotion of integrated media and the development of new media in China's news industry means that the boundaries of modern journalism are gradually blurring or even disappearing. As traditional media such as newspapers and magazines are distributed through new media platforms, they are themselves media integration. On the other hand, as media convergence plays a role in the production and distribution of news, it will also contribute to the restructuring

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<sup>45</sup> Zhang Shisyuan. Characteristics of Chinese Journalism in the Digital Age // MNCO. 2021. № 4(89). C. 427-429. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/harakteristiki-kitayskoy-zhurnalistik-i-v-epohu-tsifrovyyhtehnologiy> .

of social relations in the industry. For example, the need for teamwork and a more precise division of labour among new media workers than in traditional journalism will lead to changes in the organisational structure of news production.

#### **1.4. Content Features of Chinese Digital Journalism**

##### **Chinese journalism: political and social morality of the media.**

By virtue of their professional duties, journalists are responsible for the accuracy and objectivity of the information they convey to their audiences. As part of this responsibility, professional journalists strive to present different aspects of news events from different angles, allowing the audience to see the full picture and make their own judgements.

However, in some cases, journalists may deliberately distort the truth by shifting the focus of events and creating a biased view of the situation being covered. This may lead the audience to perceive the subjective values of the journalist, which affects the objectivity of news stories.

Social morality represents an important element in Chinese and generally in Eastern cultural 38characterized 38ion. From the Chinese practice, having morality but lacking talent, a person can still be employed, while having talent but lacking morality, it is difficult to apply this talent in work. In this regard, Chinese culture attaches utmost importance to the issue of moral and value orientation. Even in the ancient Chinese Empire, the transmission of information took place in accordance with Chinese philosophical culture, which was 38characterized by features such as social solidarity and positivity. Contemporary Chinese journalists also adhere to this ideology and endeavour to produce materials that reflect high moral values and promote social solidarity in society.

From 1991 to 2020, the “Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists” has been revised four times, which clearly shows that China attaches great importance to the

awareness of the value orientation of journalism and is willing to make new adjustments in Chinese journalism to improve professional ethics.

It can be argued that the value orientation of Chinese journalism is generally based on the principles of Marxist ideology. Under the current conditions of continuous development of digital technology in China, the Marxist view of news also continues to evolve and will continue to shape the practice of Chinese journalism. Chinese news theory is built on the basis of Marxist materialist dialectics.

Firstly, let us consider the factors of information dissemination in Chinese society from the perspective of the universality of relations between things. The so-called connection, as a philosophical category, refers to the mutual influence, interaction and mutual limitation of relations between all things and phenomena, as well as the internal elements of things and phenomena. On the one hand, connection is objective and inherent in objective things and does not depend on the subjective will of man. On the other hand, the connection is universal, all things, phenomena and their processes in the world are connected internally and externally, the whole world is an interconnected and unified whole, each thing, phenomenon and its processes are connected, is a link in the universal connection of the world, and things reflect through themselves the universal connection of the world. With regard to the universal connection of things, we must notice that the universal connection of things is based on difference, and we can neither deny difference nor absolutise the existence of difference between things; the universal connection of things must be mediated.

Secondly, materialist epistemology holds that being determines consciousness. Media actions are methods of social behaviour in which people have clear goals and methods. They are actions that enable people to understand and face the outside world. The work of journalists as an ideology is the result of thinking and commenting on the outside world. If objectivity and people's social practices are left behind, news dissemination activities will lose the object of reflection and the basis

for publication. In other words, Chinese media primarily pay attention to facts and secondarily to news reports of timeliness. At the same time, news texts are the product of reporters' conscious activities.

Secondly, it is worthwhile to understand the nature of Chinese news communication from the perspective of objective existence, which determines the law of consciousness. Materialist epistemology holds that existence determines consciousness. News dissemination activity is a social behaviour of people with a clear purpose and motivation. It is an activity designed to make people reflect and understand the external world. News, as ideological things, are products of social activities of people reflecting and evaluating the external world. Journalistic work is a reflection of human subjective consciousness. And a person is subjectively active in disseminating information.

In other words, objective facts come first and news reports come second.

Third, the media in China is influenced by the philosophical category of the unity of opposites. This category includes the view that all things contain internal contradictions. Both sides of the contradiction are united and struggle to develop and transform things. The most representative example of this concept is the category of Yin and Yang known from Chinese classical philosophy. In addition, we find confirmation of this in the statements of Mao Zedong. In his opinion, even the hand contains contradictions: the thumb points in one direction, and the other four – in another direction, only with such a structure of hands it is possible to work effectively. When we consider this philosophical category in the context of the media, we can say that the various information, ideas and public opinions disseminated and accepted by both sides in the transmission of news are essentially contradictory in nature and social life, as well as the public disclosure of each aspect of the contradiction, and both sides are the dissemination of these contradictions. Thus, journalists in China are required to grasp the development and changes of the



situation, observe situations comprehensively, and report news facts impartially and objectively.

Fourthly, according to social structure theory, society consists of two main components: the economic base and the superstructure. The economic base determines the nature of the superstructure, and the superstructure in turn has its own degree of independence and initiative. Journalism, as part of the superstructure, plays an important role in public life, but should not be replaced by the political superstructure, such as the state apparatus or ideology.

However, ideology is an important political resource for the state and many countries have always attached great importance to it. History and real experience show that a country cannot exist without a certain ideology. For this purpose, the media is an indispensable tool in providing and disseminating ideology in society. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that journalism must remain independent and objective in its work and not be turned into an instrument of political power.

Two main social systems in modern society determine the directions of media activity: characteristics and functions. Characteristics are associated with the formation and maintenance of social structure and public opinion, and functions are associated with the implementation of information flows and communication. Journalism, being part of the superstructure, has its own disciplinary system, which distinguishes it from various ideological forms and makes it an indispensable tool in the provision and dissemination of information in society. Thus, journalism is an important component of public life and a necessary element in ensuring freedom of speech and information freedom.

Journalism as an ideological attribute has a subjective initiative regarding the economic basis and other forms of ideology. According to K. Marx, “the thought of the ruling class is the dominant thought in every era. Such thinking is created by a class that has objective means of production, while at the same time it regulates the value orientation of people who do not have material means of production. It is

difficult for the controlled class to produce independent spiritual materials, so the ruling class usually dominates them.”<sup>46</sup>.

Therefore, Chinese journalists should pay attention to correctly understand the main ideas when disseminating news, and also take on the social responsibilities of information disseminators. This will allow them to fulfill their role in society, namely, to provide access to information for all segments of the population and to form the correct consciousness based on the objectivity and truth of the information transmitted. In this way, Chinese journalists can contribute to shaping the social structure and direction of society as a whole.

Fifthly, the journalist must understand the audience and speak to be in the same socio-cultural space with it. For example, a journalist must take into account the influences of traditional Eastern philosophy, which requires the media to be humble in order to set an example for people and society.

#### **Increasing social control over new media.**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Great Britain created new seats in Parliament for journalists. At this time, the phrase “fourth estate” began to be applied to journalists, meaning that they had their own representation in the British Parliament, in addition to representatives of the nobility, clergy and ordinary citizens. In 1828, the Anglo-Irish politician E. Burke also called journalists the “fourth estate” and emphasized that their representation was more important than the other three classes. Since then, the expression “fourth estate” or “fourth force” has become famous. Particular attention is paid to the term “fourth estate” in the United States, where this principle is one of the basic principles for media independence.

In today’s digital age, where the Internet and smart devices have become an integral part of society, China has witnessed the emergence of new information dissemination platforms such as KUAISHOU, TikTok, Weibo and many more.

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<sup>46</sup> Collected Works of Marx and Engels, Volume X, People's Publishing House, 2009 edition, pp. 591

These platforms are playing an increasingly important and influential role in the transmission of information in China, given their popularity among the population.

Over the past few years, with the development and increasing popularity of digital technologies, there has been the emergence of a number of online events aimed at studying public opinion. In light of the scale and speed of Internet communications in the new media era, misinterpretation of events related to public opinion on the Internet can seriously undermine trust in government, a process that can no longer be regulated by government oversight alone.

In the context of modern China, social control is an integral part of citizens' lives, in light of the development of the Internet and the rise in general living standards. Despite significant progress in the field of social supervision, there are still certain problems, including insufficient public awareness of social supervision, low levels of citizen participation, lack of communication between subjects of social supervision, and the inadequacy of the social supervision mechanism. In light of this, in the new media environment, the government should use online media as a tool to form a strong supervisory mechanism, ensuring the synergy of social supervision by enhancing social participation, enhancing coordination and cooperation among entities, and improving the social supervision process.

Online public opinion is a form of information feedback in which the general public expresses their views and attitudes towards social practices through new media. Information contained on online platforms may be related to current real-life issues or issues of interest to the public itself.

With the advent of the self-media era and the deepening of social innovation, people are participating in information production, distribution and production of new media content, creating prosperity in the new media environment and promoting profound changes in the way information is disseminated. Today in China, with the help of new media, the "fourth estate" can effectively control the government and greatly increase the enthusiasm of citizens participating in

government affairs. For example, in 2012, people learned through Weibo that one of the officials had an expensive watch, and he was suspected of corruption. Ultimately, after an investigation, the official was detained and charged. In 2020, during the spread of the new coronavirus infection, Chinese citizens quickly learned about the viral epidemic through new media. After this, everyone began to actively participate in the fight against the virus in matters of collective public safety, thereby playing an important role in effectively controlling the coronavirus in China. В настоящее время жизнь граждан в КНР в том, что касается получения информации, претерпевает глубокие изменения, и эти изменения будут продолжаться и в будущем.

### **A study of Information management practices In China's digital era.**

The digital age of new media opens up a complex virtual space for society, which is characterized by a number of important features, including digitalization, interactivity, personalization, timeliness, equality, virtuality, openness and mass participation. This new environment is significantly different from traditional information dissemination environments, and requires high qualifications and professionalism in managing information processes.

Research from McKinsey Asia Research Institute suggests that the Chinese government is taking a “try first, oversee later” approach to digital businesses and new media. Currently, the PRC is actively promoting the development of digital technologies, which in turn confirms government support for this industry.

Although the Chinese government’s control over the digital industry is low, it may weaken the protection of consumer rights and interests. However, this policy gives new media and digital industries the opportunity to explore and progress.

### **Chinese journalism and Chinese cultural symbols.**

In light of the globalization of culture and the interaction of international communities, China’s national image plays an important role in shaping views and opinions about this country. For a long time, China has used various symbols such

as the Forbidden City, pandas, the Great Wall, Chinese cuisine and others to make full use of folk elements to build the country's national image.

With profound changes in international politics gaining more and more attention around the world, the image of China is becoming increasingly relevant. Currently, Chinese journalism is discussing issues related to the past and future of this country.

Currently, there is a steady trend towards cultural globalization, which entails the need to preserve and disseminate national cultural values. One of the most significant aspects of this problem is the formation of a national image, which is becoming increasingly important in international relations. In this context, China is putting forward and implementing a strategy of "going global" to strengthen its cultural soft power. According to the concept of the American anthropologist K. Geertz, culture is a web of meanings created by man. It is through cultural artifacts such as the Forbidden City, pandas, the Great Wall and Chinese cuisine that China displays its cultural elements and shapes its national image. In turn, the PRC media must present objective and accurate information about their country and its people, as well as tell about the history and culture of China and the path of its development. The important point is to preserve the spiritual identity and cultural essence of Chinese civilization, as well as to promote Chinese culture to the world and strengthen Chinese cultural communication.

According to General Secretary Xi Jinping, China must adhere to its cultural position and improve its spiritual identity. Thus, China's national image in the international community is becoming increasingly important, and the PRC media plays a key role in shaping and disseminating its country's cultural values.

Although the value concept of Chinese journalism is consistent with the country's political direction, it also helps Chinese non-governmental organizations and cultural groups to continuously enrich the image of Chinese culture. For

example, L. Ziqi<sup>47</sup>, as a blogger who can be called an independent reporter or an unedited reporter, has attracted widespread public attention in China and abroad. The main platform for her materials is YouTube video hosting. The number of her subscribers on this platform has exceeded 10 million, surpassing even many famous media outlets. In the video, the author talks in detail about the meaning of Chinese symbols, and also draws the audience's attention to the open economic and cultural environment in the country.

The case of L. Ziqi shows us that in the digital era, with new media presented on the Internet, the dissemination of information has a higher speed, wider reach and greater interactivity. At the same time, with the help of technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence, the needs of viewers can be more accurately identified and information can be more effectively disseminated to meet their individual information needs. With these advantages, digital technology has become an important means of disseminating modern Chinese culture, opening up more opportunities for the spread of Chinese culture. According to a 2013 study of Chinese cultural symbols in the United States, Germany, Russia and India, Americans believe that the top ten cultural symbols that best represent China include the Great Wall of China, Chinese food, Yin and Yang images, Chinese characters, dragons, giant pandas, silk, the Forbidden City in Beijing, Chinese kung fu and cheongsam.

Let's analyze what else representatives of different states include in the list of direct associations with China.

For example, Russians believe that the top ten cultural symbols that best represent China include the Great Wall, Yin and Yang, dragons, Chinese food, kung fu, porcelain, traditional Chinese medicine, hieroglyphs, silk and giant pandas.

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<sup>47</sup> Li Ziqi is known as a YouTube creator who specializes in content about rural life. Li Ziqi quickly gained an audience outside of China, becoming the most famous Chinese vlogger in the world.

Germans believe that the top ten cultural symbols that best represent China include: the Great Wall, the Yin-Yang Map, Chinese food, the Forbidden City in Beijing, the dragon, traditional Chinese medicine, porcelain, the Chinese, silk and giant pandas.

The top ten cultural symbols that Indians consider most representative of China include the Great Wall of China, Chinese food, the dragon, Chinese kung fu, the Forbidden City in Beijing, the Temple of Heaven, Chinese gardens, silk, Chinese language and traditional Chinese medicine.<sup>48</sup>

From this analysis, we can conclude that Chinese cultural symbols are practically the same in the perception of different foreign respondents. In addition, it is important to note that almost all the symbols named in the survey are traditional and do not have modern elements. From this we can conclude that the use of modern digital technologies in shaping the national image of China can further enrich the cultural symbols of China.

However, the study “Top Ten International Communication Stories of Chinese Culture for 2020-2021,” jointly published by China Daily and Dalian Foreign Studies University in September 2021, notes that half of audience contact with Chinese culture is due to new media communication<sup>49</sup>.

Thus, with the help of new media platforms such as Tik-Tok and YouTube, as well as other modern means of communication, modern symbols of Chinese culture are gradually spreading throughout the world. This includes cultural symbols of modern Chinese cities, scientific and technological achievements, commercial brands, contemporary Chinese art, aesthetic symbols, etc. In the open economic and cultural context of the digital age, China is attracting more and more attention to its

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<sup>48</sup> Wang Liya. A preliminary study of the current situation of Chinese cultural symbols in foreign communication // *International Journalism*. 2013. № 35(05). C. 74-83. DOI: 10.13495/j.cnki.cjjc. 2013.05.001.

<sup>49</sup> Top Ten Cases of International Communication of Chinese Culture 2020-2021, <https://cn.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202205/31/WS62958e8ca3101c3ee7ad8156.html> . Date accessed: 25 Oct. 2021.

culture and arts, and these new media platforms play an important role in promoting Chinese culture in the international arena.

### **Conclusions**

The next few decades will be a key period for China's digital development. China's economic development creates better conditions for the development of digital technologies. Thus, China began to lead the world in the development of new media. However, economic development often outpaces the development of cultural and scientific theory, so research on value-based journalism in the digital age is still in the research stage.

Thus, from the structural characteristics of modern Chinese journalism in the digital era, it follows that it is in its infancy, but can still share its experience with other countries. In terms of structural features, the content of Chinese journalism is constantly being enriched. On the one hand, it promotes the development of social management and social economy, on the other hand, it constantly provides new opportunities for disseminating information about China both within the country and abroad.



## **Chapter 2. Problems of modern professional standards in journalism in China**

Changes in the digital age have brought dramatic changes in the way people live, while at the same time changing market needs continue to drive digital innovation.

The use of digital technologies has given rise to a new digital era. When information technologies are widely used in all spheres of people's lives and contribute to the constant development and change of society. The digital age is characterized by the continuous expansion of the application of digital technologies in various fields such as manufacturing, economics, science and technology, culture and society, education and national defense and has brought positive changes in them. Likewise, the digital age has not only changed the lifestyle of people, but also changed the popular culture of society.

Against this background, journalists gradually develop new doubts about the value and meaning of their profession, and their self-identification is in crisis. In the digital age, journalists are losing not only their audience, trust and markets, but also their values.

At the dawn of the digital age, people were hopeful about the future of new media, envisioning its role in empowering citizens and the true liberation and freedom of access to information that could be achieved through new technologies. New media has brought us into a new era where everyone is a journalist and an author. However, the promise of a more democratic society offered by the Internet and new media has not come true. Only rich internet and social media companies such as Tencent and Sina etc. emerged. At the same time, the digital divide has widened further, misinformation has flooded the Internet, and the cost of accessing information for truth and communication has skyrocketed.

With the advent of the digital age, people have become immersed in a deep cult of technology and have become accustomed to pinning their entire future on technological advances. But the many problems that have arisen in reality today tell

us that, despite the development of technology, it seems that relying on it to solve all social problems is still impossible.<sup>50</sup>

When we reconsider the concept of society, we can realize that social science itself is quite chaotic. It is difficult for us to put everything under a general formula.

Through a series of reforms, Chinese media have moved from a propaganda approach based on political management to an approach in which “politicians run newspapers, businesses operate, and conglomerates grow”<sup>51</sup>. In the process of developing conglomerates, Chinese news media have taken the path of conglomeration, and in the process of their development, news media have continued to expand the scale and improve the division of labor to make the news industry better. The development of new media technologies in the digital age has led to a new era of news media in China, which, combined with the unique characteristics of Chinese culture, has led to China becoming a media power.

From a journalist’s perspective, news production is becoming a consumer product of cultural content, and this is leading to faster, more diversified and varied news content.

Modern audiences are no longer passive recipients of news. In the new era, the news audience has become the subject of news communication, and its sense of autonomy and independence is gradually increasing. The change in the means of communication not only created a relationship between the communicator and the audience, but also democratized the development of journalism, as the audience became the decisive force influencing the fate of the media.

This, in turn, has tested the development of Chinese journalism and the way it distributes content.

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<sup>50</sup> Zhang Shisyuan. Problems of modern professional standards in journalism in China // MNCO. 2022. № 3(94). C. 316-318. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/problemy-sovremennyh-professionalnyh-standartov-vzhurnalistike-kitaya> .

<sup>51</sup>Shishi S. On the transformation of news communication and its value orientation in the new era[J]. Journalism Research Guide, 2016, 7(07):104.

China's digital technology is now at the forefront of the world, and China's current news industry will not only face a technical challenge, but also a complex social challenge.

## 2.1. Features of information dissemination in China

With the progress of the economy and society, the level of science and technology is increasing at an accelerated pace, digital technologies have penetrated into all areas of people's activities and lives, and the news industry is no exception. Digital technology requires the news industry to continue to change and evolve, which requires theoretical research into news in the new era to keep up with the times, as well as make appropriate innovations and optimizations according to changes in the current media and news environment.

According to L. Jun, digital journalism has several characteristics: firstly, it is determined by the digital space, that is, it is produced in the conditions of the information and digital era. Secondly, the content of such content is mainly digital and iconic. Thirdly, the semantic content of the content is also important, which has changed noticeably, for example, news in digital journalism should not only truthfully and objectively reflect social reality, but also be publicly available<sup>52</sup>.

Internet access arrived in China in 1984, and China's first Internet media, Shenzhou Xueren (神州学人), appeared in 1995 in the form of emails. By 1999, most Chinese media had moved online, including an online version of the newspaper Renmin Xinwen (人民新闻), which is updated nine times a day. And currently, all Chinese media are predominantly 24-hour, operating 24 hours a day. With the development of Internet technology, historical changes in the distribution of Chinese

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<sup>52</sup> Liang Jun. Exploring digital change and innovation in news editing theory[J]. China Media Technology, 2014 (12): 93.

news can be represented as: “broadcast at a certain time” (in a weekly or daily news broadcast) – “timely” (the frequency of news transmission increases) – “real time”.

Timeliness of news is very important when disseminating it. In the digital era, the process of disseminating information has become easier and faster, which distinguishes digital media from traditional media and ensures instant dissemination of information. This allows the audience to receive information directly from the original source, and the process of accessing information breaks down the boundaries of time and space. This rapid dissemination of information also meets the needs of today’s fast-paced audiences and societal demand.

At the same time, content is presented in a more diverse form. The presentation of news content is an important factor in public acceptance of news and its widespread dissemination. With the support of digital technologies, information can be distributed in the form of text, pictures, animation, audio and video; formats are often combined to form a multimedia product. This approach allows us to provide content of any complexity to the audience in a complete and interesting way. This multimedia approach also helps to captivate the audience.

The traditional method of media communication was one-way mass communication, where the audience existed as a passive recipient of information, and the frequency and time of information transmission was determined by the journalist. Currently, digital technologies are changing not only the means of communication, but also the usual way of disseminating news. The traditional one-way, top-down mode of communication is gradually evolving into a two-way, interactive mode of communication. As a result, audiences in the digital age can participate in the dissemination of information more autonomously.

Online media transforms one-way communication into two-way interaction by enabling timely and effective exchange of information while also providing opportunities for audience feedback. Now everyone can become a creator and distributor of news information.

## 2.2. Transformation of Chinese journalism

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the development of digital technology, various new media have challenged and influenced the living space of many traditional media in China due to their high information transmission efficiency, rich content and two-way communication. Although television news media is still the most popular among Chinese viewers, there is no doubt that new media in the digital age are becoming increasingly popular, changing the existing communication system.

China's social and technological development has brought about significant changes in the journalism industry in the digital age. New media such as social media and video sharing have not only changed the way news is produced, distributed and consumed, but also necessitated a reconsideration of the traditional connotations of journalism in China. In today's dynamic news system in China, many traditional news outlets are realizing the importance of adapting to new conditions and strategically taking advantage of them to consolidate their position in the journalism industry. Thus, research into issues related to the development and adaptation of China's journalism industry to new trends becomes one of the key priorities in this field.

Understanding the characteristics of the digital age, the challenges and the nature of changes in the Chinese journalism industry will help determine ways for the further development of the Chinese journalism industry.

### **The evolution of the spiritual and cultural needs of the Chinese public in the digital era: implications for the development of journalism.**

Traditional media is gradually losing its original power of speech under the influence of the Internet. The rise of digital technology has also meant that the golden age of traditional media has passed.

According to data from the State Radio, Film and Television Administration of China and the National Press and Publication Statistics Network, the number of printed newspapers declined rapidly between 2008 and 2015<sup>53</sup>.

The Internet has not only displaced the market for traditional paper media, but also contributed to the development of new media. With the development of software applications for smartphones, traditional news portals are now also forced to transform. In the era of traditional Internet portals, Sina, Sohu, Netease and FENG were the four major news sites in China. Subsequently, China entered the era of media convergence with “two Wes and one client”<sup>54</sup>(Weibo, WeChat and news clients for mobile devices). Today, Tik-Tok, Kuaishou and several other new short-video services are again beginning to reshape the market, and traditional media is facing another convergence.

The most Important value of journalism Is to disseminate Information to society, but in the face of the constant impact of new media in the digital age, the value of traditional media is waning. In terms of information capacity, newspapers and magazines are limited in area, and radio and television are limited in duration, so there is a limit to the amount of information they can contain. But new digital media presented on the Internet have no limitations in volume and can carry countless amounts of information. Thanks to new technologies, viewers have more options for obtaining information.

Not only print media, but also audiovisual content has undergone transformation. In addition to environmental observation, interpretation and socialization, mass communication also serves an important function, namely entertainment. Compared to newspapers and magazines, television has the advantage of video and sound to

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<sup>53</sup> Based on data from the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television <http://www.gapp.gov.cn/>, National Press and Publication Statistics Website [www.ppsc.gov.cn](http://www.ppsc.gov.cn) and Science and Press Website [www.keyin .cn](http://www.keyin.cn).

<sup>54</sup> Weibo, WeChat and news clients for mobile devices.

provide richer entertainment content. It can be said that one of the successes of television is that in addition to informing, this type of media also aims to entertain. In recent decades, China has made significant strides in socio-economic development, which has led to changes in the needs of the Chinese public. Now, in addition to material wealth, people began to show higher spiritual and cultural needs. In the digital age, the Internet and other new media provide even more entertainment values that can satisfy these needs. Traditional media, at the same time, are beginning to lose their entertainment status and the public is increasingly choosing new media.

According to Maslow's theory, social needs are a reflection of the increased level of needs of the audience. In this regard, the development of digital technology and the emergence of new media that provide a platform for the public to interact with information and establish two-way communication between the communicator and the audience are of great importance in meeting the spiritual and cultural needs of the Chinese public. Therefore, modern Chinese journalism must adapt to new trends and provide the public with a variety of information to meet their needs.

In the wake of digital technology development, China's traditional media is facing challenges: traditional media are gradually declining, while some new ones are beginning to rise. The emergence of more and more news distribution channels means that news is no longer controlled by individual journalistic editorial offices. Although some traditional media are dying out, those that survive inevitably adapt better to the new era. This may be where technology has taken advantage of the market.

### **The state and problems of professional activity of journalists in modern China**

Journalistic values are an important aspect of professional practice, guiding the creation and distribution of news content. Within journalism, values play a significant role in shaping the philosophy and practice of journalistic practitioners,

including core social values, professional values within the industry, and laws and regulations.

With the rapid development of digital technologies, especially online media, the journalistic values and career choices of practicing journalists are unconsciously changing. This is due to the emergence of new forms of information dissemination, changes in search and filtering algorithms, as well as a change in the role of the journalist in the process of creating and distributing news content.

Journalistic ethics is an important aspect of a social phenomenon that belongs to the superstructure of society. A person cannot live in isolation from the group in which he works, and his actions must take into account the interests of other people or groups to which he belongs in order to avoid the emergence of disputes and conflicts. Therefore, as part of journalistic ethics, journalists must be guided by the principles of fairness, impartiality and credibility when creating and disseminating news content. With China's reform of the market economy, the service and entertainment functions of journalism are strengthening, while traditional models of propaganda and management of journalistic organizations are becoming increasingly susceptible to market influences. In the digital age, the value proposition of profit-driven online journalism is becoming increasingly clear.

Based on a statistical and analytical study of the resignations of more than 50 media professionals over a six-year period from 2009, some researchers concluded that the reasons for leaving tend to be related to dissatisfaction with the traditional system, helplessness in the face of new technologies, enormous pressure related to media management and various new opportunities in planning your career<sup>55</sup>.

China is in a period of social transformation in journalism, with a growing awareness of the concept of service and entertainment journalism. The traditional management model of journalism is increasingly being influenced by the market

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<sup>55</sup> Chen Min, Zhang Xiaochun. Farewell to the "golden age" - a content analysis of the resignation letters of 52 traditional media employees [J], News Reporter, 2016 (2): 16.



economy. During China's journalism reform, the professionalism of journalists is often tempted by the commercialization of the market.

In the digital age, the market model of journalism is fundamental, and the catalyst is the development of digital technologies. There are two main stages in the internal process of Chinese journalism: pre-publication, which is controlled by the editorial department, and post-publication, where performance is assessed. As journalism today begins to use corporate governance techniques to produce news content, the audience will be viewed as the "customer," the content as the "product," and the readership as the "market"<sup>56</sup>.

In a market economy, competition and profit have an impact on journalists. Journalists are abandoning professional principles and trading the power of public opinion they wield with interest groups in the marketplace. For example, paid news, paid deletion of posts and online blackmail are all cases that constitute the pursuit of personal gain at the expense of the public interest.

Modern news media, using new technologies, select news for viewers, who, in turn, sell it to advertisers. Currently, Chinese news content on new media platforms is measured by clicks.

A study of the news content production process in China shows that it consists of two main stages: the first is the verification of the news by the editorial department before it is published, the second is the evaluation of the effectiveness of the news after its publication. In addition, there is a relationship between these stages in which the results of the second stage influence the first, and the first stage influences the second next news release.

However, this cyclical process and the desire to increase the amount of news with minimal effort and time, combined with the pursuit of click-through rates, lead to an increasing tendency towards fragmented and emotional news content. Chinese

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<sup>56</sup> John Herbert McManus. *Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware?* April 1994. SAGE Publications, Inc.

journalists working in the modern market context are facing the onslaught of marketization, which is forcing some of them to abandon their professional ethical principles and focus only on satisfying their audience as purveyors of “cultural products”.

In 2003, the Sina Weibo service conducted a survey on the working and living conditions of media workers in China. The study results indicate that about 43% of the million workers in this field do not have an employment contract, work permit or press card. Often these workers were real “migrant journalists”<sup>57</sup>. Professor L. Xiguang, Deputy Dean of the School of Journalism and Communication at Tsinghua University, stated that “in China’s hungry, commercialized news media environment, Chinese journalists are becoming people who work hard every day to earn a living” and “the next generation of journalists in China is becoming “journalistic miners” who lack even basic power”<sup>58</sup>.

Relentless market competition and strong commercial interests have led to the careless management of modern journalists and the lack of adequate professional training for newcomers to the profession. Journalism personnel are motivated by survival pressures and a utilitarian mentality, which has led to a weakening sense of professional ethics among journalists themselves, a dissipation of their sense of the sanctity of journalism, and a decline in the quality of news content.

There are many reasons why journalists in China have ceased to be the “fourth estate” and have become low-paid and often illegal workers. One of these reasons is the significant reduction in professional requirements for those who want to become a journalist in the era of citizen journalism. However, an even more significant factor is that the personality of a journalist is undergoing a psychological transformation

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<sup>57</sup> Luo Jianhua. From “migrant news workers” to “journalists” // *Journalists*. 2007. Vol. 12. P. 38–41.

<sup>58</sup> Li Xiguang: “Journalism in Transition”, Nanfang Daily Press, 2005 edition.

in the current Chinese market, where temptations arise and new income opportunities arise.

With the transformation of a “passive audience” into a “mass with a subjective point of view”, journalism becomes a “tool for expressing emotions”

Once upon a time, audiences had to rely on passive perception of traditional media to receive information. With the rise of self-publishing in the digital age, people have the means to export their own information. Some of these messages are positive and meaningful. These include exporting experiences from a personal perspective; filming and conveying a significant event from a personal point of view, etc.

However, at the same time, as more and more information, becomes available on the Internet, the difficulty of accessing reliable information increases. In this context, viewers begin to prefer to live in a “comfort zone” when receiving information. And therefore, extreme emotions have a better chance of winning over a larger audience. As a result, the Internet and personal publications have become a tool for some people to vent their emotions. For example, competition between different groups in society can quickly lead to irrational emotional outbursts and confrontations online. There have been many cases of “pop-up screen drawing” of malicious video clips and verbal abuse on the Chinese Internet in recent years.

As the French publicist Gustave Le Bon wrote in his book “Psychology of Peoples and Masses”:

*“The crowd never strives for the truth; she turns away from evidence that she does not like, and prefers to worship error, if only this error seduces her. He who knows how to mislead the crowd easily becomes its ruler; whoever strives to reason with her always becomes her victim.”*<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Lebon, Gustave. Psychology of peoples and masses. M.: AST, 2021. P. 228.

## **The impact of the development of media technologies on social culture: the culture of “fandom” in China**

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the “magic bullet” theory arose, according to which the audience was described as passive, difficult to interact with information producers and communicators, irrational and easily manipulated. However, since the early 1960s, this theory has been replaced by the theory of uses and gratifications (Uses and Gratifications). She highlights the enormous role of the audience in communication, emphasizing its ability to actively participate in the communication process and influence its effectiveness.

Before the advent of the Internet in China in 1995, traditional media played a major role in the mass communication of Chinese users wishing to access external information. However, with the development of digital technology, Chinese journalism has undergone significant changes. In the past, mass communication media determined the importance of news events in terms of their size and impact on society as a whole, and set the agenda accordingly. In the digital age, personalized communication has become “the public, universal and essential nature of news”<sup>60</sup>.

Influenced by digital technologies, audiences are experiencing an era of new media that is fragmented, mobile and unlimited. Digital technologies are converging, interacting and surpassing each other – all of which are changing the way we use media. In the modern world, audiences are individualized and seek self-development, challenging the limitations of traditional media. This will largely depend on your own behavior, abilities and mentality. Meanwhile, the characteristics of the audience that simultaneously receives information, searches, engages in communication, and disseminates information will continually change.

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<sup>60</sup> A digital footprint, or digital shadow, is a unique set of traceable digital activities, actions, posts and messages that appear online or on digital devices. Digital footprints can be classified as passive or active. The first type includes user activity in the browser and information stored in cookies. While the term usually applies to an individual, a digital footprint can also refer to a business, organization, or corporation.

New communication technologies bring more experiences to audiences, and the changing role of communication and audiences has led to a decline in the dominance of traditional media. These changes mean the loss of influence of traditional journalism, as well as the loss of jobs for journalists.

An important form of journalism in the digital age is citizen journalism. This model of news collected and published by citizens provides the public with a more independent and broader range of news information, thereby complementing the news published by established media outlets.

Although diversified information sources provide more comprehensive information, the subjective nature of individual news stories and the pervasive nature of information continually reduce the accuracy and reliability of the information. The seeming abundance of information sources in this situation has made it difficult for people to access truly truthful, objective and reliable information.

The interaction of media technologies and social culture is an important object of study, and in this context it becomes obvious that the development of media technologies has influenced the development of social culture. Currently, a new platform for gathering fans has emerged in China, known as fandom culture (from the English word “Fan”), which has emerged along with the development of digital technology and through Internet platforms. Fan groups use digital media as a space for their activities and engage in irrational behavior around celebrity culture. Their value orientations are focused on flow and data, resulting in a perverse form of society where social platforms are operated on a large scale and over-commercialized. Fandoms created by fans around idols take advantage of the low social costs of new media to help idols vote on Weibo, fabricate stories, engage in cyber violence, and unwisely consume artists’ and favorite performers’ merchandise. As a result, “lists of idol values on digital media platforms have become the biggest driver of data-driven fan choice.” On August 27, 2021, the Internet Information Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China issued a notice to

strengthen the management of the chaos caused by “fandoms” as the behavior of fans is too erratic and needs to be controlled<sup>61</sup>.

Although the expression of public sentiment is a reflection of the movement of modern journalism towards democratization, the actions and words of the public are not always rational. The expression of emotions through new media platforms is sometimes not a simple catharsis of emotions, when at certain moments of public opinion the emotions of society are expressed for a specific purpose. For example, people involved in a news event use new media to evoke emotions of sympathy and support among the public. At the same time, thanks to the openness and rapid dissemination of information in the digital age, people participating in many events can easily attract public attention. For this reason, Internet platforms such as Weibo are becoming an important tool for “emotional mobilization” in Chinese society.

E. Goffman, a researcher from the United States, compared human activity with a performance in a theater and analyzed social activity from a theatrical point of view, putting forward the theory of dramaturgy in his book “Self-Presentation in Everyday Life.” This theory views people in society as actors performing on stage. E. Goffman’s theory draws an analogy between the social life of people and the theater, arguing that each person plays a large number of different roles in different social arenas, demonstrating their characteristics in front of each audience. Therefore, the behavior of people in a given environment can be divided into what they do on stage and what they do behind it. New media platforms are new modern presentation tools and performance stages. Modern methods of individual “emotional mobilization” in Chinese new media are: the strategy of vulnerability to grief; strategy for conveying emotions; strategy for sharing emotions, etc.<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> Further fight against chaos "Fan Quan" <http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0828/c1001-32210934.html>  
Access date: 08/28/2021

<sup>62</sup> Bai Shuying, Xiao Benli, Emotional Mobilization of Netizens on Sina Weibo [J], Journal of Lanzhou University (Social Science Press), 2011, 39(05): 60-68. DOI: 10.13885/j.issn.1000-2804.2011. 05.021.

There are several strategies used within this theory.

**Grief Vulnerability Strategy:** The general public tends to be more understanding and helpful towards disadvantaged and sad people. The grief vulnerability strategy builds on this social psychology, using modern media as a platform to achieve the desired “emotional mobilization” effect.

**Emotional distraction strategy:** by changing or diverting people’s attention to achieve the effect of changing public attention.

**Emotional Exchange Strategies:** Through emotional interaction with the audience such as encouragement, praise, etc. to gain support from the audience. This way it is also easy to form certain circles. The “fandom” mentioned in the text is also subject to this type of “emotional mobilization.”

In this regard, the digital age, with its fast, interactive and convenient information, is becoming a platform for the Chinese public to express their will more freely. But at the same time, it can easily become a platform for the outburst of emotions and even create the risk of public opinion getting out of control.

### **The influence of the Internet on the boundaries of journalism.**

In the current era of social media, news and any other information content is no longer a fixed form of product and object of consumption, but is a consumer-led content production and distribution activity related to weather news, historical events and any other developments in the globalization of communication.

This theory can be described by the terms “liquidity” (Liquid Modernity) , which Z. Bauman talks about in his book “Liquid Modernity”. The concepts of “fluidity” and “liquidity”, borrowed from Bauman’s concept, are used to summarize current events in journalism. Fluid journalism is journalism driven by speed, where speed has become the dominant logic of content production in modern media.

This manifests itself in the “liquation” of journalistic identity. In the emerging digital media culture, the user or consumer of news is also a producer of public information. From a “liquation” perspective, the identity and role of journalists are

no longer relatively stable, but rather are characterized by constant switching between professional journalists, citizen journalists and the general public in the process of news production.

The second is the “liquation” of the professional journalistic community. On the one hand, the boundaries between journalistic information and information control are diluting and expanding, and on the other hand, new forms of production and flow of journalistic information are created jointly by professional and non-professional communities in the process of moving from news production to their joint curation, which can change institutionalized power structures traditional journalism.

In China, journalism has both cultural and commodity attributes. Cultural attributes mean that it is based on serving the interests of political parties and society; commodity attributes mean that it comes from the pursuit of economic interests. Journalism is the reporting of the latest facts coming from various regions and resulting from the physical and mental labor of journalists, reduced to undifferentiated human labor.

Under the powerful commercial model of market-oriented digital media, the balance between social public goods and goods is gradually being lost. The advent of the Internet has blurred the boundaries between news and information, rumors and truth, advertising and news content, etc.

In China, since news media editors are not allowed to conduct interviews, they usually edit content by collecting it from other news and information sources. Some editors often change the title of the original article to make the topic more provocative and attract more attention. Some editors ignore the requirements of professional ethics by not indicating the source of information and the author.

In addition, commercial pressures have led to a skew towards news about certain groups of people, including show business stars and the upper class elite, as well as other juicy stories. They drain public resources, neglect vulnerable groups and forget the public nature of news.



Thus, the task of journalists today is not simply to “refuse hedonism” or “restore morality”, but to rethink the meaning and content of news and what the values of journalists should be<sup>63</sup>.

### **2.3. Commercialism of Chinese journalism**

#### **Inaccuracies in the content of journalistic material.**

A study of US college students' media consumption published in October 2018 found that nearly half of US college students were not confident in identifying fake news on social media, and 36% said the threat posed by misinformation made them unable to trust the media 45% are unsure whether they can identify news as true or false, and only 14% are confident they can identify fake news<sup>64</sup>.

Distortion of news content resulting from fake news. Since 2001, Journalism Review has established an "Annual News Study Panel" that selects the "Top Ten Fake News of the Year" as a sample for statistical analysis to study the characteristics and rules of fake news production.<sup>65</sup> Years of research have shown that fake news often comes from highly marketized media that do not hesitate to abandon their professional ethics in exchange for economic gain, while government and party media, through a relatively standardized news production process, monopolize information sources party and government sectors, and the amount of fake news is much less than that of commercial media. С точки зрения содержания новостей, современные китайские фейковые новости имеют следующие характеристики:

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<sup>63</sup> Wu Guanjun. The main thing is the restoration of media values [EB/OL]. Observer.com.

<sup>64</sup> Chen, Y., Conroy, N. J., & Rubin, V. L., “News in an Online World: The Need for an 'Automatic Crap Detector'” In The Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology Annual Meeting (ASIST2015) (St. Louis. Nov. 6-10, 2015).

<sup>65</sup> Annual Fake News Research Group, Bai Hongyi, Cao Shiyue, Chen Bing. 2020 Fake News Research Report[J]. Journalist, 2021. No. 01. pp. 23–37.

1. The selection of fake news often involves the use of topics of primary interest to people, such as emergencies, food and drug information, social news, economic news. News about current events is relatively less likely to be fake because it is subject to greater scrutiny.

2. The narrative text of fake news is often interspersed with fragments of real news, blurring the interpretation of false elements. Celebrities with high social status or people from professional fields are also used to endorse false pieces of content. The narrative and interest in the news is also reinforced through exaggeration, alarmist statements and fabrications to attract attention.

3. Fake news often does not have a specific author, and also refers to hidden sources, often they distort the true meaning of what the interviewee said.

4. There are also certain research difficulties in studying fake news in modern China: for example, the current Chinese audience has not formed a reasonable perception of the criteria for identifying fake news. In addition, the Chinese audience does not share classic fake news and news that appears as a result of someone else's delusion. This is due to what we talked about above - the degree of verification of sources in the Chinese media is not yet so high.

Of course, one of the main challenges for journalism today is the need to compete for traffic and audience attention. However, this leads to a number of problems with the accuracy of expression in news language. For example, there is often a discrepancy between the style of news and its content, when the news headline is used in an exaggerated or very one-sided manner, which can lead to misrepresentation of the facts. Additionally, the overuse of colorful epithets to attract viewers to news headlines is also a common problem. In turn, this can result in news that receives a lot of attention but does not reflect the real events and issues that are in the public eye. Violations of ethical standards in photography, including falsification of images, are also unacceptable and can have serious consequences for audience trust in the news.

With the rapid development of Internet technologies and social media, news producers and information dissemination channels are becoming increasingly diverse and dynamic. This raises a number of new problems related to news misconduct, such as the spread of false and inaccurate news, the increasing number of anonymous sources, unfounded accusations, etc. The crisis of information reliability, associated with the negative impact of fake news on public opinion and decision-making, is of unprecedented proportions, requiring immediate action by social and government institutions to ensure quality and reliable information.

Analyzing existing algorithms for information distribution based on unsupervised clustering, it should be noted that they have a number of limitations and cannot guarantee an optimal solution to a complex problem. The disadvantages of algorithms are their inability to correctly process unstructured data, as well as the possibility of accumulation of entropy materials, which can lead to a decrease in the reliability of information.

However, an even more significant factor limiting the use of machine participation algorithms in the dissemination of information is their dependence on software, which cannot be adapted to each specific situation. Even the most advanced algorithmic systems can be biased in their decisions due to the limitations of established models.

Thus, the full involvement of artificial intelligence technologies in the process of information dissemination may lead to the emergence of various factors that adversely affect the presentation of truthful news. It is necessary to continue research into the development of new algorithms and technologies that can eliminate existing limitations and provide more accurate information distribution<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup>Chen Changfeng, Shiwen, Intelligent News Verification Technology: Algorithms, Logic and Constraints[J], University of Journalism, 2018, No. 152(06):42-49+148.

### **Journalist misconduct.**

In the process of disseminating information, people are inevitably influenced by the ideology of their surroundings, and at the same time, China is firmly on the path of marketization, greatly underestimating the influence of capitalism on journalism in modern Chinese society.

In the past, most traditional news organizations in China relied on government revenue to guarantee income for their employees. In 2003, China's Propaganda Department carried out a reform that retained the central newspapers People's Daily, Guangming Daily and Economic Daily, as well as the magazine Qiushi, known as "three newspapers and one magazine". All other newspapers and magazines at the central level, as well as newspapers from various industries and regions of the country, changed their leadership, and their management was transferred to legal entities created under the control of the government. Likewise, at the provincial level, only one provincial body remains, and all other newspapers and magazines have been separated from government departments and become corporate property.

Against this backdrop, a large number of editorial staff appeared in China, receiving salaries on an honorarium basis without the social guarantees afforded to full-time employees. China's market reform is replacing journalists in news agencies with more "peasant journalists", or nonngmingunu in Chinese terminology. At the same time, the economic development of Chinese society has made it more and more expensive to live in the city. Journalists who previously worked on investigations and high-profile publications about the social sphere of China have today turned into illegal workers, without social and other guarantees.

Meanwhile, with the rise of citizen journalism, some traditional media workers have moved from editorial work to creating their own personal new media platforms, a trend dubbed "KOL."

When the term "KOL" first became known, it was mainly used to refer to a group of visually attractive models who shared aesthetic photos, showed off a well-

groomed appearance, and posted photos of their outfits and makeup. An aesthetic image attracts hundreds of thousands or even millions of followers, making the creators of this content more visible and influential on social networks than many cultural celebrities, and even more influential than many social media accounts.

To expand their ability to monetize their own content, these Internet users expanded their activities and took over some stores on Taobao, with such sales reportedly reaching 100 million yuan. The fame and fortune they display actually encourages many to follow and imitate them.

Subsequently, online celebrities of various types began to appear. On the one hand, they are content producers, providing the public with video, photographs or textual content, and on the other hand, they form loosely connected communities through their influence. Because of the economic value that such celebrities can represent, some commercial organizations have begun to purposefully "create" them and direct them to participate in commercial activities. This has led to a number of undesirable phenomena, such as false advertising of products and poor quality efforts to attract attention.

As China's younger generation increasingly uses digital devices, KOL in Chinese journalism will continue to exist for a long time. The brokers, operations teams and commercial conversion teams that will emerge from these new information producers will form a new orderly large-scale chain in the market economy. The implications of this new communication culture are manifold.

Journalism in the digital age must be sensitive to the values of information content on the Internet, as well as the ethical calibration of their business models.

In this way, we will be able to help people in the information society, where the media is becoming increasingly decentralized and flattened, and society is increasingly stratified, so that mainstream values and good cultural content are distributed adequately and effectively, creating a healthy cultural industry

environment and information dissemination system, beneficial to the minds of all members of society.

### **Unofficial news channels for disseminating information.**

News aggregators, such as websites or news apps, are a new type of information content providers that typically receive information streams from the Internet and that process and integrate the information once it is received. In the era of news portals, news from traditional media was aggregated by portals: In the era of mobile social media, news from traditional media and portals is aggregated by news aggregator sites or apps. The news content production model has changed from PGC (Professionally Generated Content) to AAC (Algorithmically Generated Content).

In March 2014, New Beijing News began issuing warnings and publicly exposing new media (including websites, mobile clients, official microblogging platforms and WeChat, etc.) that use content produced by New Beijing News without permissions. As of August 2019, 59 issues of such messages have been published<sup>67</sup>.

In today's digital age, news aggregators play a significant role in changing the news production process and the media system. They improve the efficiency of distribution of news content and have a great influence on traditional news media. One example of such influence is Toutiao, which has raised serious concerns about copyright issues. Toutiao's mode of operation is to collect traffic, which is then transformed into economic income through recommended media. In addition, Toutiao is based on the free collection of quality content from traditional media, which has sparked controversy over online content rights and the unclear regulatory status of journalism in the digital age.

The Chinese government is responding to such problems and developing strategies to address the problem of content theft in the digital age. In this context,

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<sup>67</sup> Xinjing News Anti-Violation Bulletin. Vol. 59. URL: <https://m.bjnews.com.cn/detail/156514375014221.html>. Access date: 12/1/2020.

on April 17, 2015, the National Copyright Administration of China issued the “Notice on the Regulation of Online Reproduction Copyright Issues,” which means effectively regulating the protection of online reproduction copyright issues. However, protecting the rights to news content in the digital age remains a very difficult task, and there is still a long way to go to effectively regulate copyright issues of news content on the Internet.

News media in the digital age often use big data analytics in an attempt to study user behavior patterns and analyze their content needs in order to achieve an accurate determination of the interests of each viewer in order to increase user loyalty.

And the use of native advertising through commercial marketplaces is currently the main advertising model on websites and mobile applications.

Native advertising is a way to blur the line between advertising and news information without disrupting the user's “experience” and hide advertising within news information. This misleads the user into believing that the information is news and not a marketing offer. In terms of content, native advertising provides users with content that interests them; at the same time, in terms of ad format, it matches the content of the news story and fits more naturally into the user's use case.

Native advertising in its form blurs the boundaries between advertising and journalism. Although it goes some way to reconciling the need to inform the public with the demands of advertising, it does so at the expense of ethical journalism. For the general public, on the one hand, there is a risk of leaking personal information about everyone; at the same time, some viewers tend to perceive advertising as news, which is detrimental to mainstream journalism. In the long term, the digital commercialization model will further erode trust in journalism.

**A cost-effectiveness model for journalism in the digital age: creating a new “information cocoon.”**

When a user uses a social media account, numerous pieces of information about him (for example, the brand of mobile phone; the people he follows; information

about his friends; personal preferences, etc.) are accumulated and presented in the form of a large number of tags, inside information system. Based on this series of tags, the media recommends information to the user, constantly improving the algorithm to offer its audience optimized content based on the user's reading traces, including what news topics they selected and clicked on, how long they stayed on the page, what they shared, etc. d. As the number and frequency of use by users increases, the system will more clearly identify the interests of users, thereby making the presentation of news information more intelligent and interesting to the user.

Although people are satisfied with the convenience that artificial intelligence technology brings to their lives, there are also certain hidden dangers. On the one hand, the privacy of users is violated, on the other hand, they find themselves deeper and deeper in the “information cocoon”.

The concept of the “information cocoon” was developed by the American scientist Cass R. Sunstein in his monograph “Infotopia: How Many Minds Produce Knowledge.” In this study, the author proposes to consider the viewer and the technology of presenting content as a cocoon and a silkworm: in an intelligent information algorithm, the viewer can be caught in a cocoon, like a silkworm. This occurs because the public's perception of its own information needs is incomplete and irrational, and viewers tend to settle on the information that interests them. In the long term, digital technology has enabled the public service journalism industry, which is public by nature, to enclose the public in its own “information cocoon.” Although people share a common means of accessing information, digital technology has widened the divide between people.

In fact, digital technologies respond to the individual needs and values of the user by writing algorithms. This makes it commercially possible to make countless users dependent on the software. As for providing viewers with diverse, high-quality and rational information, in the digital era this does not bring either commercial



income or investment and, naturally, does not become the main goal of the company's development.

### **Measures taken by the Chinese government.**

There are two sides to any technology, and while people enjoy the convenience of new technologies, they must also be aware of the impact technology has on society and actively develop appropriate controls. China is also actively applying a number of rules to the use of digital technologies.

On the one hand, in order to reduce the restrictions on the Internet industry caused by the network effect, the Chinese market is trying to create a good development environment with the participation of the government to maintain market fairness. On the one hand, the government sets certain restrictions on market competition on the Internet to promote a favorable development environment. At the same time, the government is actively building a digital public service platform for resource sharing or building key facilities.

On the other hand, to protect the legitimate rights and interests of news content consumers, and to develop standardized laws and regulations.

In 2015, Xi Jinping suggested at the opening ceremony of the Second World Internet Conference that the Internet is not an outlaw place. Cyberspace is virtual, but the entities that use it are real, and all must abide by the law and define the rights and responsibilities of all parties.

In April 2018, the "Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Heroes and Martyrs" was introduced. Subsequently, during the Muli forest fire in Liangshan, Sichuan in 2019, some users of Internet platforms were detained for insulting the deceased firefighters.

Meanwhile, the State Internet Information Administration of the People's Republic of China conducted a series of special operations called "Qinglan". The term "Qinglang" comes from the meaning of "making the sky clear" in cyberspace. These operations are mainly directed against the use of the Internet for the

dissemination of illegal information. 2016 saw a number of initiatives, such as "targeted fixes for apps with children and teenagers as users" and the Chinese government's internet governance efforts to reduce the amount of unhealthy information online<sup>68</sup>.

There are "special measures to combat cloud storage for the dissemination of illegal information" and "special policies regarding illegal WeChat public accounts." By the end of 2016, a total of 1.045 million accounts, 1.29 million spaces and groups disseminating obscene, pornographic and violent information had been closed, and more than 2,000 illegal websites had been closed.

On the one hand, in order to reduce the barriers to the Internet industry formed by the network effect, the Chinese market is trying to create a good development environment with government intervention to maintain market fairness. On the one hand, the government sets certain restrictions on market competition on the Internet to promote a favorable development environment. At the same time, the government is actively building a digital public service platform for resource sharing or building key facilities.

On the market side, interconnected companies are also being reformed and regulated.

The government responded to the phenomenon of monopoly of Internet platforms with strict regulation and new restrictions on the scope of their activities. The government continues to step up regulation of internet companies, making 2021 the busiest year for antitrust enforcement in China. Alibaba was fined 18.228 billion yuan for abusing its dominant market position; Tencent was fined 6 million yuan in 2022. The Chinese government's strict regulation of Internet platforms, from legislation to enforcement, effectively regulates the news market in the new era,

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<sup>68</sup> In 2016, the State Internet Information Administration conducted a series of special operations called "Qinglang" aimed at solving persistent problems on the Internet and creating a permanent deterrent. URL: [http://www.cac.gov.cn/2016-11/25/c\\_1119991081.htm?agt=269%5Cx26amp;qq-pf-to](http://www.cac.gov.cn/2016-11/25/c_1119991081.htm?agt=269%5Cx26amp;qq-pf-to) . Access date: 11.2.2021.

thereby striking a more reasonable balance between press freedom and press supervision.

Some media outlets have a large user base and can easily lead to serious consequences if they provide poor quality information. Therefore, it is necessary to create a new model for monitoring platforms between companies and the market, as well as between the media and the public. This is done by classifying all types of information on the Internet and new media and establishing reasonable monitoring.

In order to more effectively use Internet technology in Chinese society, as well as promote the healthy development of social information culture, on the one hand, the Chinese government provides legal regulation through legislation and national policies, such as the Standing Committee of the 12th National People's Congress Convocation at its 24th meeting in November 2017 adopted the Network Security Law of the People's Republic of China, which clearly states that network operators must fulfill obligations to protect cybersecurity, accept government supervision and bear social responsibility. On the other hand, various Chinese industry associations, NGOs and other third parties have also become the main social oversight body of Chinese digital enterprises, for example: in 2020, the Internet Development Institute of Beijing Normal University and five other departments jointly released a Research Report on the Corporate Social Responsibility of the Chinese Internet for 2020; In 2021, the 13th Annual China Corporate Social Responsibility Conference released the Chinese Internet Industry Social Responsibility Monitoring Report (2020-2021). 2020-2021) to evaluate and reveal the development status, development problems and development trends of digital CSR in China.

In addition, digital technologies provide society with richer information resources, guiding it to more easily enjoy the conveniences that digital technologies bring to everyone. For example, wider acceptance of various information. Media platforms that lead to learning for everyone in society, university catechisms, etc.

The issue of value orientation of Chinese journalism in the digital era is a phenomenon of change from external to internal, which is also deeply related to Chinese journalism in the context of economic reform.

Based on external objective factors, it seems that there are certain elements in the Chinese journalism system that have not adapted to the digital age.

On the one hand, professional Chinese journalism places too much emphasis on cultural and political attributes. On the other hand, given the many challenges of the digital age, there is a need for more timely laws to regulate and complement China's existing laws and regulations, which tend to restrict and limit news distributors rather than protect them.

### **Conclusions**

From internal motivation it follows that the value orientation of journalists in the digital era is lost by itself.

The value orientation of Chinese journalists was accompanied by three stages of history: the period when the Chinese intelligentsia was dominated by values associated with publishing newspapers to educate the people, opposing feudalism and calls for national liberation; the period after 1949, when journalism served as the “mouthpiece” of the Chinese government and party; and a sense of freedom influenced by the spirit of Western commercial journalism after the introduction of reform and opening up in China.

Currently, Chinese journalism is undergoing a rapid transition to the digital age, and the traditional propaganda model is increasingly influenced by the idea of a market economy. Amid these changes in journalism, commercial competition and profit have again and again forced the souls of journalists to choose between money and ethics.

On the one hand, the gradual monopoly of large Internet platforms in recent years has made news distributors worry about capital and power; on the other hand,

dependence on artificial intelligence algorithms has led to changes in the way news is produced, which in turn has led to changes in the social responsibility of journalists.

The most important internal reason is that profit becomes the new paradigm of journalism: when the reader or viewer is perceived as a “customer,” news also begins to be viewed as a “commodity.” With a market focus, audience, content and circulation are gradually transformed into more commercial concepts – consumer, product and market.

### **Chapter 3. Analysis of the evolution of the value orientation of Chinese journalism in the context of digital reform**

With the rapid development of science and technology in China in recent years, the new concept of digital journalism has become widespread and has become the object of research in journalism theory. The impact of digital technology and changing attitudes and practices of news production in the new era have resulted in original theoretical concepts showing a tendency to fail to adapt to technological developments and environmental changes. In this regard, it is relevant to study innovative approaches in the theory of journalism based on the development of the digital era, which can help journalists effectively adapt to new challenges and opportunities.

Digital technologies have changed the way information is produced and disseminated in society, and have also challenged the traditional understanding of journalistic research.

In recent years, Chinese journalism research has kept pace with international research and played an increasingly important role in digital journalism theory research. This study attempts to review the concept of Chinese journalism and analyze the development trend of digital journalism in China by examining the changing understanding of the concept of digital journalism and its development characteristics.

People derive the concept of value from external production relations that fulfil their needs. Therefore, it can be said that value is meant for people and that it can only be seen in the society of people and in cultural creativity. Journalistic value puts more emphasis on the practical value of journalists to society. The value orientation of Chinese journalism comes from Chinese national culture, national tradition and

real environment, which together form the basis of the value system of journalism with Chinese characteristics.

That is why, on the one hand, Chinese Confucian culture has an important influence on the professional value orientations of all segments of society in modern China.

As the education level of modern Chinese grows, the spirit of the ancient Chinese intellectual class has an increasing influence on modern Chinese. Among them, the concepts of "scholar" and "gentleman" are the most important in the culture of ancient Chinese schooling. In traditional Chinese society, "scholar" represented the elite class of the real society and was respected by the society. Many of the values of the elite in modern Chinese society are inherited from the spirit of the "scholar". This has influenced both the political culture of China and the choices and mentality of various leaders of Chinese enterprises and organisations. For example, according to one famous Chinese historian, the Chinese tradition is that the choice of opinion does not depend on the majority as in the Western so-called democratic spirit. Instead, the Chinese tradition is to appeal to the wise. If there is a wise man, the opinion of that one person will be accepted, and if both are wise, it will depend on the opinion of the majority. "Sage" is quality, "many" is quantity, and in Chinese personnel organisations quality is more important than quantity. A "gentleman" is the highest moral class in any profession in Chinese society, and these people are usually characterised by intelligence, morality and loyalty. These standards have been followed by the Chinese since ancient times. In modern Chinese society, "scholar" and "gentleman" have influenced the values of many important professions in China. Some of these attitudes are potentially socially acceptable, such as the old Chinese saying, "A gentleman loves money and takes it the right way." This is familiar to all Chinese today. It means that money is something everyone strives for, but it must be obtained in a reasonable way.

On the other hand, the values of modern Chinese journalism have been shaped by Marx's views on journalism and continue to be inherited and developed in the new era according to China's national conditions. The Communist Party of China (CPC) has continuously studied the journalistic ideas of Marx-Engels and Lenin, accumulated rich experience in using the media to guide the armed struggle, the construction of basic regimes, socialist revolution and construction, and the cause of reform and opening up, and established the "Xi Jinping's View on Journalism in the New Era", the theoretical system of modern Marxist journalism. According to these values, Chinese news should focus on the political direction as the first priority, while insisting that news is a medium that serves the people. Some Chinese scholars have summarised Xi Jinping's concept of journalism in the new era as the dialectical unity between the basic principles of Marxism and China's real work combined with the beautiful traditional Chinese culture; the dialectical unity between the creation of the theory of socialist journalism with Chinese characteristics and the time of journalism; the dialectical unity between the ideology of journalism of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and its innovativeness<sup>69</sup>.

According to the book *Four Theories of the Press*, the Chinese communication system falls into the category of "authoritarianism". But China defines itself as socialist values with Chinese specificity.

There are some differences between the values of Chinese and Western journalism, which are determined by political, economic and cultural factors in China and the West. Among them, Chinese Confucian morality and modern socialist factors have a great influence on the value orientations of Chinese journalism.

In the digital age, the speed of media renewal is accelerating, which will lead to changes in journalistic practitioners' willingness to work and professional ethics. This is because changes in technological productivity have led to huge changes in

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<sup>69</sup> Zheng Defeng, Zheng Quan. Development process, main characteristics and ideological disclosure of Sinicization and modernization of the Marxist concept of journalism // *Contemporary Communication*. 2023. Vol. 4. P. 4–11.



the superstructure of the Chinese journalism industry, and a large number of past journalists have had to start finding new ways of working to adapt to the new changes in society.

With the development of digital technology, the future of Chinese journalism will become more diverse and democratisation will become more democratic. All this is influenced by the objective environment. On the one hand, it is due to the fact that information dissemination in the digital environment has the character of one-way propaganda with the mutual spread of information influence; on the other hand, it is accompanied by China's long-term political reforms in the past four decades, economic opening up, cultural diversity policy, and the significant improvement in the education level of Chinese people after China's education reform.

Of course, there is some basic consensus on the news values of different countries in the world, for example, "the basic views of the journalistic community in the East and West agree that news is the reporting of facts, and news should strive for truthfulness, objectivity, completeness and fairness", but these common levels of news values, when realised in the news values of a certain country, nation or group, will not have the same connotation. However, when these common journalistic values are realised in the journalistic values of a particular country, nation or group, their connotation changes to a greater or lesser degree. Historically, Chinese journalistic practice has deeply reflected and revised these concepts, or to be precise, the Chinese press has critically embraced them. Thus, in the West, truth, freedom and objectivity - the basis of journalistic professionalism - are at the centre of journalistic values, but in China they give way to the values of "communication" and "indoctrination". In China, these concepts are secondary to the values of "communication" and "indoctrination". In China, these concepts have undergone a process of localisation and these values are known as socialist values with Chinese characteristics.

The ideology of Chinese journalism that "news is the mouthpiece of the party" is different from the spirit of Western journalism. Therefore, the authors summarise the discourses on journalistic values in the official media and combine them with the Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists, which was enacted by the China Journalists Association (CJA). This will help explain the changes in the value orientation of Chinese journalism hidden behind social progress.

Looking back at the history of the formation of this characteristic value system of journalism, it can be seen that it is the result of the logical and natural development of history and is constantly enriched and sublimated in the course of practice. An important reason why Chinese news value orientation has gained popularity among the public is that Chinese culture attaches great importance to historical experience and historical laws. China's historical practice has proved that the news value system with Chinese characteristics guides news practice, and the activities of news practice with Chinese characteristics enrich the news value system.

### **3.1. Formation of the concept of “digital journalism” in China**

Digital journalism is a form of journalism in which news content is distributed via the Internet, the main information text can be accompanied by various images, photos and videos. At the same time, photos and video images can act as independent news content. Compared to traditional journalism, digital journalism is a special form of communication in the new media era that has developed with the advent of the digital society. As a form of combination of digital technologies and journalism, digital journalism has enriched the methods and means of traditional news communication, and also introduced many new directions and ideas into the field of journalism theory research.

Although journalism research often focuses on the form of inquiry as a whole, with the advent of the digital age, specific news styles such as data journalism, algorithmic journalism, and multimedia journalism have already begun to become

the everyday work of journalists. Overall, it seems that the study of digital journalism in China has been accompanied by technological upgrades, and its nomenclature has passed through “online journalism,” “convergent journalism,” and “digital journalism.”

The world's first digital news appeared in the UK in the 1970s in the form of teletext - a method of transmitting information using a television set sending data through a broadcast signal to display text and graphics. In China, before 1987, the number of people who owned televisions exceeded 100 million. Considering the demographic and social situation in China, it is only natural that digital journalism research in China started relatively late.

The term “online journalism” emerged in the 1990s, when China was under the influence of the global Internet and the way journalism was distributed and the way information was obtained was undergoing massive innovation. Initially, the concept was analyzed and explained mainly in terms of the dissemination and reception of information, and the main research during this period was devoted to describing and analyzing the new characteristics of journalism. Research in online journalism has argued, on the one hand, that new technologies will forever change the way viewers interact with news content, and on the other hand, that a new paradigm will emerge between those who distribute news content and its producers. Thus, the concept of “online journalism” most often focuses on the “practice of journalism.”

The concept of “convergent journalism” first appeared in S. Queen's book “Convergent Journalism: The Fundamentals of Multimedia Reporting” in 2006. Convergent journalism is considered, on the one hand, as a combination of all channels of news dissemination at this stage, and on the other hand, as the formation of the form of a new journalistic institution. Thanks to the integration of platforms such as television, newspapers and the Internet, the distribution of news content is moving in multimedia and cross-media directions. However, in the process of convergence and the relationship between different media, the cultural integration

of different news organizations, the experiences and emotions of journalists, external political and economic factors have become dilemmas in the development of the convergent phase of media.

The concept of “digital journalism” is widely discussed in China today. With the advent of the Internet and mobile platforms, traditional printed content no longer meets the needs of audiences, and as a result, interactive and multimedia hypertext content has become the main means of disseminating information. However, the term “digital news” is often confused with the term “online news.” Around 2010, the concept of “digital media” gained a better understanding due to advances in digital technology in China and rich practical and research experience.

The essence of digital journalism consists of the words “journalism” and “digital”. Its legitimacy as a new paradigm is reflected in its new potential as a journalistic discipline, namely sensitivity to context, general relevance, comparative trends and normative awareness<sup>70</sup>.

As a result of extensive research and analysis, Chinese scholars have characterized the modern concept of digital journalism as follows.

First, digital news is news created using various digital information technologies and techniques.

Second, digital news production actors represent a rich variety of formats.

Third, the distribution and reception of digital news is carried out mainly through the Internet and interactive text and digital terminals.

Fourth, digital news represents the characteristics of cross-media and hypertextuality in a form of communication.

Fifth, digital news culture is based on diffuse information sharing and interpersonal social networking.

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<sup>70</sup> Sue Robinson, Seth C. Lewis & Matt Carlson (2019) Locating the “Digital” in Digital Journalism Studies: Transformations in Research, *Digital Journalism*, 7:3, 368-377, DOI: [10.1080/21670811.2018.1557537](https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2018.1557537)

We can say that digital journalism is a theoretical knowledge system with holistic characteristics. Chinese journalism researchers have actively incorporated the systemic concept of digital media and the latest concepts of journalism from around the world, and have rethought and developed the original epistemology and methodology of journalism. The result is a socialist theory of journalism with Chinese characteristics, which is normative and critical.

### **Digital journalism in the Marxist view of journalism.**

The socialist theory of journalism with Chinese characteristics stems from the Marxist-Leninist doctrine of press and the teachings of Mao Zedong, from the socialist theoretical system with Chinese characteristics, and through the mastery of the achievements of advanced human journalistic thought and culture.

Journalism and journalism under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party have always been an important part of the development of the Party and the state, and have played an important role in different periods of history. It was in this process that a theoretical system of journalism with Chinese characteristics was gradually created and developed. Especially after the 18th Party Congress, the theory system of socialist journalism with Chinese characteristics has been innovative and developed through the process of inheriting tradition.

On the one hand, a system of journalism theory with a more Chinese subjectivity is being created. The intertwining and overlapping of China's social transformation and the digital revolution represented by the Internet has created a number of serious issues that need to be unpacked and explained. On the one hand, to create a theoretical system of journalism with more Chinese subjectivity. The digital revolution and with it, social changes in China are intertwined and overlapping, creating a number of serious problems that need to be explained and resolved. Socialist journalism theory with Chinese characteristics should focus on solving the main pressing problems in journalistic practice, and propose new theoretical ideas,

perspectives and methods in order to better understand the activities of journalism in the Internet environment.

On the other hand, enhance cultural loyalty to the study of socialist journalism with Chinese characteristics. The 5,000-year history of Chinese civilization has given Chinese journalism unique cultural genes and traditions.

In the 100 years since the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, propaganda, ideology, news and public opinion under the leadership of the Party have integrated the general principles of Marxism with the reality of China, creating journalism with Chinese characteristics.

Since China's reform and opening up, the structure of China's journalism industry has undergone profound changes. With the development of the Internet, digital technologies and the construction of a networked society, she has acquired a unique experience and style.

Philosophical and social research is often informed by historical, contemporary and local contexts. The study of socialist journalism with Chinese characteristics should draw on rich history and current reality, enhance theoretical self-awareness, and, in the process of building a dialogue with tradition and current reality, reflect Chinese characteristics and propose unique Chinese solutions in terms of epistemology, value theory and methodology<sup>71</sup>.

Classical Marxism is the source of the theoretical ideas that make up the study of digital journalism and provides new developments in labor theory, surplus value theory, methods of class analysis and cultural industry theory in the digital age. Although digital technology has brought enormous changes to society, the principle of human character as an important theoretical connotation of the Marxist news concept has not changed. Digital technology has become a new medium that reflects people's thoughts and can speak on their behalf. At the same time, the Marxist

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<sup>71</sup> Promoting the innovative development of socialist journalism with Chinese characteristics <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2021/1116/c40531-32283186.html> Access date: 11/16/2021

ideology of the Internet era, which emphasizes the unity of the party spirit and the spirit of the people, has led to new innovations in the practice of Chinese journalism. It can be said that the development of journalism in the digital era is also becoming an important platform for the construction of China's socialist culture and a new space for the spiritual and cultural life of the people. For example, researchers are exploring how to make full use of new media technologies in news production to integrate the study of mass social psychology into the dissemination of mainstream ideology.

### **Journalism education in China in the digital age.**

There are many research results on journalism education in the digital era in China, which mainly reflect: responding to the trend of media convergence, cultivating journalistic talents in the new era by integrating science and technology research methods such as computational science and information science. On the other hand, reflecting on the possible value orientation of journalism education influenced by digital technologies, for example, some scholars have suggested that journalism education in the digital age cannot abandon the traditional journalistic values that underlie journalism ethics<sup>72</sup>. Other scientists believe that journalism, born in industrial civilization, must meet the needs of a post-industrial society and information society<sup>73</sup>.

In addition, control and management of news has always been a tradition in Chinese journalism. The advent of the digital age has challenged the traditional model and the original system of news regulation. However, with the practice of news management, new research has emerged in the field of news management in

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<sup>72</sup> Hu Decai. The concept and path of training journalistic communication talents in the era of media convergence // University of Journalism. 2015. No. 5. pp. 119–125.

<sup>73</sup> Wang Runjie, 2020. Challenges to Journalism and Changes in Journalism Education [J]. China Publishing (14): 10 - 14.

the digital age. They include research and specific management decisions on news fraud issues such as online rumors, false reports and social media hype. All these studies reflect the new characteristics of Chinese digital journalism and contribute to the new development of journalism in the digital era in China.

### **Creating a value system in Chinese journalism.**

Controlling and managing news has always been a tradition in Chinese journalism. The advent of the digital age has challenged the traditional model and the original system of news regulation. However, with the practice of news management, new research has emerged in the field of news management in the digital age. They include research and specific management solutions to news misconduct issues. All these studies reflect the new characteristics of Chinese digital journalism and promote a new round of journalism development in the digital era in China.

### **Legal concept of journalistic values.**

The development of journalism in China is determined by the Constitution. Article 27 of the Constitution states that “all state bodies and civil servants must rely on the support of the people”; Article 35 of the Constitution states that "citizens of the People's Republic of China have freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, procession and demonstration."

In addition to the Constitution and laws, China's departmental and local regulations define the authority to supervise public opinion regarding the press. Temporary Rules for the Administration of Newspapers, issued by the General Administration of Press and Publication in December 1990, require newspapers to “reflect the opinions and suggestions of the people and perform the function of monitoring public opinion.” This was the first time that public opinion control was mentioned in the regulations of a Chinese government department, and after 2000, the authority to control public opinion began to be delegated throughout China.

Compared to the West, China was late in developing journalistic ethics, but



several documents had already been developed to regulate professional ethics in journalism, for example, the Code for Journalists was promulgated in 1981 (a draft for trial use).

In 1987, the All-China Journalists Association published a draft Code of Professional Ethics for Chinese Journalists.

Officially, the Code of Professional Ethics for Chinese Journalists was adopted and published by the Chinese Journalists Association in 1991. This document became the first unified and nationally applicable professional code of ethics for journalists after the founding of the People's Republic of China.

In 1994, the Code of Professional Ethics for Chinese Journalists was revised. It added a provision on “protection of the legitimate rights and interests of journalists.”

In 1997, the Code of Professional Ethics for Chinese Journalists was again revised, its principle of "public benefit as the supreme principle" was changed to "upholding the correct orientation of public opinion." Additionally, “upholding the principle of objectivity and impartiality” and “promoting international friendship and cooperation” were paired with “ensuring the truthfulness of news” and “promoting the spirit of solidarity and cooperation,” respectively.

Thus, amendments to the Code of Professional Ethics for Chinese Journalists have been made several times: in April 1994, January 1997, November 2009 and November 2019.

In 1997, the China Journalists Association issued a statement calling for the establishment of a system of public oversight of journalists (“建立新闻工作者接受社会监督制度”). In the same year, the Ministry of Propaganda, the Ministry of Radio, Film and Television, the General Administration of Press and Publication, and the China Journalists Association jointly promulgated “Some Provisions on the Prohibition of Paid News” (“关于禁止有偿新闻的若干规定”).

In 2003, the People's Daily of China, Xinhua News Agency, Quyi Magazine, Guangming Daily, Economic Daily, Central Radio and Television Station and China

Central Television Station jointly formulated the "Self-Discipline Convention on Promoting Professional Spirit, Maintaining Professional Ethics and Preserving the Image of the Team" ("“弘扬职业精神、恪守职业道德、维护队伍形象”自律公约”).

In 2005, the Ministry of Propaganda, the General Administration of Radio, Film and Television, and the Office of Press and Publication jointly issued the “Regulations on the Management of the Practical Activities of News Reporters and Editors” (for trial use).

In 2009, the Code of Professional Ethics for Chinese Journalists was revised for the third time. This time the review was, in particular, devoted to regulating the behavior of journalists. For example, for the first time, the provision “the people are the main object of reporting and the purpose of service” was included, and a requirement for reform and innovation was added to promote the development of Internet communication technologies by journalists, as well as strengthening the dissemination and influence of news and work with public opinion.

In 2019, the Code of Professional Ethics for Chinese Journalists was revised for the fourth time, adding phrases such as “adhere to Xi Jinping Thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new generation” and “adhere to the right political direction, coordinate public opinion, journalistic aspirations and work.”

Over the past thirty years, much has changed in the professional and ethical code of Chinese journalists, but the essence of Chinese journalism has not changed. Its essential principles can be summarized as follows:<sup>74</sup>

1. The fundamental requirement is the emphasis on pursuing the right political orientation. Chinese journalism is essentially considered the Party's political work, and the Party's media institutions are effectively the Party's

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<sup>74</sup> Zhang Shixuan. Creating a system of values in Chinese journalism // Modern science: current problems of theory and practice. Ser. Humanitarian sciences. 2023. No. 7(183). pp. 168–174. URL: <http://nauteh-journal.ru/files/e1c841a3-b6fb-4587-8b3c-5960b90e1268> .

political organs. Therefore, the principles of the Party are fundamental to journalism and public opinion, and adhering to the correct political orientation and leading public opinion is the most important requirement of Chinese journalism.

2. Adhere to the main principle - putting the people at the forefront. This is due to the fact that the fundamental position of the CCP is the people. In the Code of Professional Ethics of Chinese Journalists, "honest service to the people" is the first professional and ethical requirement that Chinese journalists must follow. Accordingly, Chinese journalism pays more attention to the people, which also makes it different from Western journalism.

3. The emphasis is on the reliability of the news. Chinese journalism is required not only to report individual facts, but also to comprehend and reflect the entire picture of an event or situation from a macro perspective. Regardless of how communication technology changes and develops in the future, the reliability of news will not change.

4. The emphasis is on determination and the ability to keep up with the times. Journalists play an important role in promoting the progress of social thought in China. Society is constantly developing, and social efficiency is constantly growing. In this context, journalists must always insist on improvement and innovation, always recognizing the laws of society and the Internet media thinking of the social digital age.

5. Attention is focused on compliance with the law in work. The Code of Professional Ethics for Chinese Journalists constantly emphasizes the need to improve the level of education in the field of legal awareness of journalists. As China's market reforms continue, journalists face financial temptations, leading to the need to insist on legal education.

6. Particular attention is paid to strengthening international communication potential. The ability to disseminate information determines

a country's soft power. For a long time, international opinion was dominated by the West, as well as the media of individual countries. The Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists emphasizes that Chinese journalists must have a global perspective and an international outlook. They should tell Chinese history, spread Chinese culture, actively build a connecting bridge between China and the rest of the world, and present a true, three-dimensional and comprehensive China<sup>75</sup>.

Some scholars have compiled statistics on keywords in China's Code of Ethics for Journalists in 1997 and 2009, and they look like this: <sup>76</sup>:

Table 2 - Comparison of keywords in the 1997 and 2009 Codes of Professional Ethics for Chinese Journalists.

	1997	2009	2019
socialism	13	3	5
public opinion	13	6	9
party	10	7	11
policy	5	3	5
line, course and policy	4	1	1
propaganda	9	9	10

The comparison also reflects changes in Chinese journalism as a whole.

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<sup>75</sup> Cai Mingzhao. Telling Chinese Stories and Spreading Chinese Voices - Studying Comrade Xi Jinping's Important Speech at the National Conference on Propaganda and Thought Work[J]. Foreign Communication. 2013. No. 206 (11). P. 4-6.

<sup>76</sup> Zhang Xuli. Ethical dilemmas of Chinese journalists during the transition period: dis. Fudan: Fudan University, 2014.

Although Chinese journalism continues to emphasize its role as political propaganda, the service function of journalism is also increasing.

### **Values in Chinese journalism and the evolution of news organizations**

Press management in Chinese society has dual characteristics: on the one hand, Chinese journalism performs the function of propagating the ideology of the state, and on the other hand, it cooperates with the government administration. Historically, press management reform in China has always been linked to China's political and economic reform.

The first session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) was held in Beijing from September 21 to 30, 1949 (the People's Republic of China was founded on October 1). This meeting created the Central People's Government of China and proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China to the world, but also produced the "General Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Council", which served as the provisional constitution at the beginning of the Republic.

The General Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Council sets out the final policies regarding China's regime, economy and culture. It states that in accordance with the Basic Law of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, the Central People's Committee has been established to exercise state power. This was the case until the First National People's Congress was held in 1954.

Chapter III of the Basic Law of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China defines the scope of powers of the State Council. Among other things, the Culture and Education Council of the State Council is responsible for Chinese culture and education, as well as the press.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> The Culture and Education Council of the State Council (政务院文化教育委员会) reports to the State Council and is responsible for the work of the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Academy of Sciences, the General Administration of Press and the General Administration of Publications of the State.

Under it there is a General Directorate for Press Affairs, which manages the specific work of the press, and a General Directorate of Publications, which manages the work of the press and publishing houses. These two bodies form the system of press administration in China, and thus begins the first page of the book on the press in the People's Republic of China.

The General Administration of Press and Publication of the Central People's Government was officially established on November 1, 1949, and the first national conference of the General Administration of Press and Publication was held in Beijing in March 1950. The management functions included carrying out the party's propaganda policy, developing management policies in the field of press and publishing and monitoring its implementation, managing the administrative affairs of the press and publishing, coordinating planning and leading the coordination of the development of printing and publishing, monitoring and managing the content and quality of publications, control and management of the printing industry, copyright management and publication import management.

The General Administration of Press and Publishing under the Central People's Government was established in October 1949. It is the main governing body for printing and publishing affairs in China, and its basic functions include approval of new printing and publishing enterprises, supervision and management of printing, etc.

In the course of history, in connection with the convening of the National People's Congress and the drafting of the Constitution, the General Press Office of the Central People's Government of Information and the General Office of Publication of the Central People's Government were successively abolished, and their functions were taken over by the Ministry of Propaganda and the Ministry of Culture.

After the 1980s, with the reform of China's political economy, new changes occurred in press management. The National Copyright Administration was

established in 1985, the Press and Publication Administration in 1987, the State Council Information Bureau in 1991, and the State Radio and Television Administration in 1998. In 2001, the Office of Press and Publication was abolished and the General Directorate of Press and Publication was created. In 2013, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television and the General Directorate of Press and Publication Affairs were merged into the State Administration of Press, Publication and Radio, Film and Television Affairs.

With the development of new technologies, the Internet has changed the original structure of the Chinese news industry and has become an important force in promoting China's democratization and modernization. In 1993, the Ministry of Propaganda of the Chinese government began the process of informatization, and in May 2011, the State Internet Information Administration was established. This shows that the government is paying more attention to online news management.

With the advent of the digital era, data has become the fifth factor of production after land, labor, capital and technology. With the further development of digital technology in China, digital journalism has become a relevant field for the modern journalism industry.

On March 7, 2023, in the proposal of the State Council of the People's Republic of China on the program of institutional reform of the State Council, submitted to the first session of the 14th National People's Congress of China, it was proposed to create a National Data Bureau. Its tasks will include coordinating and promoting the construction of the data infrastructure system in the People's Republic of China, coordinating the integration, exchange, development and use of data resources, coordinating and promoting the planning and construction of digital China, digital economy, digital society, etc. This reflects that the great importance China attaches to data security and information technology in the digital era.

The greater emphasis on governance in Chinese journalism is because it strives to serve the Party and the people.

The most representative among others is the All-China Journalists Association (also known as the China Journalists Association), a national people's association of the Chinese press led by the Communist Party of China, which serves as a bridge between the party and the government with close contact with the press. One of the important tasks of the Association is to promote the self-control of the journalistic profession, regulate journalistic activities, serve as an ethics committee, guide and promote the core socialist values of journalists, develop the professional spirit of journalism, uphold professional ethics, in particular adherence to the Code of Professional Ethics of Chinese Journalists and the Charter of the Committee on Journalism Ethics of the Chinese Journalists Association.

The China Journalists Association (CJA) plays an important role in regulating the values of Chinese journalism. To encourage Chinese journalists to better adhere to professional ethics, the CJA established the China Journalism Award (中国新闻奖) and the Changjiang Taofeng Award (长江韬奋奖). To ensure professional and high-quality training for Chinese journalists, there is the Journalist Training Center of the Chinese Journalists Association (中国记者协会新闻培训中心) and the Editorial Interview Evening School Research Center (夜班编辑采访调研).

1. The main feature of the Chinese press is that it is the eyes, ears and mouthpiece not only of the party and government, but also of the people. This basic characteristic determines the structure, management and mode of operation of the Chinese press, and thus forms a socialist press system with Chinese characteristics.
2. In addition, an important form of press organization is press self-control bodies, which emerged as a result of the historical development of the press in different countries of the world. China has also begun making similar attempts since the 21st century.
3. News and Information Review Organizations: In 2006, Beijing Qianlong.com



and many other media outlets jointly launched an initiative to create smart internet access. Soon after, the Beijing Internet Information Review Board was established;

4. Journalistic Ethics Committees: In China, journalistic ethics committees have been established in various provinces, currently covering important provinces such as Beijing, Shanghai, Hubei and Hebei;
5. Reviews of journalistic ethics in news media. The news media represented by Southern Weekend has created its own internal code of ethics, thereby establishing a higher ethical profession for new journalists and more sound journalistic values for more journalists.

To summarize, journalism is a special kind of profession and journalists need a more thoughtful code of ethical boundaries developed among members of the profession, in addition to adhering to the constitution and laws. Modern developments in the field of digital technologies are of a communication nature and also function as a communication tool <sup>78</sup>. Currently, regulation of online communications requires the greatest responsibility and affects the greatest number of sectors. China has made some attempts to develop journalism in the digital age in the future, but there are still many difficulties ahead.

### **Educational models of journalism in China.**

In October 1918, the Peking University Journalism Research Association was officially established, marking the beginning of the study of journalism as a discipline and the development of journalism education in modern China.

The end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 ushered in a spring of journalism development in Chinese universities. The number of newspapers, radio and television stations was growing, requiring a large amount of journalistic talent. According to a study conducted by the Ministry of Propaganda and the Ministry of

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<sup>78</sup> Zhuo Guangjun. News Communication and the Legal System. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. // Chongqing University Press. 2013. March. P. 197.

Education, in 2000, an additional 110,000 journalism specialists were needed at universities, including 90,000 students and 2 staff in need of training<sup>79</sup>.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the number of places for journalism students at Chinese universities of all types has grown rapidly. As of 2015, there were approximately 637 universities nationwide with journalism and communications departments covering seven major undergraduate majors: editing and publishing, communications, radio and television journalism, advertising, online and new media, journalism and digital publishing. In terms of student numbers, there are more than 140,000 undergraduate students majoring in journalism and communications at Chinese universities<sup>80</sup>.

Throughout its development, Chinese journalism has strived for similar journalistic values to the Western world: fact-based objectivity, impartiality, respect for others, social and public responsibility, etc. This is because they promote access to information for the general public, more accurate news editing and more efficient delivery of information. Journalistic values include: objectivity based on facts, impartiality, respect for others, social and public responsibility, etc. All of these contribute to obtaining information from the public, more accurate editing of news, and more effective delivery of information.

Chinese journalists are entrusted with the task of directing public opinion in the right direction, so in professional training more attention is paid to: legal issues, access to information, professional and humanistic aspects. However, with the onset of market reform in Chinese society, some news organizations have retreated from their values. To win in the fierce competition for news, many news media resort to unfair competition and even illegal means, wanting to gain more economic benefits in reflecting and managing public opinion. These problems reflect a lack of

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<sup>79</sup> He Zhua. Four problems of journalism education and countermeasures. *Chinese journalist*. 2005. No. 6.

<sup>80</sup> *Yearbook of Chinese Journalism and Communication* [M]. Institute of Journalism and Communication, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. China Social Science Publishing House. 2015.

objectivity, impartiality and social responsibility in journalism.

In order for Chinese journalists to develop healthy journalistic values, most journalism and communication departments in Chinese universities have introduced a course in journalism ethics using various textbooks, mainly the following publications: “The New Theory of Journalism Ethics” by Xu Xinping<sup>81</sup>; "A Course in Journalistic Ethics" by Lang Hongwen<sup>82</sup>; "Journalistic Ethics" Huang Hu<sup>83</sup>.

In general, journalistic ethics is based on the premise of following the laws of journalism and communication. It is integrated with national policies and regulations and social ethics and governs conduct in all aspects of the dissemination of news and information. Chinese journalistic ethics is focused on upholding core socialist values. Teaching journalistic ethics in contemporary China includes<sup>84</sup>:

- (1) Analysis of the relationship of journalistic ethics to politics and society, as well as the ethical relationship between news organizations and society;
- (2) Explain the importance of observing journalistic ethics and the importance of the regulatory role of journalistic ethics;
- (3) Recognizing reporting and communication practices that may be destructive to journalistic ethics;
- (4) Discussion of manifestations of journalistic ethics and ways to prevent ethical violations;
- (5) A study of the principles and methods of assessing journalistic ethics and the issues to consider, as well as a consideration of the methods and meaning of journalistic ethical criticism;
- (6) Studying ways to demonstrate journalistic ethics, discussing the motives that

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<sup>81</sup> Xu Xinping. New theory of journalistic ethics [M]. Hunan Normal University Press, 2001.

<sup>82</sup> Lan Hongwen. Textbook of journalistic ethics [M]. People's University Press, 2001.

<sup>83</sup> Huang Hu. Journalistic ethics [M]. Xinhua Publishing House, 2000.

<sup>84</sup> Zheng Weiwei. Journalistic practice calls for journalistic ethics and ethics education[J]. Contemporary Communication. 2007. No. 135 (04). P. 10–12.

motivate journalists to follow journalistic ethics and the means to achieve the highest good, understanding the rules of right and wrong that govern relationships between people in journalistic work.

Today, due to technological innovation and the development of digital technologies, as well as the rise of citizen journalism, journalism education in higher education institutions is facing dramatic changes as a large number of student journalists are engaged in non-journalism activities. Positioning journalism in education faces a choice between preparing talent for the news media and preparing talent for other industries. In May 2020, Tsinghua University canceled admissions for undergraduate journalism and communication courses, and future journalistic talents will be mainly in demand as research talents. Some scholars believe that journalism and communications majors are very practical, and it is often difficult to match the professional education provided by schools with the needs of industry. Journalism should be studied in practice, not in higher education institutions<sup>85</sup>.

In this context, journalism ethics has become more relevant with the development of the digital age. The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China clearly stated that “great importance should be attached to the construction and innovation of communication means, as well as enhancing communication power, leadership, influence and authority of public opinion.”<sup>86</sup> This is not only the goal of Chinese journalism, but also its future goals, and also shows the direction for journalism education in universities.

The new era does not mean that the old journalistic ethics must be completely overhauled. High professional ethics, fine journalistic flair, humanistic spirit and professional journalistic skills will never disappear. However, in the new era,

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<sup>85</sup> Zhao Xinli. Inspiration from Japanese journalism and communication education—and a review of Tsinghua University's cancellation of undergraduate admissions in journalism and communication [J]. *Young Journalists*. 2020. No. 16. P. 68–69. DOI: 10.15997/j.cnki.qnjz.2020.16.025.

<sup>86</sup> How to understand and master the power of communication, leadership, influence and authority of news and public opinion? URL: [http://www.zgjj.cn/2020-04/08/c\\_138957162.htm](http://www.zgjj.cn/2020-04/08/c_138957162.htm) .

university education in Chinese journalism is further developed with innovative ideas to improve the dissemination of core ideas, enhance the influence of news opinion, and enhance the credibility of Chinese journalism among the general public.

### **Citizen journalism and new issues related to the values of journalism.**

Accelerated social transformation has led to the rapid development of communication technologies. The emergence of “citizen journalism” is one manifestation of this transformation in the media, and this type of communication is inextricably linked with the advent of the digital age.

In the digital age, the emergence of citizen journalism has meant that the general public has become increasingly important in the dissemination of information. The role of ordinary citizen journalism is also increasing in some public events. The interactions between citizen journalists, online media and traditional media together constitute the “pseudo-environment” through which people perceive the objective reality around them. The new communication environment in the digital age not only controls the perception and behavior of the viewer, but also influences the objective environment of society as a whole. In an era when every citizen has a voice, professional media and citizen journalism compete and influence each other.

Providing public information to the public is one of the key responsibilities of journalism. In the age of citizen journalism, the audience is no longer content with passively receiving information that is superficial and homogeneous, but is ready to actively participate in the exchange and dissemination of information that interests it, moving from passive acceptance to active inclusion and active participation in communication. For this reason, society is required to publish news about what is happening around us at any time and in any place, as well as diversify sources of news information, due to which the dissemination of news information ceases to be limited by time and space and the speed of transmission of news content increases. In addition, open information dissemination platforms, with lower information collection costs and ease of operation, make it possible to integrate the transmission

and reception of information in the dissemination of news and information to citizens. This allows citizens to play a greater role in the news dissemination process by expanding sources of information and increasing citizen participation in information sources and influence on the process of disseminating news and information.

Under these conditions, news production techniques in citizen journalism are developing, which, in turn, contributes to the emergence of more innovative content in traditional media.

However, in citizen journalism, roles can change at any time, because everyone can be involved in both producing and receiving information. This ambiguity of roles in citizen journalism has become one of the difficulties we face when exploring the value orientation of journalism. And this characteristic, while promoting a more diverse and democratic dissemination of information, at the same time has more complex issues of journalistic ethics. On the one hand, citizen journalism inherits and enhances the shortcomings of traditional media, such as aggressiveness and irritation, on the other hand, new journalistic ethical problems arise, such as fragmentation of information.

These problems and features are discussed in detail in Chapters 1 and 2. The causes of these problems are varied: as for news producers, in their case it is the loss of journalistic orientation and the temptation of money; When it comes to audiences, the Internet's use of audience psychology to push information has become a driving force behind a number of problems: institutions precede rules, lagging legal and journalistic norms have become an indirect problem, etc.

In response, the slogan “upholding core values” has been taken very seriously in journalism education and journalism management in China. The measures taken range from laws and regulations, journalistic ethics and education in universities, all aimed at establishing the right journalistic values in the new era and ensuring a healthy information environment for society.

As for specific approaches, a number of Chinese scientists have put forward their own proposals. Some scholars believe that citizen journalism should fully respect every citizen without violating his rights while exercising his right to self-expression. The information behavior of selfmedia users must be subject to ethical restrictions. A code of ethics for citizen news and information dissemination needs to be developed to create an ethics of communication in self-media<sup>87</sup>.

Some scholars have made suggestions regarding short video clips, a major method of information dissemination in the digital age, in terms of news content. They also analyze the chaos of short video news, which poses the risk of moral and legal violations, and suggest that the production of short videos should be subject to certain rules<sup>88</sup>.

Some scholars suggest that society should centralize public discussion of fake news on social media; journalism - to reconsider the values of journalistic ethics; prevent cyber violence and create a harmonious environment for public opinion; build trust in mainstream news and government, and avoid the Tacitus Trap and other countermeasures to disrupt and dissolve rumor-mongering on social media<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>87</sup> Niu Jing. Origins and Paths: Formulation of Ethical Standards for the Dissemination of Information by Self-Media Users [J]. *Young Journalists*. 2019. No. 644 (24). 23–24. DOI:10.15997/j.cnki.qnjz.2019.24.006.

<sup>88</sup> Yang Chia-yin. Exploring the ethical failure of short-form video journalism from a news narratology perspective[J]. *New Media Research*. 2019. No. 5 (17). pp. 70–71+78. DOI:10.16604/j.cnki.issn2096-0360.2019.17.026.

<sup>89</sup> Zou Miaomiao, Liu Xun. Research on the transmutation of group communication of the rumor mechanism in social media and countermeasures for managing public opinion [J]. *Publishing Guangjiao*. 2019. No. 339(09). pp. 64-66. DOI:10.16491/j.cnki.cn 45-1216/g2.2019.09.018.

### **3.2. Changes in journalistic ethics in China using the example of the Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists**

#### **Creation and revisions of the Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists.**

At the time of the founding of New China, there were no documents regulating the journalistic profession. It was only during the period of reform and opening up that Chinese journalists began to realize that journalism is a profession that requires high professionalism and needs moral and ethical regulation and discipline<sup>90</sup>. In 1986, in order to implement the important requirement of “vigorously strengthening the construction of professional ethics in all spheres of life of our society” put forward in the Resolution of the CPC Central Committee on the Guiding Principles for Building Socialist Spiritual Civilization, adopted at the Sixth Plenum of the Twelfth CPC Central Committee, the Chinese Journalists Association (CJA) ) began to study the issue of creating a “Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists.” Such famous journalists as Wu Lengsi, Mu Qing, Shao Huajie, Guo Choren and others took part in the discussion and formulation of the Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists.

On January 19, 1991, at the first plenary meeting of the Fourth Council of the Chinese Journalists Association, the Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists was adopted. It was the first code of professional ethics for journalists officially promulgated after the founding of New China, containing eight basic principles: (1) serve the people sincerely; (2) accept social benefits as the highest criterion; (3) abide by laws and discipline; (4) guarantee the truthfulness of the news; (5) adhere to the principle of objectivity and fairness; (6) maintain a style of honesty; (7) promote a spirit of solidarity and cooperation; (8) promote international friendship and cooperation.

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<sup>90</sup> Lei Yuezhe, Miao Zhuang. Review-contrast-innovation: 30th anniversary of the Code of Ethics of Chinese Journalists // Media. 2021. Vol. 15. P. 17–19.



In May 1991, the Central Propaganda Department issued a circular that called for the deep implementation of the Chinese Journalists' Code of Ethics on the journalism front to improve the level of journalistic ethics. In June, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CDIC) issued a circular disseminating the Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists, which required Party media organizations and Party-affiliated journalists to strengthen their Party spirit, improve their policies, and take the lead in implementing the circular. . The Chinese Press News newspaper named the promulgation of the Chinese Journalists' Code of Ethics as the first of the ten most important events in the Chinese press in 1991.

First revision: In April 1994, taking into account the development and needs of journalistic practice, the All-China Journalists Association revised its code of professional ethics to include the words “protecting the legitimate rights and interests of journalists.”

Second revision: In January 1997, the All-China Journalists Association carried out a second revision of the guidelines, changing the phrase "recognize social welfare as the highest principle" to "submit to correct public opinion." The words “observe the principle of objectivity and impartiality” have been replaced by the words “maintain a pure and honest style.” It was emphasized that journalists must conscientiously observe discipline and the financial system and that embezzlement of public funds is strictly prohibited. The phrase "to develop friendship and cooperation with the press of other countries" was removed. It was only briefly stated that the Chinese press should uphold the dignity of the motherland and the dignity of Chinese journalists in dealing with the foreign press.

Third revision: In November 2009, the All-China Journalists Association made significant changes to the 1997 guidelines, making them more specific and more capable of regulating journalists' behavior more quickly.

Fourth Revision: In 2019, based on the new situation, challenges and demands of the modern era, the All-China Journalists Association made the fourth revision of

the guidelines, which was reviewed and adopted at the fifth meeting of the Ninth National Council of the All-China Journalists Association on November 7.

### **Statistical analysis of the Ethical Code of Chinese Journalists**

The 1994 edition of the “Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists” contains a total of 2037 Chinese characters, the most frequent among which - with a frequency threshold of 3, and in some cases 2 occurrences - are 50 Chinese words, and taking into account close synonyms - 35.

Among the words with 10 occurrences (inclusive): resist (反对), journalism (新闻), worker (工作者), develop (发展), people (人民), protect (维护). At the same time, words with political overtones are quite common, for example socialism (社会主义), propagandize (宣传), country (国家).

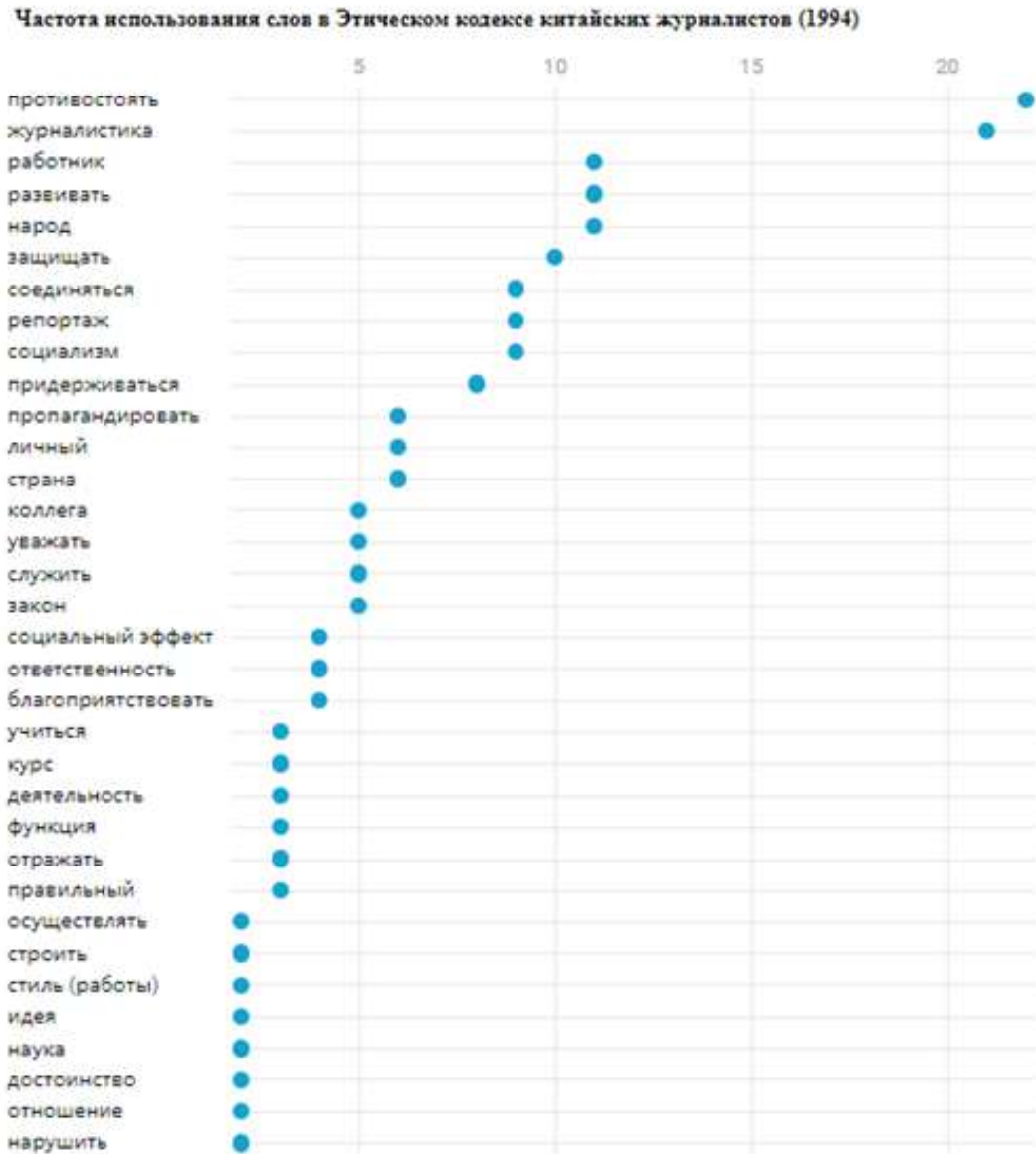


Figure 2 - Frequency of use of words in the Code of Ethics of Chinese Journalists (1994)

The 1990s marked an important era of market reforms in the Chinese economy. It is worth noting that terms such as personal (个人), respect (尊重), serve (服务), science (科学), law (法律), etc. reflect the fact that in the 1990s, ideology and culture Chinese society began to shift away from a focus on ideological struggle towards greater respect for the individual interests of citizens. The focus of society was on science and progress, democracy and the rule of law.

The 1997 Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists contains a total of 2,037

Chinese characters, the most common of which are 45 Chinese words, and 28 after clustering Chinese close synonyms.

The 1997 Code of Professional Ethics for Chinese Journalists emphasizes that journalism should primarily raise political awareness and promote patriotism. At the same time, news reports should not spread pornography, murder, violence, ignorance, superstition or any other content that is low in tone and harmful to the physical and mental health of people.

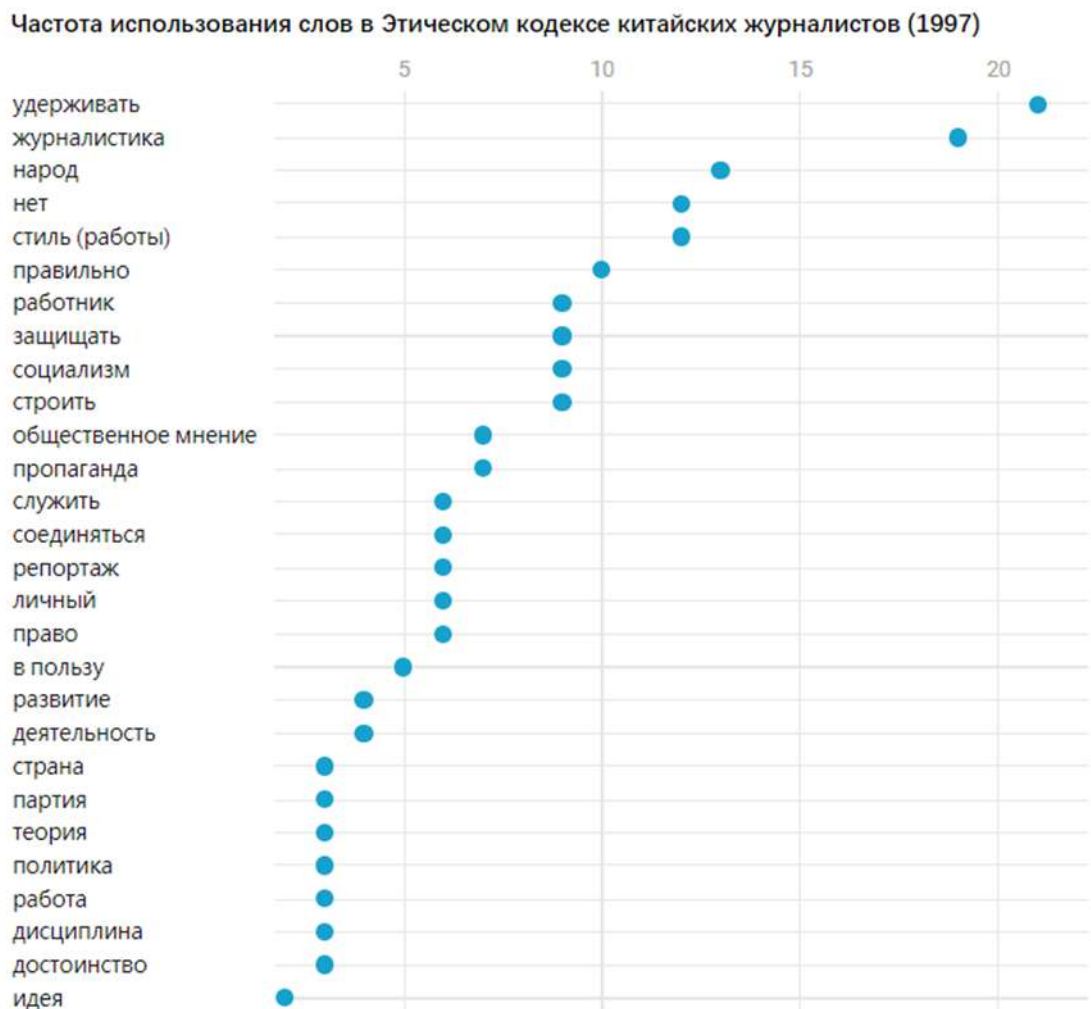


Figure 3 - Frequency of use of words in the Code of Ethics of Chinese Journalists (1997)

In the 1990s, Chinese journalism was also affected by market reforms. And some changes in the Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists reflect the fact that at this stage of China's development, journalism has gained a higher social status, but at the same

time, some journalists began to use their power in exchange for personal gain. At the same time, it can be stated that the value orientation of journalism reflects the fact that economic reforms in China have been bold, while from a political and ideological point of view, China's reform process has been more cautious. Amid dramatic social and cultural changes, Chinese journalism has largely adhered to the idea of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The 1997 Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists contains 22,204 Chinese characters, of which 42 are Chinese words with a frequency greater than 2 or 3, and 28 words after clustering Chinese synonyms.

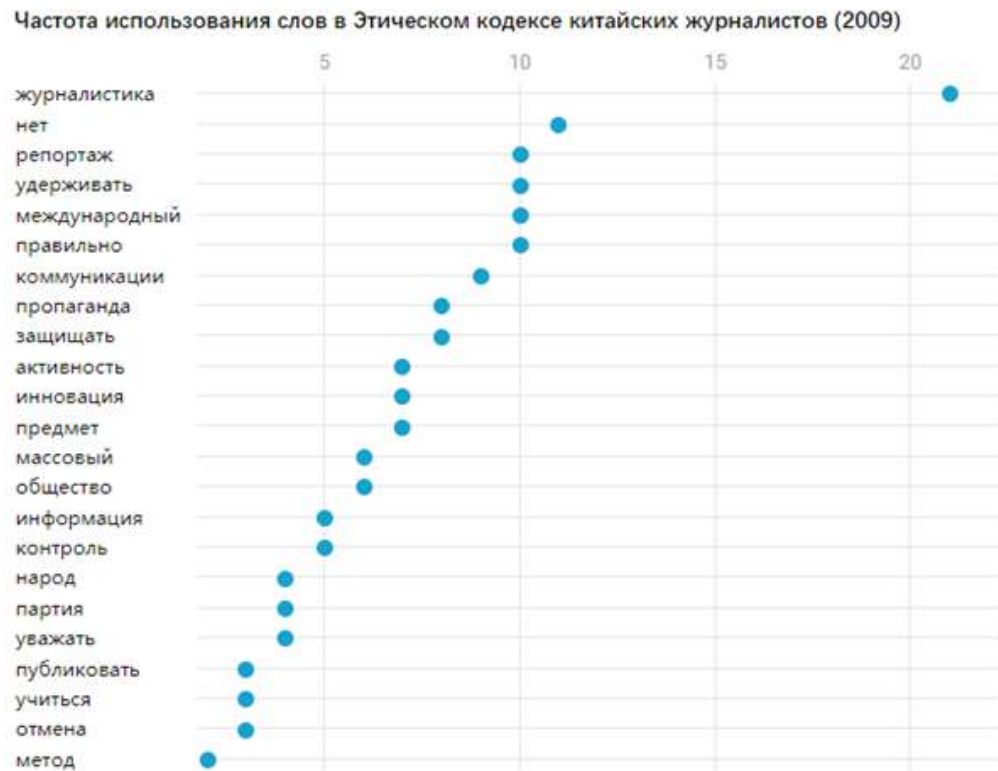


Figure 4 - Frequency of use of words in the Code of Ethics of Chinese Journalists (2009)

In 1998, a turning point, China officially moved from an economy of scarcity to an economy of surplus, social stratification began to gradually increase, and at the same time, due to the difference in economic income between classes, the

characteristics of each class became increasingly obvious<sup>91</sup>.

The 2009 edition of the Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists introduced ideas such as the “Three Representation Concept,” “Scientific Concept of Development,” “Socialist Core Value System,” “Marxist Concept of Journalism,” and other innovative ideas reflected in the materials of the XVI National Congress of the Communist Party of China. These new principles are important for understanding the work of journalism in China and regulating the professional ethics of journalists. At the same time, as China enters the 21st century, it has comprehensively strengthened its national position and expanded its international influence. It was critical for China to forge a new approach to journalism and communication, one that could help it adapt to the development needs of the new century and international press contacts. The 2009 revision provided strong ideological intellectual support for the core concepts of socialist journalism theory with Chinese characteristics.

In 2008, some Chinese scholars criticized China's past code of journalistic ethics for being laden with political language and lacking professional specificity. The 2009 Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists shows a general trend towards a reduction in the use of political terms, while words such as "audience" and "people" have become more common. On the other hand, the use of some directive words, such as “you can’t” - from 14 times to 1 time, and “must” - from 5 to 4 times, decreased. This reflects a better balance between political and professional implications in the 2009 Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists.

At the same time, the 2009 edition of the Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists placed greater emphasis on professionalism. “Commitment to truthful news” was

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<sup>91</sup> Zhu Chongyang, Qian Weicheng. What kind of consensus should journalism reach in an era of media convergence? — Analysis based on the Code of Ethics of Chinese Journalists (2019) [J]. *Journalism*, 2021 (07): 43–46. DOI:10.15897/j.cnki.cn51-1046/g2.20210625.003.

moved from the fourth to the third point, and a new component was added to the concept of “professionalism”, namely: journalists must obtain news materials through legal means and methods, and interviews must be conducted with a valid press card. News stories must include the author's real name, etc. It also mentions "respect for the rights and interests of other authors" and "strict adherence to the separation of news stories and commercial activities." As market relations deepen, the Chinese media industry has repeatedly introduced and then banned various types of journalistic misconduct that violate professional ethics, especially “false reporting” and “paid news.” Therefore, emphasizing “truthfulness,” “objectivity,” and “impartiality” in journalism is the core meaning of the code of journalistic ethics and the core concept of the professional code of journalists, and it is very important to strengthen these elements when revising the code.

The revised Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists in 2009 still needs improvement, for example, some phrases in the text are still unclear, there are some areas that seem to deserve clarification, etc. But compared with the period, which preceded the reform and opening up policy, there are many good changes in it.

The 2019 Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists contains a total of 2799 Chinese characters, of which 49 Chinese words have a frequency higher than 2 or 3, and after synonym clustering, 36 words remain, respectively. The revised code introduces new requirements that are more in line with the current situation and more focused on journalists' commitment to good politics, orientation to public opinion, journalists' efforts and their work orientation.

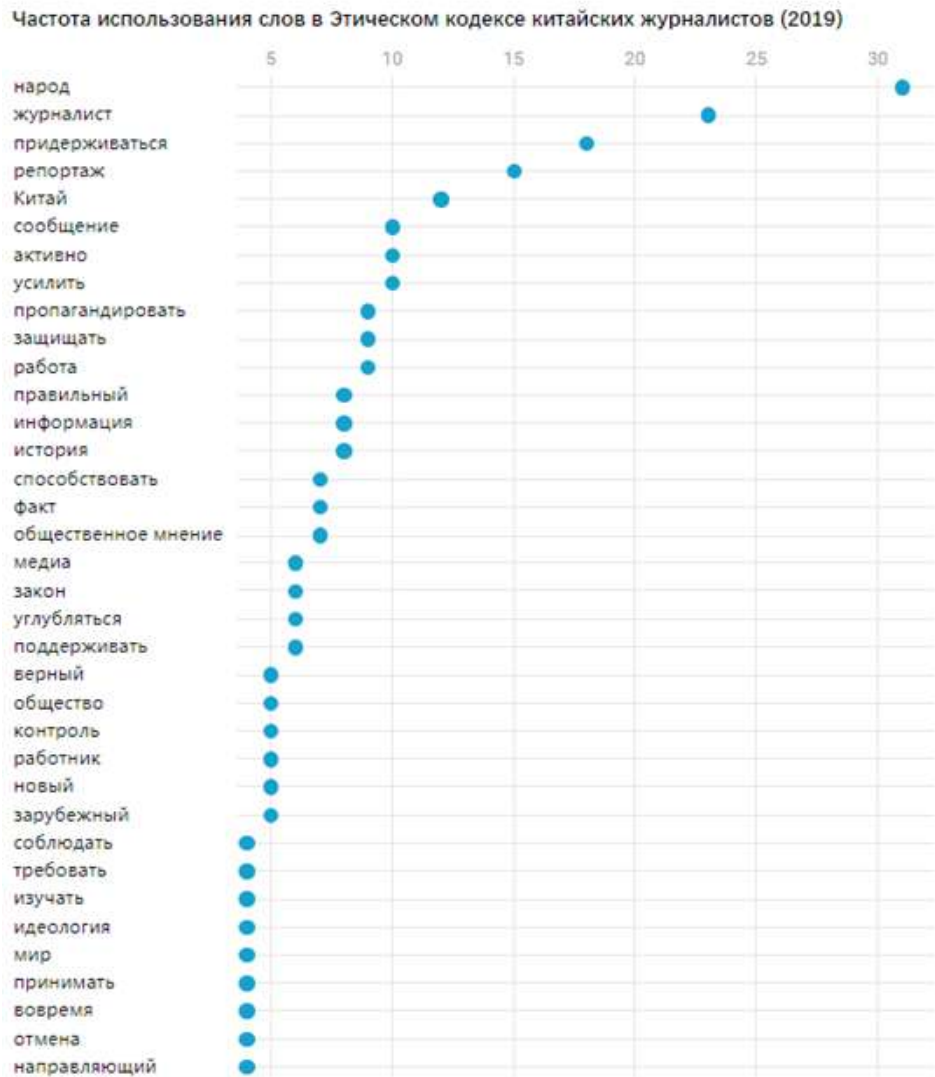


Figure 5 - Frequency of use of words in the Code of Ethics of Chinese Journalists (2019)

### **The role of the Chinese Journalists' Code of Ethics in regulating Chinese journalism**

In the digital age from 1991 to 2009, the convergence of different forms of media led to internal clashes and conflicts within the media industry, while at the same time in society as a whole, thanks to the Internet, different social classes began to coexist on the same information platforms and systems. The media industry faces a two-pronged challenge of internal and social integration. On the one hand, the work of journalists had to be reformed in terms of professional skills, and on the other hand,



integration between different branches of journalism was necessary, for example between newspaper media and Internet media. Therefore, the media industry has a responsibility to resolve internal divisions and overcome social differences. In this era, the emergence of the Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists was expected, because each time the “Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists” responded to the problems of the new era.

The 1991 edition of the Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists defined the status of journalism in China and the role of journalists: “Chinese journalism is an important part of the socialist effort carried out under the leadership of the Communist Party of China.” This political positioning of the industry and the role of propaganda has continued to this day, realizing the political attributes of Chinese journalism as a core part of the ideology, and is the main ideological feature that distinguishes Chinese journalism from the journalism of other countries. Revised in 2019, the Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists further reinforces this position and the role of journalists. This attribute is further crystallized in the following political slogans expressed by Xi Jinping: “four consciousnesses” - political consciousness, consciousness of the interests of the whole, consciousness of the core and consciousness of alignment (understanding what the core of the party is and understanding the need for alignment with the Central Committee); “four certainties”—confidence in the path, theory, system and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics; and the “two guarantees”—protecting the status of General Secretary Xi Jinping as the core of the CPC Central Committee and the Party as a whole, and protecting the authority of the CPC Central Committee and the centralized and unified leadership. It is the basic framework for Chinese journalists in the relationship between professional ethics and politics, and the main resource that guarantees the source of legitimacy for journalists' professional actions.

The decade since the 2009 Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists has also seen the most radical change in Chinese journalism. On the one hand, based on the goals

of national development, which is to modernize the country's governance system and governance capabilities, the main function of the new mainstream media is to create the capacity for dialogue and communication, that is, to promote the achievement of consensus in society at a higher level through dialogue and communication, eliminating misunderstandings and overcoming differences. This will reduce friction in the process of implementing the ruling party's government program and increase the effectiveness of social development and progress.

On the other hand, the development of productive forces in the context of the digital revolution has influenced changes in production relations and the structure of production in new industries. In this new structure of social relations, established rules and standards quickly become outdated, and there is no longer a single lasting authority; Structural unemployment and a flexible labor market are making jobs increasingly insecure, causing anxiety and anxiety among workers. The advent of “mobile” modernity has changed the human condition, and the instability of self-identification has become a fundamental problem in the development of modern societies. Based on the recognition of the function of professional organizations in social solidarity, the creation of professional communities is seen as the best way to integrate a society in crisis.

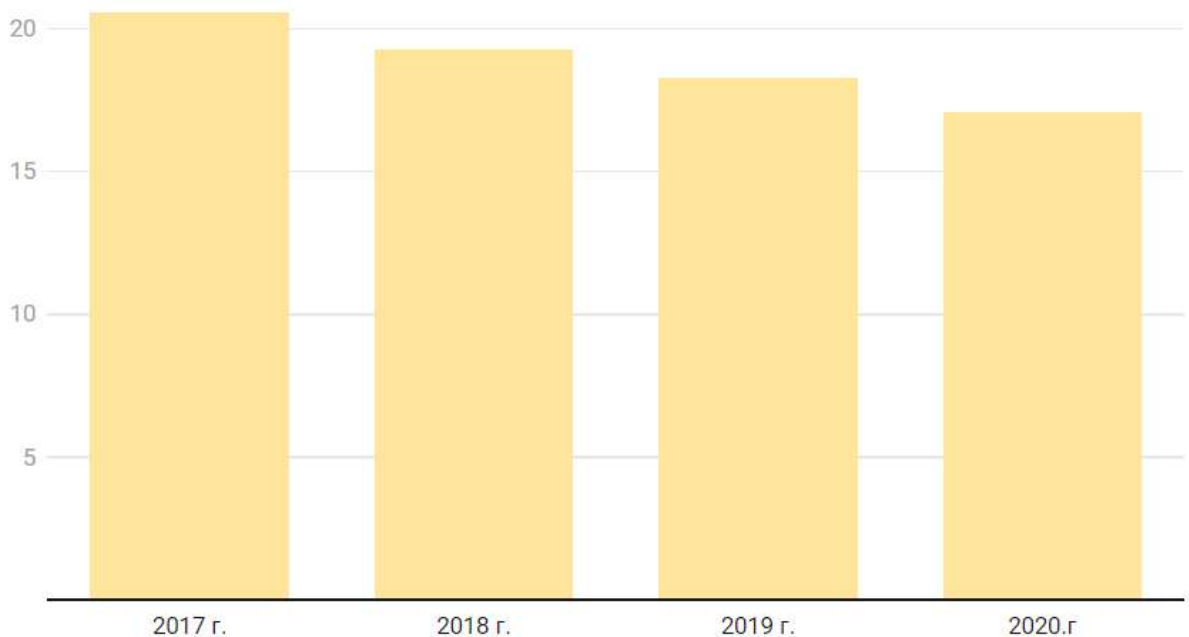
In the new scenario of news dissemination in the digital age, journalists as professional institutional communicators, especially mainstream media workers, have become deeply embedded in the social structure of their profession and have become an important factor in the dissemination of social information, and various professional organizations constitute “real social groupings”). Therefore, the more standard norms of professional ethics are formulated in the digital age, the better they can help journalists effectively realize their own socialization and become a rational, constructive force that binds social relations within the industry and beyond.

Professional ethics as a moral resource for the organic solidarity of modern society is a new force that does not depend on market regulation and government

control. Therefore, great hopes are placed on the Code of Ethics of Chinese Journalists to integrate professional consensus.

According to the China Journalism Development Report 2022 published by the China Journalists Association, the newspaper publishing industry employed 171,000 people in 2020, down 6.6% from 2019. 206,000, 193,000 and 183,000 people were employed in the newspaper publishing industry in 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively, representing four consecutive years of decline in employment. Compared to 2021, employment declined by 7.9%, 6.1%, and 5.5% in 2017, 2018, and 2019, respectively.

**Количество людей в КНР, работающих в полиграфической отрасли (2017–2020 гг.) (в тыс.)**



**Figure 6 - Number of people in the PRC working in the printing industry (2017–2020)**

Meanwhile, according to the report, there were 1.101 million radio and television workers nationwide by the end of 2020, up 1.67% year-on-year. Among them, 425,800 are women, accounting for 42.1%. The breakdown of positions is as follows: 171,500 executives, 523,900 professional and technical employees (including announcers, presenters, journalists, engineers, technicians, etc.) and 315,500 other

employees. In terms of educational level distribution, 62,000 employees have a high school education, 788,600 have a bachelor's degree, and 160,400 have a master's degree or higher. In terms of age, there were 446,500 people under the age of 35, 434,800 people between the ages of 36 and 50, and 129,700 people over the age of 51, meaning employees under 35 years old accounted for 44.16% of the total number of employees<sup>92</sup>.

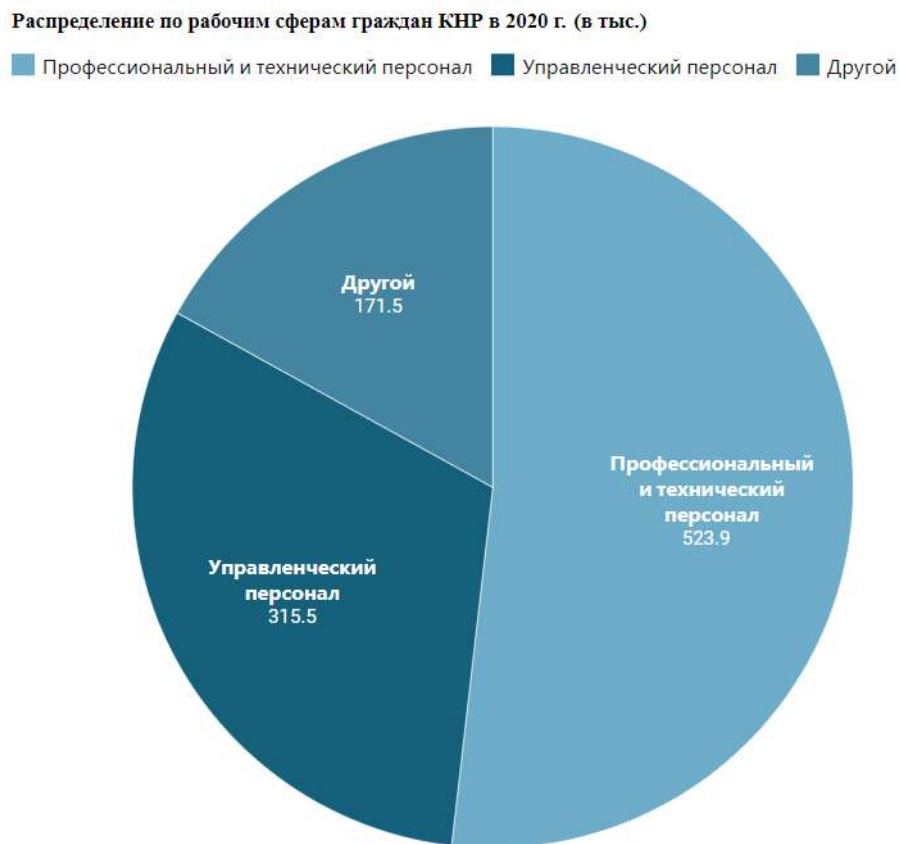


Figure 7 - Distribution of Chinese citizens by work area in 2020.

<sup>92</sup> Report on the development of journalism in China (to be released in 2022): [http://www.zgjx.cn/2022-05/16/c\\_1310592108.htm](http://www.zgjx.cn/2022-05/16/c_1310592108.htm)

Распределение граждан КНР по уровню образования в 2020 г. (в тыс.)

Бакалавры Магистры и выше Школы

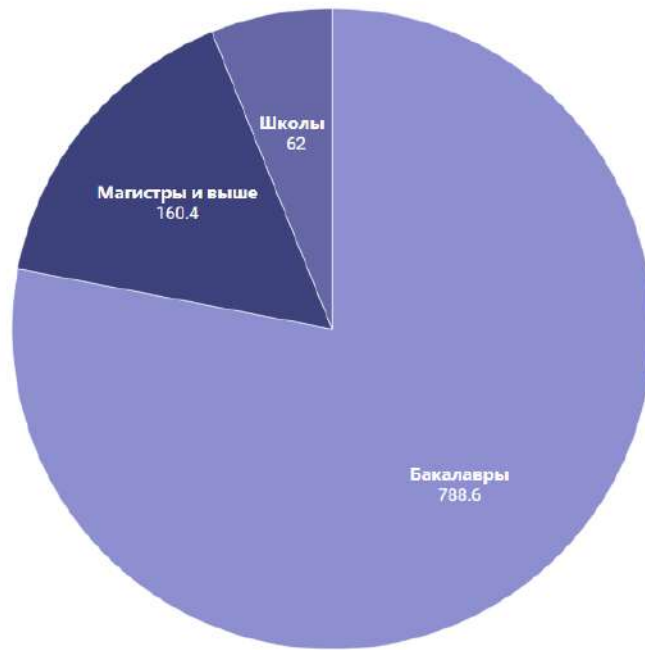


Figure 8 - Distribution of Chinese citizens by level of education in 2020.

Распределение граждан КНР по возрасту в 2020 г. (в тыс.)

< 35 36-50 > 51

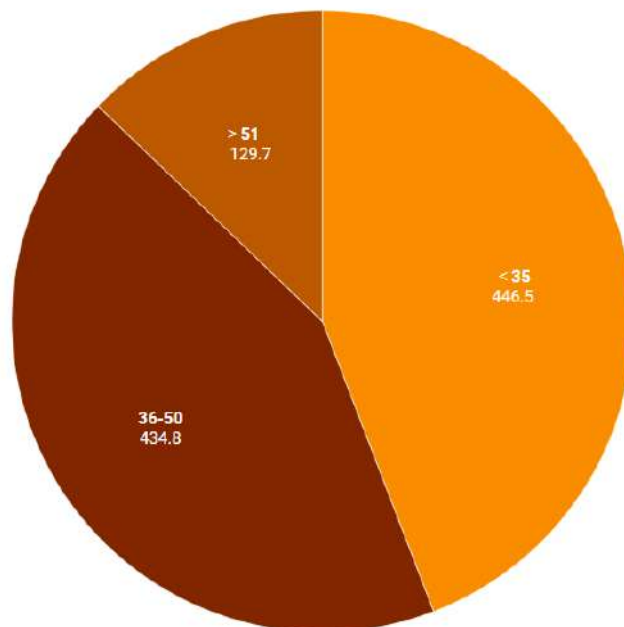


Figure 9 - Distribution of Chinese citizens by age in 2020.

The China Journalists Association published the "Report on the Development of Journalism in China (2020)", which shows that by the end of 2019, the total number of employees of newspapers was 162,000, radio and television - 994,400, Xinhua News Agency and China News Service - less than 15,000 people, so a total of more than 1.17 million people; among them, more than 230,000 journalists have valid press cards. Of the total number of licensed journalists, nearly 170,000, or 72.74%, have a bachelor's degree, 23,000, or 9.84%, have a master's degree or higher, and 16.01% have a specialist degree; In terms of media dissemination, 81,988 journalists work in newspapers, 6,365 in periodicals, 2,798 in news agencies, 140,150 in radio stations, television stations and news studios, and 1,529 in information websites.

The constant revision of the Code of Ethics of Chinese Journalists is also a continuous process of self-correction and achieving a new consensus of the profession adapted to the mobile society; at the same time, the ethical community, being one of the aspects of the spiritual community, performs an important function of integrating professional roles. With the advent of the digital era, journalists from different backgrounds are coming together on one platform and are beginning to need a clear, new professional code that will help them build consensus, build a sense of community and help smoothly advance journalism reform.

The new 2019 edition of the Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists has been updated with new characteristics:

1. Truthfulness remains the main focus of journalists' work.

Under the conditions of the "information cocoon effect," the widespread use of new communication technologies did not bring people closer to the truth, but led to the onset of the "post-truth era." Under these conditions, truth has become the cornerstone of the journalistic profession, providing the basis for the possibility of reaching consensus, which is of progressive importance.

2. Professional beliefs should be primarily people-oriented. The word "people" appears 23 times in the seven guidelines of China's new Code of Ethics for

Journalists, 10 times more than in the guidelines a decade ago;

3. In the new era, when it becomes clear that each group has its own point of view, it is necessary to respect the differences in the minds of people on the Internet and in reality, and therefore the Internet should be governed more democratically. This democratization is inevitable as the sources of speech become increasingly hidden. In the first paragraph of Article 5, the words “adapt to the trend of segmented and differentiated communication” are added; in the second paragraph - “strengthen Internet thinking and meet the development requirements of all media”; in the fifth paragraph of Article 3 - “strive for a single standard, common norms and common guidelines online and offline.” The 2019 Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists is an important outcome of China's search for ways to democratize its own journalism in the context of the digital age, and a new attempt to reform Chinese journalism.

It is also worth noting that the Journalism Ethics Committee of the China Journalists Association, formally established in December 2015, has been an important body in reviewing the ethical aspects of journalism over the past decade. The main purpose of this body is to guide and monitor news organizations and journalists to ensure that they comply with laws and regulations, are socially responsible and adhere to professional ethics. Since its inception, the organization has received reports and complaints, conducted press reviews, issued initiatives to guide and strengthen daily monitoring, and has also played a positive role in strengthening professional ethics, resolving unresolved issues and promoting the healthy development of journalism, which can be considered a direct manifestation of the role which the Code of Ethics of Chinese Journalists plays in the industry. This opens up new opportunities to improve the effectiveness of the new Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists. Этический кодекс китайских журналистов отражает эволюцию китайской журналистики.

Chinese journalism continues to emphasize adherence to the right political direction. In August 2013, Xi Jinping at the National Conference on Propaganda and

Ideology noted that journalism should adhere to a people-oriented approach in its work, and discussed in detail the issue of the inextricable link between the Party and the people, emphasizing the high degree of unity between them and stating that “in its work, journalism must first and foremost submit to the leadership of the CCP.” The 2019 Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists emphasizes the importance of the Party's leadership of news media in the new generation, emphasizing the need for journalists to adhere to the correct political direction, maintain a high degree of coordination with the Party Central Committee, actively promote the Party and government's core work and guiding principles and politics, support the central government. Despite the enormous changes that have taken place in the international arena and in China's social environment, the role of journalism in China, with its emphasis on social functions, will not change, nor will the Communist Party's leadership of the press and public opinion change.

Chinese journalism places greater importance on guiding public opinion through news. In Article 6 of the 2019 Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists, the previous version of "strictly abide by and correctly report on the state's policies regarding the system of regional ethnic autonomy, equality and unity of all ethnic groups and religious beliefs" was replaced with "strictly abide by and correctly report on the political systems and policies of the state" , effectively protect the political security, cultural security and social stability of the country." This will help journalists accurately understand the new situation in the country and the world, navigate public opinion and propaganda well, spread the healthy culture of socialism, and better penetrate society to carry out journalistic activities. From the perspective of the overall situation of the Party and the country, it is emphasized that it is important for journalists to spread positive energy, focusing on China's "two hundred year goals" (by the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, to build a society that is moderately prosperous in all respects, and by the centenary of the founding of the People's Republic of China build a rich, strong, democratic, civilized,



harmonious and beautiful modern socialist country) and the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Chinese journalism should adhere to a combination of positive propaganda and public opinion monitoring. In 2019, the Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists added: “Published critical reports must be factual and accurate, objectively analyzed,” while emphasizing that journalists' monitoring of public opinion should help improve work and solve problems. The emphasis is on building a system of thinking, accuracy, knowledge, law and efficiency. As a result of public opinion monitoring, it will be possible to take into account public sentiment, resolve social conflicts and promote social harmony, as well as take a fact-based approach to reporting, paying attention to timeliness, methodology and strategy.

### **Weaknesses of the current Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists**

At the same time, analyzing the Code of Ethics of Chinese Journalists for the period from 1994 to 2019, it can be stated that journalism in China currently has certain problems with value orientation. These include the following problems:

#### 1. The procedure for general discussions is imperfect

In order for media norms to standardize the professional behavior of journalists, it is necessary that the majority of journalists be able to freely participate in the discussion. The way the code is currently formulated shows that the process of joint discussion between the news media, journalists, the public, government and representatives of non-governmental organizations is flawed. Some of the "orders" came directly from the Central Directorate of Propaganda and the General Directorate of Press and Publication, and some were voiced by non-governmental organizations, but the process as a whole lacked openness and transparency.

2. Lack of professional focus: political discourse has largely replaced professional discourse. With the development of Chinese society and changes in the journalism environment, the Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists has been revised

four times: in April 1994, January 1997, November 2009 and November 2019. Statistical analysis shows that the Code of Ethics of Chinese Journalists contains many words that are very familiar to the Chinese people, and many of these words are political terms, such as socialism, masses, party, people, propaganda and other frequently used political terms. They reflect the strong political attributes of journalism in China, closely linked to changes in the political environment.



Figure 10 - Word cloud images for the Code of Ethics of Chinese Journalists in 1994, 1997, 2009 and 2019 respectively.

In China's specific social system, the importance of the Party must be emphasized, and the terminology used in journalism must be related to political vocabulary. However, when political symbols are misused and combined with terminology from other industries, the original deep political meaning becomes formalized and sloganizing, and the specific meaning of journalism is lost.

For example, in Chinese, the terms “to protect” (维护), “to serve” (服务), “to

benefit” (有利于), and “to observe” (遵守) are often associated with political terms. At the same time, there are many words, such as “shouldn’t” (不要) and “don’t” (不得), that convey more prohibitive commands to news media workers. Currently, the norms of journalism in China are set from the top, and the code is general, with no discussion and mutual discussion among journalists, as well as cooperation between different news organizations on ethical requirements for journalists. Thus, the journalistic profession lacks self-regulation and internal debate.

Regarding the language used in the Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists, it contains a lot of terminology that lacks relevance. For example, it contains expressions such as “sincere service to the people,” “upholding the constitution, laws and discipline,” and “promoting the spirit of unity and cooperation.” These expressions apply equally to areas such as education and health care. This example reflects the fact that the Chinese professional journalistic code does not take into account the specific requirements of Chinese journalism, which differ from those of other industries.

3. Low practicality. Professional standards should include the ideals associated with the profession, attitudes, responsibilities, requirements for professional skills, discipline, rewards, etc., and the provisions contained in them should be more complete and specific, such that they can give practical understanding of professional behavior and the restrictions placed on it.

4. Problems in managing journalism and lack of balance between responsibility, authority and interests. From the point of view of professional standards, the responsibilities, powers and interests of journalists must be harmonized. The rules should more precisely regulate the scope of powers and interests of journalists. Any profession imposes certain social obligations on a person living in society, but at the same time, the legal rights of people must be protected.

The current Code of Ethics for Chinese Journalists does not clearly differentiate between the responsibilities, powers and interests of Chinese journalists, which leads

to an imbalance. Too much emphasis is placed on journalists' responsibility, especially political responsibility, while less attention is paid to social responsibility. The power of journalists and the protection of their interests is controversial, and there is a lack of attention to the relationship between the powers and interests of journalists and the interests of audiences.

In the long term, journalists are too concerned about taking on political responsibility and will face the formalization of news content and a lack of accountability in society. All this will lead to the fact that in a competitive market, journalists will lack depth of attention to the news, as well as the lack of a clear sense of social responsibility, as a result of which they will tend to focus on their personal interests, gradually deviating from journalistic ethics and losing public support .

5. Existing professional norms of journalism can easily lead to the formation of a large number of “unwritten rules”.

In the digital era, all industries are experiencing a period of rapid development, so the problems of professional standards of Chinese journalism are expanding, and their solution is to a certain extent delayed. Some media and online companies have developed their own regulations regarding news content and requirements for journalists. In a market economy, different norms of different media organizations have led them to focus more on news products that can directly bring economic benefits, and not pay enough attention to important social news.

At the same time, the lack of uniform norms in society makes possible the emergence of shortcomings and loopholes in the management of journalism. This makes Chinese journalists' code of ethics even more ineffective and creates a vicious circle in society.

### 3.3. The development trend of digital journalism research methods in China

Since around 2010, Chinese journalism has produced ongoing research into the crisis and challenges facing journalism in the digital age, as well as the cultural logic underlying digital technologies. The modern approach to digital journalism in China is based on positivism and the use of computer technology to collect new forms of news texts and related data<sup>93</sup>.

**Digital journalism** is a new form of information dissemination in which “digital” and “journalism” interact.

As an emerging field of journalism research, digital journalism has spawned a variety of new research forms over the past decade, including data journalism, immersive journalism, and algorithmic journalism.

Data journalism was one of the first journalism theories in the digital age to attract the attention of theoretical researchers. Data journalism in a broad sense refers to the creation of news stories that use data to improve their content and communication effect, while data journalism in a narrow sense refers to emerging digital journalism that uses big data as a provider of content and form, with rich visualization as external design. In recent years, data journalism has been one of the central topics of digital journalism research in China. The use of big data and computer technology in the production, dissemination and reception of news is explored, and the trend towards "informatization" is questioned. Exploring the interactive, transparent and diverse nature of data journalism, the commercial and government forces behind big data are explained.

Since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus in 2020, Chinese society has used digital news to play an important role in social health and social governance, which

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<sup>93</sup> Zhang Shixuan. Analysis of the evolution of the value orientation of Chinese journalism in the context of digital reform // *Modern scientist*. 2023 No. 2(44). pp. 31–36. URL: <https://sujournal.ru/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/su-2.pdf>.



On the other hand, data and image analysis through digital news promotes the popularization of medical knowledge on epidemic prevention. At the same time, combined with modern devices, everyone's personal information is tracked. Through some measures, this has greatly simplified China's healthcare system and epidemic prevention system. Entering different types of data into the same chart can make it difficult to understand. In the face of publicly available data, the Visualization and Visual Analysis Laboratory of Peking University has carried out some visualization work. According to the characteristics of the data presented, various chart forms were selected (including: epidemic barometer, national epidemic situation, zero growth map, epidemic situation, epidemic trajectory, volunteer of various provinces and cities)<sup>96</sup>. As the picture shows:

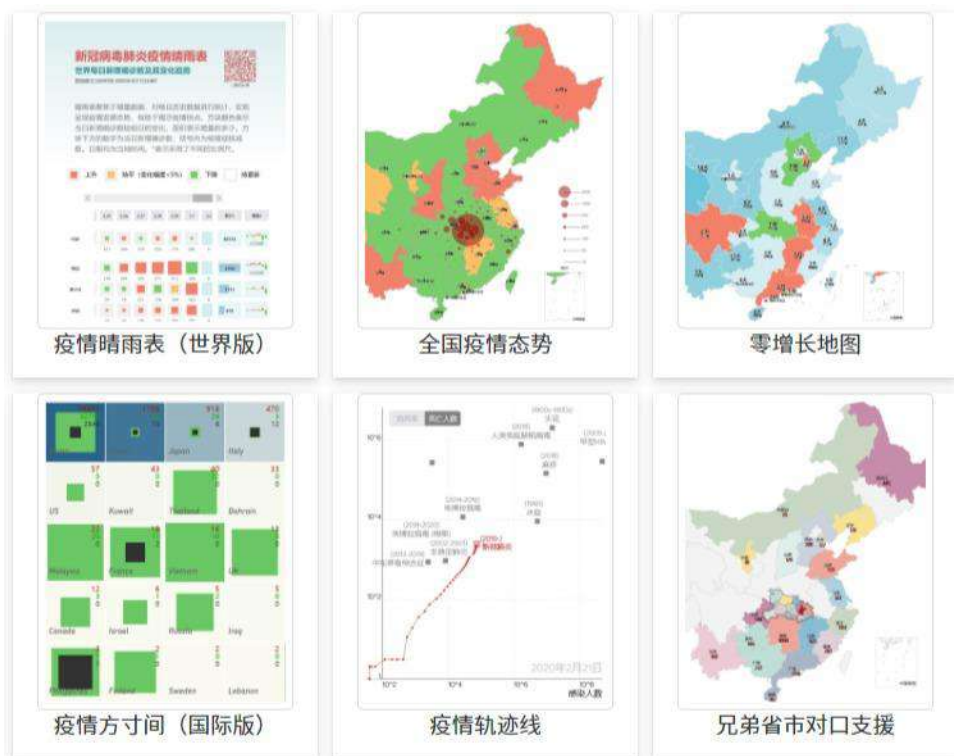


Figure 12 - Examples of visual analysis of the novel coronavirus outbreak used in Chinese media.

<sup>96</sup> A story of 763 confirmed patients, reconstructing the path of spread of the new coronavirus across the country <https://cn.gijn.org/2020/03/03/ncov-data/> Date of visit: 03/04/2020



The dissemination and use of data journalism has been made possible by the development of digital technologies and the promotion of the concept of visualization. The media embodies the principles of journalistic transparency by revealing the raw data on nationally important events. Also, in the digital era, data from social networks is important, which reflects the direction of citizen discussions and public opinion about any events. However, nowadays data journalism also faces problems of behind-the-scenes information, uniform expression of information and its homogeneity.

In the future, the research focus of data journalism in China will focus more on data source research, data expansion, and innovation in presentation forms. These studies will make data journalism a more effective supporting tool for interpreting more complex information.

**Immersive journalism** generally refers to a form of journalism that uses augmented reality technology. Viewers can immerse themselves in a news scenario using all their senses, resulting in a completely new experience. Since 2015, some world-famous news organizations have been experimenting with immersive news production, and this new form of news has also attracted the attention of Chinese digital news researchers. The current stage of development of immersive journalism includes three directions: studying how virtual reality technology affects traditional methods of storytelling; analysis of changes in user psychology and journalistic ethics from the point of view of user psychology; an analysis of the changes that the implementation of new technology will have on the concept of news production and journalism, as well as possible future effects on public culture. Compared to data journalism research, immersive journalism has emerged much more recently, and work theorizing immersive journalism based on digital journalism research perspectives is only maturing in 2019, with more studies beginning to examine



immersive journalism from the perspective of the culture around the virtual reality technology itself<sup>97</sup>.

Although virtual technology has become the cutting-edge technology of digital information since its inception and is expected to become the next universal computing platform after the Internet, the development of immersive journalism suffers from high production costs and long production cycles. For example, the famous VR special effects film “HELP!”, a short film lasting only five minutes, cost US\$5 million<sup>98</sup>; Sina.com produced "Mountain Village Kindergarten", which also cost US\$1 million<sup>99</sup>.

The technological development of immersive journalism currently has some limitations and cannot yet replace other types of news genres. However, the emergence of immersive journalism has once again revolutionized the way information is disseminated and, to a certain extent, changed the way audiences receive and understand information, and also contributed to the development of information dissemination.

**Algorithmic journalism**, also known as "automated journalism" or "robotic journalism" in China. Algorithmic journalism means that the production and distribution of news is guided by artificial intelligence and relies on the search and selection of big data to produce content and disseminate information. The emergence of algorithmic journalism has forced researchers to pay more attention to the application of artificial intelligence technologies in journalism. Existing experience includes:

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<sup>97</sup> Mabrook R, Singer J B, 2019. Virtual reality, 360 video, and journalism studies: conceptual approaches to immersive technologies [J]. *Journalism Studies*, 20(14): 2096 — 2112.

<sup>98</sup> How much do VR films cost? Less than 10 million dollars in 10 minutes <http://vr.sina.com.cn/news/report/2016-06-24/doc-ifxtmwei9254377.shtml> Access date: 10/02/2020

<sup>99</sup> Want to watch VR+ news anywhere, anytime? You will have to wait at least another 10 years <http://tech.sina.com.cn/roll/2017-06-25/doc-ifyhmpew3315195.shtml> Access date: 10/02/2022

1. Analysis and critique of the influence of algorithms and various aspects of news production, including issues of accuracy, reliability and transparency of news information;
2. Critical consideration of the potential value orientations and ethical problems of algorithmic journalism, as well as attempts to create a new system of value orientations in the context of AI technology;
3. Reflections on the direction of development of algorithmic technologies and specific power structures;
4. Analysis of the psychological and value orientation of the process of producing algorithmic news in relation to the subjects (news editors and news users);
5. Analysis of the image of AI technology in journalistic culture and the ideology of digital journalism.

At present, Chinese scholars have formed a unique style and characteristics in the research of algorithmic news, such as exploring the concept of "information cocoon" from different perspectives, studying the cognition and value of news users through algorithms, news recommendation mechanism and psychosocial effects.

Since language is the most important means of communication and an ideological and cultural carrier for the dissemination of information by humans, the development of linguistic intelligence is an important sign of the high technological effectiveness of artificial intelligence. The emergence of intelligent text technologies is an objective condition for the emergence of algorithmic news. The research divisions of intelligent text technologies around the world include: OpenAI, ARRIA, AutomatedInsights, NarrativeScience, Google, Microsoft, etc., and the main divisions in China are: Ali, Baidu, Tencent, JD.com, etc.

On December 1, 2022, OpenAI, a research institution headquartered in San Francisco, USA, released the natural language generation model GPT, an artificial intelligence capable of automatically generating responses based on user input. Since it is very close to the response rate of a real person, in February 2023, ChatGPT

discussion also became active on China's Sina Weibo. According to a survey published by China News Network, 50% of Chinese netizens believe that ChatGPT will replace their jobs<sup>100</sup>.

The artificial intelligence technology introduced by CHATGPT will undoubtedly have a huge impact on the journalism industry. Its positive role is expressed in: huge information resources, faster and more convenient assistance and inspiration for employees. Of course, its function is not limited to the dialogue form, people can use it to update old working models, for example: automatically generating drawings, integrating with computer search engines in the form of auxiliary tools, etc. By combining the functions of computer search, people can intuitively interact with content. For example: Google's ChatGPT tool uses ChatGPT technology, when you search for a shopping word, a summary and explanation of the search content will be displayed, making it easier for people to find information.

At the same time, the news operation of the new intelligent text technology introduced by ChatGPT still has certain problems. These include:

1. Insufficient accuracy of answers, and questions for which the AI does not know the answers are created “at its own discretion” and are not reliable. A Daily Economic News reporter said in an interview: “Two days ago, we asked ChatGPT which country the poet Bei Dao (Kitajima) is from, and the AI answered that it was Japan, but thanks to feedback in the last two days, it changed the answer to China.”<sup>101</sup> So, even with the most advanced AI, the answers it provides still cannot be fully adopted for human use directly. And news content that relies entirely on intelligently generated content is also unlikely to be reliable. It still needs to be checked by a

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<sup>100</sup> 50% of netizens surveyed believe that ChatGPT will replace them at work. URL: <https://weibo.com/1684012053/Msd8J0rDX?type=reply>. Access date: 03/01/2023.

<sup>101</sup> ChatGPT, the most powerful chatbot, has come to steal jobs again? URL: [https://china.zjol.com.cn/202302/t20230207\\_25392220.shtml](https://china.zjol.com.cn/202302/t20230207_25392220.shtml). Access date: 03/01/2023.

human. Thus, at the moment, the heart of algorithmic journalism remains a person, and the new technology is still only a tool that helps a person in his work.

2. When computing-generated content touches on human morality, ethics and other issues, the result will be uncontrollable, causing hatred, rumors and discrimination. Although ChatGPT is designed to limit ethical issues, it can easily be unlimited by humans.

3. Insufficient modernity of content. Artificial intelligence lacks the timeliness and richness of language. Because creating ChatGPT requires a very large language model, which requires a huge amount of money and time. Human culture and language constantly generate new content and popular vocabulary, and it is difficult for modern artificial intelligence technologies to synchronize them over time. Thus, when modern AI is used as a simple human assistant, the answers can be used at the user's discretion without having a big impact on journalism. However, if AI is used for commercial purposes, its accuracy and controllability must be improved.

Overall, despite being the most advanced technology introduced by ChatGPT so far, there are still many challenges in the research and use of algorithmic news. AI can only replace content with simple logic, and is far from being able to replace more creative content. But the capabilities will help AI journalists work more efficiently.

However, from a social point of view, increasing the efficiency of news work due to the emergence of new technologies will inevitably entail problems in social employment. The relative decline in demand for journalists will cause journalists to face difficulties in finding employment due to the limited number of positions. Thus, artificial intelligence itself still needs human management, but it will inevitably lead to a reduction in the number of people working with simple texts, which will increase the efficiency of senior journalists. All these are pressing issues facing the development of journalism in China today.

**New Thinking—An exploration of the critique of digital journalism.**

Chinese journalism studies takes a critical view of opposites and unity in its thinking, and a number of critical studies on the emergence of new technologies have emerged. These include critiques of Western digital democracy, reflections on digital labor, and critiques of digital utopia.

Critique of e-democracy. Digital journalism reveals a false “freedom of expression”, supposedly creating the illusion of “democracy”. For example, McChesney points out that while digital journalism purports to create connections between people and achieve formal democracy, in reality the capitalist system that controls Internet companies reinforces the segregation of classes and groups of people in digital space through strategies that allow for more effective segmentation. market than ever before, making it more difficult to generate genuine public will and resistance. This is essentially moving towards the antithesis of democracy<sup>102</sup>. Chinese scholar Lu Guoliang also views digital journalism as an integral part of the global “colonization of data”<sup>103</sup>. This process allows for the gradual "capitalization" of human life itself in new ways, with much greater detail, degree and precision than we previously expected from the capitalization of everyday life<sup>104</sup>. This line of thought argues for the need to analyze digital journalism, tied to the study of the new political and economic foundations of global capitalist culture in the context of digital technologies.

Digital labor market research. Digital labor is a vibrant and richly productive modern critical theory, which in China is seen as the application of Marxist labor theory and the doctrine of surplus value to the space of information production on the Internet. She explains the nature of “work” and “consumption” in the digital

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<sup>102</sup> McChesney R W, 2013. Digital disconnect: How capitalism is turning the Internet against democracy [M]. New Press

<sup>103</sup> Lu Guoliang. Material traces of data colonization: A dialogue between data colonialism theory and media infrastructure studies[J]. Journalism, 2022(06): 86-96. doi: 10.15897/j.cnki.cn51-1046/g2.20220620.011.

<sup>104</sup> Chang Jiang, Tian Hao, 2020. Nick Coudry: Data Colonialism - The Last Stage of Colonialism - Marxism and the Critique of Digital Culture [J]. Journalism (2): 2.

media environment, through an examination of digital communications and media, as well as user behavior on online platforms. In recent years, digital labor theory has become an important framework for studying the survival and identity of journalists and news users in the digital journalism industry. For example, “freelance journalists” in the digital age, in the name of “freedom,” have been deeply influenced by high-tech news companies and become “digital slaves.”

In 2019, Chinese scholars Wu and Wal<sup>105</sup> conducted research on the production and dissemination of citizen journalism on the WeChat platform, they proposed a new concept of digital surplus value analysis and labor condition analysis, which opens up new perspectives for the study of digital journalism in China.

### **Criticism of digital utopianism.**

Digital utopia, or what has been called technological utopia and cyber utopia. Scientists believe in technological determinism and remain extremely optimistic about science. They also believe that with the help of digital utopias it is possible to achieve progress in the field of technology, especially digital technology, which can solve most of the problems of human society and lead to the creation of an ideal utopian society.

The development of digital utopianism arose almost simultaneously with the development of digital culture and represents, to varying degrees, the fanatical attitude of many scientists and the general public towards digital technologies. Critics believe that this is a false image created by the media and high-tech companies, and that the “network culture” actually serves to maintain the stability of the current system. The social conditions necessary for the realization of a digital utopia are difficult to achieve in real social structures, and researchers should remember its illusory nature while perceiving the situation sensibly.

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<sup>105</sup> Wu Y, Wall M, 2019. Prosumers in a digital multiverse: An investigation of how WeChat is affecting Chinese citizen journalism [J]. *Global Media and China*, 4(1): 36 – 51.

A critique of digital utopia attempts to provide theoretical ideas about values for understanding the political nature and historical role of culture in the digital age. Its main theoretical demand is to oppose all forms of determinism, maintain a dialectical understanding of new technologies in the context of historical and social progress, and remain conscious of the illusory nature of digital technologies.

## Conclusion

On the one hand, Chinese journalism has cultural attributes and is based on serving the public interests of political parties and society; on the other hand, the development of journalism in the digital age relies on a huge commercial market. These are objective conditions for studying the value orientation of Chinese journalism in the digital era.

The value orientation of journalism is the ethical analysis of Chinese journalism and the analysis of the realities of Chinese society from the perspective of communication. The essence of digital journalism has not changed as news production technology has changed, and many of these core principles still play a role today.

Media and information have a symbiotic relationship. The media can influence real society and even reshape the entire world through the dissemination of information. Technological development sometimes does not exactly lead to a more civilized society, but its opposite also manifests itself in technological monopolies and the blind cult of technology. From the moment a new technology is created, a new culture is implied. The application and dissemination of this technology will inevitably lead to the birth of a new way of thinking, a new way of life and a new ideology that will influence the direction of society.

The new characteristics of journalism in the digital age and China's unique social culture have both contributed to the transformation of journalism. They also gave rise to a number of new problems, such as changing public opinion about journalism, the contradiction between the public and commodity attributes of journalism, bias in audience access to information, and so on. And this context has faced certain psychological changes for journalists and many new social phenomena in terms of impact on the audience.

Value orientation refers to the values reflected in the choice of news content by the subject of news communication in the process of news communication.



Therefore, the characteristics of digital journalism have also reconstructed the traditional values of Chinese social journalism.

On the one hand, digital technologies contribute to greater diversity of news content. For a long time, news in China tended to be propaganda for a single political cause. However, in the new generation, journalism is no longer the only tool for political propaganda, but at the same time offers a wider range of functions. In particular, with the advent of the Internet as a new media, the meaning of journalism becomes more diverse in terms of public information and cultural knowledge, and its functions become more diverse as it becomes more connected to its audience.

On the other hand, there is a greater democratization of journalism. In the new era, journalism is becoming more closely connected with the people and is not one-sided propaganda. Since ancient times, Chinese texts have been more about retelling history from the point of view of the emperor, the hero of the story, the family, or the state. This approach has resulted in Chinese news reporting focusing more on macro-level information about society and not enough attention on individual lives.

In the digital age, getting closer to audiences has also led to news content becoming more focused on the plight of the individual. More vital news content and greater accessibility to news content have led to a more democratic and pluralistic approach to journalism, not only in terms of the relationship between the communicator and the audience, but also because the audience has become a decisive force in shaping the fate of the media.

Digital journalism, as a new way of studying journalism, criticizes, rethinks and inherits the value orientations of journalism.

Although digital news has its roots in the development and continuity of traditional journalism, it challenges journalism theory and journalistic research methods.

The emergence of new things will inevitably have an impact on old thinking. Therefore, China's digital journalism in the new era pays more attention to the

aspects of reflection and criticism, and its theoretical research work should consider the discourse of technological optimism. Thus, a necessary premise of digital journalism is that journalism gives new meaning to technology.

Different forms of digital news have similar psychological and emotional states when communicating in different social and cultural environments around the world, which will enrich people's new thinking about humanism. This means that it is possible to extract common concepts from different types of digital news and analyze their structure.

The commonalities in theoretical research on digital news forms between China and the West are greater than the differences. Thanks to the development of China's digital technology, Chinese scholars also have rich research experience in studying many issues of journalism in the digital era (such as the analysis of "information cocoons", the study of issues of value orientations, algorithmic news, etc.) And these studies and experience have of great importance for the study of digital technologies and production around the world.

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