

ARTICLE

Analysis in Results Production Mode of Chinese Media Type Think-Tank

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ABSTRACT

Purpose / Significance: Through the analysis in the results production mode of the Chinese media type think-tank based on the media operation structure and communication platform, found there are structure and cooperation problems of spread and research line, team cooperation and transformation problem of research and spread, research production and media production positioning problem, and spread channel widening problem, this paper tries to provide a useful suggestions for the current traditional media transformation encourage the media type think tank go abroad, raise the international influence, personalize the products, make it into Boutique, become a brand and the development strategy of the new think-tank with Chinese characteristics. **Methods / Processes:** analysis the results production model of media-based think tank from four aspects: category, characteristics, existing problems and development trend. **Results / conclusion:** the achievements of Chinese media-based think tanks will follow a new development trend through the establish of cooperative innovation system, achievements make and press system of “all media tendency”, market-oriented transformation theory, brand strategy, and exerting international influence.

1. Introduction

In recent years, many Chinese media like Xinhua News Agency, People’s Daily, south window media, have begun to try to transform into think tanks. As the media think-tank gradually becomes an important part of the new type of think-tank in China, its production model based on the media operation structure and communication platform has gradually formed, showing distinct characteristics from other types of think tanks.

As of 2019, more than 50 media outlets, including 8 central media like Xinhua, People’s Daily, 12 local media like south window media and more than 20 market-oriented media, have announced the establishment of think-tank

business units or the overall transformation to think-tank. Joel Wuthnow & Dingding Chen (2020) mentioned, In 2018, the Chinese government announced 25 state-level high-end think tanks, and Xinhua News Agency is the only media think-tank. Xinhua News Agency or New China News Agency is the official state-run press agency of China. Xinhua is the biggest and most influential media organization in China, as well as the largest news agency in the world in terms of correspondents worldwide. Xinhua is a ministry-level institution subordinate to the State Council and is the highest ranking state media organ in the country alongside the People’s Daily.

This paper will discuss the classification, characteristics, structure and cooperation problem of spread and re-

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search line, team cooperation and transformation problem of research and spread, research production and media production positioning problem, and spread channel widening problem and development trend of some representative media think-tank in China, so as to provide reference for the media transformation and the development of new think-tank in China.

2. Literature Review

Joel Wuthnow & Dingding Chen believe that While private think tanks have used a variety of strategies to secure funding and access to officials, a major constraint is the continuing influence of their state-run counterparts. Pascal Abb and Patrick Koellner(2015) think that China today hosts the second-largest think tank scene in the world, and many Foreign policy think tanks have received influxes of funding and increased the academic qualifications of their staffers in recent years. Foreign policy think tanks are in many ways linked to the government. While they seek to inform and influence foreign and security policy as well as public discourse on international affairs, they usually do not act as agenda setters.

In this article, the writer try to use SWOT analysis to analyse what are the strong advantages and weakness, opportunities and threaten exist in current time, use the data provide by Chinese government think tank resources Xinhua News Agency and local governmental media like South Window to make comparison.

3. Main Findings

3.1 Type Analysis of Results-Based Production Patterns of Media Think-Tank

The production of think tank results generally refers to the academic production process in which the think tank enters the research production process by accepting the government entrustment, undertaking the project, selecting independent topics and so on, and finally forms the academic production process of the ideological products such as consulting reports, research papers, academic reviews and so on.

Media think-tanks have not only media communication channels and public influence, but also the research ability and decision-making influence of think tanks. Media think-tanks still retain significant features of media production in production patterns. About influence side, media think tank has a long way to go to arrive the public.

The production mode of media think-tank is the production form and process of production through its own collection and research resources and through its own

media platform. So it has limitation of resources. The production of this kind of products is the iconic production form of media think-tank, and it is an important feature of the dissemination power and influence of think tank.

Compared with other think tanks, the results-based production model of think tanks can be divided into three types: Traditional production models for results, Media results-based production model, Innovative production models. The definitions and differences between each other are below.

3.1.1 Traditional Production Models for Results

The production process of the traditional think-tank results is mostly carried out through government entrustment, bidding project, self-design project of think-tank, participation in other think-tank or institution project research and so on. On the topic direction, generally around the government development blueprint and public policy research. For example, from Xinhua New Agency website, the *Xinhua News Agency* has approved the project of the Central Propaganda Department, “Belt and Road” Foreign Communication and Discourse System Construction. In addition to selecting topics around the government’s strategic planning and policy, the think tank will also focus on local economy, enterprise development and social hot spots.

The output forms of the think tank, such as research reports and research reports, are generally published in the internal publications of the think tank and submitted to the government and related units through special channels. Such as local media watchtower think-tank set up the internal reference journal “watchtower research”. And academic papers and works are through the form of public publication, forming academic appeal and public influence. At present, the traditional production mode of think tank still occupies a dominant position in the production of Chinese media think-tank.

Therefore, it is an important task and goal for media think-tanks to consolidate and strengthen the channel construction of reporting results, form a systematic internal research product line and serve the government’s decision-making needs.

3.1.2 Media Results-based Production Model

Media-type think tank not like traditional production models for results with governmental background, governmental arrange, **it is like semi-governmental** organization, its media form of results are both traditional paper publications, but also adapted to the Internet era of websites and electronic publications, APP, WeChat public number,

Weibo and so on. Media-based production model can be divided into two categories: news production model and research production model.

(1) News Products Production

Through the media think-tank’s external media and channels published news works, the main forms include investigation reports, current political commentary, economic situation analysis and so on. The production of news products is mainly done by the communication team of the think tank and some researchers, special experts and journalists are also involved in it. Because it is a news product produced by think-tank, it is no longer limited to stating and analyzing the causes of news events, but to explain the thinking of news events from the standpoint of observers and researchers and become an independent ideological work.

(2) Research Products Production

The main forms of research products include industrial development report, regional development report, economic situation analysis, public opinion report and so on. Think tank research team and external experts, with its own advantages of media resources to carry out research, more can reflect its advantages of media resources and communication channels, forming a good social communication power.

3.1.3 Innovative Production Models

The production of innovative products mainly includes evaluation index, conference forum and brand planning.

(1) Evaluation Index Product Production

On the basis of the collection of certain objective data and theoretical research, a standardized measurement index system is established in the research field, and the qualitative and quantitative evaluation products are given to the research objects. For example, Zijin Media think-tank interprets, studies and publishes the economic confidence in the public data of listed companies and the economic confidence index of Chinese people.

(2) Meeting Forum Product Production

With the help of the public relations propaganda ability of media-based think-tanks, we build and expand resources and circle platform operation, and gather experts and scholars to make suggestions and suggestions through holding closed meetings, round tables and public forums, so as to form the unique results of think-tanks. “Watch tank”, for example, launched a series of “future forums” conference products.

(3) Brand Planning Products

Brand planning products are produced by accepting customizable brand planning products. For example, the south window media think tank in recent years through

undertaking government and research institutions large-scale activities publicity, commemorative publications, video production and other projects to form a market-oriented product production model.

3.2 Characteristics and Advantages of Results Production Mode of Medium Size Think Tank

China’s media-based think-tanks, with abundant media resources, media-oriented operation characteristics and diversified results of think-tanks, have formed a new model of production of think-tanks with obvious characteristics and advantages.

3.2.1 Diversified Resources, Communication and Interactive Platforms

The Chinese media think-tank itself has a huge database of traditional media information, author, topic and content. Some of these media after the transformation of think tanks, the original database to adapt to the development of think tanks, the formation of data and information platform, expert exchange platform, research platform and think tank results platform and other new think tank information platform (see figure 1).

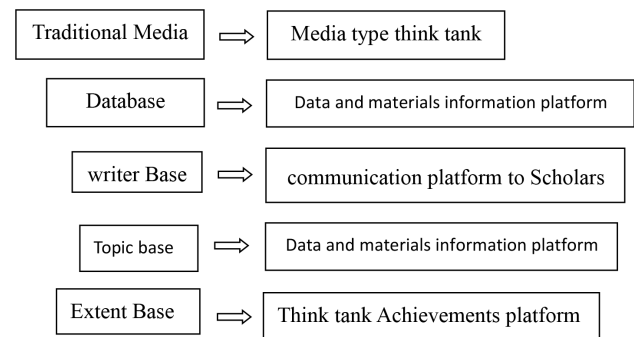


Figure 1. Database Transformation from Media to Media Think Tank

Taking the lookout thinktank as an example, its “Xinhua big data new think-tank cloud” is based on the database data accumulated by traditional media. It is mainly composed of interactive platform of data and information, online exchange platform of experts, open research platform of topic and display platform of results of think tank. Its goal is to become a comprehensive platform of crowd sourcing, crowd funding and online evaluation of thought interaction, achievement display and subject research [5].

Database is a valuable information resource and resource platform for media think-tank. Media think-tank can develop data products and form data assets through database resources, and can also use the platform to absorb and use favorable resources to expand the width and

breadth of the production line of think tank products.

3.2.2 A Pool of Research and Communication Professionals

Media think-tanks need “Outsider scholar” energy to hire researchers from universities and scientific research institutions, but also retain a considerable number of editors, journalists, a small number of them have research potential, have a unique view of current politics, the economy, expert journalists, editors who are good at in-depth reporting gradually try to transform to researchers, its main composition and sources are shown in Figure 2.

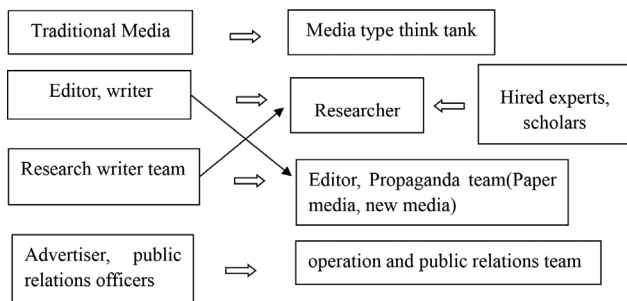


Figure 2. Main Composition of Media Think Tank

For example, the south wind window media think-tank research team is mainly composed of south wind window editor-in-chief, deputy editor-in-chief, executive editor-in-chief and other six people composed of a high-level editorial team. Watchtower now has more than 200 full-time researchers, editors and journalists.

3.2.3 Unique Production Processes that Blend Production and Communication

In the general think tank results production process, the work order of the communication end often occurs after the production end, and the results production is completed into the next communication process, showing a single line of development model (see Figure 3).

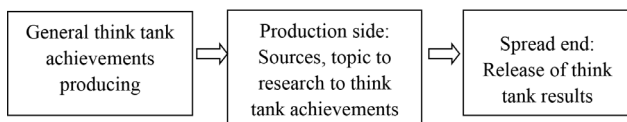


Figure 3. Production Processes for General Think Tank Results

The news products in media think-tanks become important ways to attract audience, guide public opinion and expand the influence of think-tanks through the analysis and observation of current politics and economic situation. Therefore, the communication end is no longer a subsidiary production end of the channel or tool. With the production end join into the production process, there is

no sequence, no status, and the communication end of the product production can also be regarded as another form of expression of the production end.

Compared with ordinary think-tanks, the news products of media think-tanks can not only provide direction and clues for their research, but also spread the views of their think tanks to the broad audience of think tanks, and gradually form a unified production process of production and dissemination in the production of products, and it is possible to form an integrated system of results under the idea of unified planning, showing a unique model (see Figure 4).

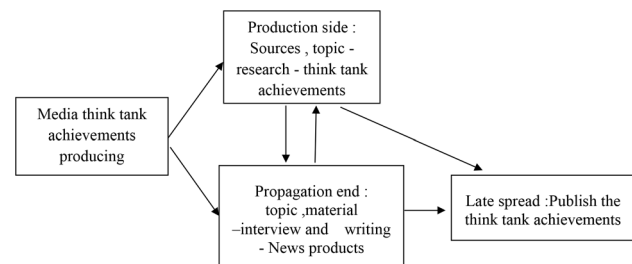


Figure 4. Main Results Production Processes of Media Think Tank

3.2.4 Product Production Model under Market-oriented Mechanism

Media think-tanks, due to the media, born with their own communication resources, channels and audiences, compared with other think-tanks, more influential communication after the transformation of think-tanks, related resources, talent also part into think-tanks, bring flexible development vitality. In three respects:

First: In the production of research think-tanks, media think-tanks are good at giving play to innovative mechanisms, through cooperation with institutions, enterprises and institutions to undertake projects, play their own advantages. For example, from the *People’s Forum of People’s Daily Society* the *People’s Forum of People’s Daily Society* has established an independent civil intelligence market research organization through the financing mechanism. It is not only an exploration of independent third-party research institutions, but also a major innovation in the operation mechanism of media think-tanks by undertaking ministry survey topics, index research, data evaluation and output.

Second: Media think tanks generally own their own paper publications and “two micro (*WeChat*, *Weibo*) end (news client APP)” new media. Business mindset to run its media well and rebuild the advertising operation mode is also another important way of thinking about the marketization of media-based think tank products. In 2013,

from Watchtower database, for example, Watchtower set up its first self-media alliance, the rhino finance and economics alliance, to foster its *WeChat* public numbers and invest considerable marketing expenses to actively develop the advertising business of well-known customers.

Third: Media think-tanks tend to be more market-oriented when developing innovative products. Media think-tank has rich media resources and professional operation team, the public has a high degree of trust in its media research, publicity planning ability and quality. For example, from the *People's Network Research Institute* website, the *People's Network Research Institute* through the organization of public marketing activities, organized media salon and other forms to achieve market-oriented results^[4].

3.3 Current Issues in the Production of Media-based Think Tanks

The deep integration of research and communication is an important feature of the production mode of media think-tanks, and in the current construction of media think-tanks, the integration of research and communication must face many bottlenecks and problems that need to be solved.

3.3.1 Communication and Research Production Line Architecture and Coordination Issues

One of the major features of the production model of media think-tank is that communication and production line go hand in hand. Most media think-tanks have evolved from traditional media, among which there are problems such as communication, research system structure, and coordination of working mechanism. This involves a series of new and old policy coordination problems, process combing problems, market-oriented development of funds and the introduction of talent establishment, flexible compensation and other issues.

3.3.2 Collaboration and Transformation of Research and Communication Teams

Most media think tanks have two teams of researchers and communicators. This raises several questions: first, how the communication team can effectively realize the transformation of think tank, and guide the work thinking and skills of traditional media personnel to the work field of think tank. Second, how to give full play to the enthusiasm of the research team, so that it can play a greater role in the two production lines of traditional research products and media products with the cooperation of the communication team. Third, how to carry on the effective performance appraisal to the research team and the dissemination team personnel, implements the scientific reasonable

incentive policy.

3.3.3 Positioning of Research and Media Products

At present, the production of media think-tank still has the problem of homogeneity and typology. Among them, there is the question of how to differentiate the products of media think-tanks and other think tanks. For example, how its research products reflect its own communication advantages while showing its unique research strength. When the media products compete with the media, especially the new media products, what kind of product orientation and development route should be established^[2].

3.3.4 Expansion of Product Distribution and Distribution Channels

At present, most media think-tanks set up by the central media have special reporting channels, such as watchtower self-built high-end reporting channels, has become the central government's trusted reporting point, and has opened up direct reporting decision-making departments of internal communication lines. For most other media think-tanks, on the one hand, the lack of transmission channels through the decision-making department, on the other hand, its communication platform compared with the current rapid development of new media also lack a broader influence, so in decision-making influence and public communication power is insufficient.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

4.1 The Development Trend of Results Production in China Media Think Tank

Nowadays, with the increasingly fierce competition in the field of think tanks and the pressure of traditional media transformation, the pace of development of media think-tanks in China will further develop rapidly and usher in a new trend of development. But for the structure improvement of Chinese think tank, cooperation of research team and communication team, transformation, positioning research products and media products, spread to public and do more important research, it has a long way to go.

4.2 Give Full Play to the Advantages of the Cooperative Alliance of Think Tanks to Form a Collaborative Innovation Mechanism for Production of Results

On the one hand, building cooperative alliance and giving full play to the advantages of collaborative innovation have become the general trend of the development of think tanks in the future. On the other hand, giving full play to

the advantages of media think-tanks and realizing communication and cooperation on a unified platform, it is urgent to establish innovative cooperation alliances between media think-tanks in different regions and fields. In this way, we can optimize the allocation of resources among think tanks, strengthen the exchange of personnel, information and results, and realize the optimization of the results and effectiveness of media think-tanks^[3].

4.3 Improving and Optimizing the Production and Dissemination System of “Everybody is the Media”

In order to meet the requirements of the transformation of the Internet era, most of the media have established “all media” news centers. As a research institution, media think-tanks should take the research as the logical starting point of all media news centers, push editing center transform to research-center. And form the standard process construction of integration of editing and research.

4.4 Specialized and Market-oriented Production and Operation of Products

In order to develop a powerful media think tank, we must make good use of products and resources to form a development trend of specialization and marketization. Make it economy effective. In the aspect of specialization, media think-tanks should make use of their own professional advantages, especially in the new economy and other fields to collect and study information data, and carry out frontier project research around the key areas of scientific and technological innovation and industrial transformation. For example, the analysis and monitoring of public opinion, the operation and service of data platforms and advertising planning in the field of data, etc.; in the market-oriented development of product production and operation, media think tanks should set up a product operation service side outside the current product production end and dissemination end, and build a product operation and public planning team, dedicated to the operation and promotion of think tank products.

4.5 Personalization and Branding Development Strategy

Media think-tanks come from the media and have a brand effect. *Xinhua News Agency's* watchtower think tank, *Guangming Daily's* Guangming think tank, *Hubei Daily's* Yangtze River think tank, and so on, its set up think tanks enjoy high visibility and attention in society. It is an important choice for media think-tank to develop in the future to give full play to the brand effect and adopt the

strategy of individuation and fine-quality.

4.6 Production of Results Advocates “Going Abroad” and Exerting International Influence

At present, Chinese think tanks in international cooperation, strives for international discourse power, and enhances the appeal and influence of international public opinion is still extremely inadequate. The media think-tanks have inherent advantages in taking the road of international development, mainly reflected in two aspects. First, many media think-tanks are born out of traditional and authoritative media. Some media units at the central level, such as *Xinhua News Agency*, have its own accredited institutions and personnel abroad, have relatively mature international media and channels, and have initially constructed a certain international influence and voice. This laid the foundation for product promotion and promotion at its media think tank. Second, the media think-tank itself has a relatively strong communication team and research team, including a certain proportion of international talent, can adapt to the diversified, global work environment and research tasks.

Therefore, the production of media think-tanks must also actively advocate “going out”, expands the achievements of new think tanks with diversified thinking and international vision, carries out international dialogue and cooperation with foreign think tanks, convey the “Chinese voice” to the world, and strives to build a new type of think tanks with Chinese characteristics with full international influence and competitiveness^[1].

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