

Research on the Status Quo and Countermeasures of Public Opinions Communication in Guangdong Province's Think Tanks in the New Media Age*

Dan Lu

Beijing Normal University, Zhuhai
Zhuhai, China 519087

Abstract—This paper starts with the analysis of the communication mechanism of think tank, analyzes the importance of public opinion communication of think tank, and takes Guangdong think tank as an example, analyzes the current situation of public opinion communication of its think tank, summarizes its characteristics and shortcomings, so as to summarize the ways and strategies of improving and updating the communication mechanism of think tank.

Keywords—think tank; public opinion dissemination; the new media

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, China's think tanks have gradually exerted more and more influence in the process of government decision-making. Strengthening the construction of new think tanks with Chinese characteristics has become the goal of establishing a sound decision-making consultation system in China. As a special institution for generating and disseminating ideas, think tanks must establish a comprehensive public opinion communication mechanism. In the face of the advent of the new media era, think tanks must think about how to disseminate results in new forms, which also means it is more difficult for think tanks to achieve the influence of public opinion in the global information age, which makes the research on the current situation of public opinion communication of think tanks have practical significance.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC OPINION COMMUNICATION IN THINK TANKS AND ITS MECHANISM

According to the 2013 China Think Tank Report, in the specific context of the development of socialism with

Chinese characteristics, think tanks mainly refer to a professional research institution with public policy as the research object, influence on government decision-making as the research goal, public interest as the research orientation, and social responsibility as research guidelines. The Chinese think tank is an important part of the country's "soft power" and "discourse power", and has a profound impact on government decision-making, enterprise development, public opinion and public knowledge dissemination. It can be seen that in addition to providing professional and scientific decision-making in China, think tanks also carry the public opinion function of production decision-making knowledge and spread widely. At present, there are nearly 200 active think tanks across the country. The scale and speed of the construction of national think tanks will increase as government puts forward the goal of strengthening the establishment of a new type of think tank with Chinese characteristics and establishing a sound decision-making consultation system. As a special institution for generating and disseminating ideas, think tank must improve and perfect the mechanism of public opinion communication, avoid stereotyped thoughts, and enhance the influence of ideological information on public and government decision-making. Public opinion communication serves as core competitiveness of think tank. The construction of think tanks in Guangdong Province is in the forefront of the country, and it ranks third in the list of active think tanks, next to Beijing and Shanghai. To improve the participation of Guangdong think tanks in policy, influence the degree of decision-making, and enhance their "ideal opinions and competitiveness", it's a must to depend on the spread of public opinion in Guangdong think tanks. Strengthening and perfecting the research on the status quo of public opinion dissemination in Guangdong think tank is of great significance.

At present, the main communication mechanisms of think tanks are mainly the following:

A. Printing and Distribution of Publications

The publications of think tank include journals, books, research reports, and so on. Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the largest social science research think tank in China, has nearly 100 kinds of professional journals. Books

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published by think tanks are personal writings and collective writings. Common publications that are collectively completed include research reports, and there will also be special press releases for the publication of research results on major and urgent policy issues.

B. Holding Seminars and Forums

Think tanks generally combine their own superior resources to hold seminars and forums, etc., form professional advice or decision-making on social issues through exchanges and interactions of participants, and promote the value and purpose of think tanks. Some conference reports will be officially released in conjunction with the news media, or published as a book.

C. Cooperating with Professional Media Organizations

Expressing opinions and comments through the media is a very important way for think tanks to exert their influence. The think tank can attract the attention of the audience and decision-makers through the media platform and agenda setting of mass media. Think tank experts in China will express their thoughts and opinions in some columns of the

media, or spread the think tank information through interviews and reports of radio, television and some online media.

III. THE STATUS QUO OF PUBLIC OPINION PROPAGATION IN GUANGDONG PROVINCE

At present, there are 54 private social science research institutions and 133 provincial-level research societies registered in Guangdong social science federation. Guangdong has formed a pattern of joint development of official think tanks, policy think tanks, academic think tanks and non-governmental think tanks. The author selects several representatives from the official think tank, academic think tank, non-governmental think tanks, and takes the public opinion dissemination style as the main content, analyzed the general situation of the public opinion think tanks promotion. The public opinion spread of Guangdong think tanks is diversified and influential, and different types of think tanks have their own advantages in public opinion dissemination. But the think tank communication mechanism needs to be improved and updated in the new media era. (See "Table I")

TABLE I. THE FORM OF PUBLIC OPINION DISSEMINATION IN THE MAIN THINK TANKS OF GUANGDONG PROVINCE

Think tank name	Nature	Organization forum	Print medium	Network medium	Social media
Guangdong Academy of Social Sciences	Institutions, comprehensive philosophy and social science research institutions managed by government	Guangdong think tank forum, seminar	"Guangdong Social Science" magazine, "Asia-Pacific Economic Times" newspapers, papers, monographs, research reports	Chinese website Real-time update (no English website)	Weibo (504 fans)
Guangdong Social Sciences Association	Academic mass group	Lingnan Forum	Academic Research, Guangdong Academic Newsletter	Chinese website Live Update	/
Guangdong Provincial Economic Science Development Think Tank Promotion Association	Community responsible for think tanks	Think Tank Forum	The works of experts such as Zhu Youdi and Zhang Wuchang	/	/
South Nongovernmental Think-tank	China's first systematic nongovernmental think tank and online political platform initiated by oeeee.com and Nanfang Metropolis Daily	Network Politics Forum	Book Edition of "Network Politics"	Chinese network Live Update	Weibo

First, Guangdong Academy of Social Sciences is a comprehensive social science research institution directly under the People's Government of Guangdong Province. It serves as the "brain trust" and "think tank" of the provincial party committee and the provincial government. In the "2013 China Think Tank Report", it ranks third in the list of "Local Social Science Influence", next to the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and Beijing Academy of Social Sciences. The public opinion transmission platform construction of Guangdong Academy of Social Sciences is diversified, and the information dissemination content of many platforms is

rich. The journal "Guangdong Social Science" is the core publication of the Chinese Social Science Citation Index (CSSCI), which has certain authority in the professional field, and abundant forums and exchange activities. However, as the only unit in Guangdong Province selected as China's top think tank, it lags in the construction of the network communication platform in the new media era. For example, Guangdong Academy of Social Sciences opened its official Weibo account in November 2013. A total of 404 Weibo posts were published till July, 2019, all of which were related to the activities and achievements of the Academy of Social

Sciences. The number of comments and forwarding of multiple Weibo were zero, failing to play the interaction and communication feedback effect of social networking platforms. By the way, there is only Chinese version of the official website, but no English webpage. Meanwhile, the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and Beijing Academy of Social Sciences have English websites, which will promote the external dissemination and influence of the think tank's achievements.

Second, the Guangdong Social Sciences Association and the Guangdong Economic Science Development Think Tank Promotion Association are government-managed associations. The public opinion promotion of the two think tanks is dominated by traditional organizational forums and print media because of the influence of official background management. The website mainly introduces the activities and achievements of the group, and lacks the interactive nature of the communication. The website of the Guangdong Social Sciences Association will be updated in real time according to the work activities, while the website of the Guangdong Economic Science Development Think Tank Promotion Association has not been updated since May 2013. What's worse, the content of the website, in addition to the official work activities, lacks detailed results that reflect the decision-making results.

Third, the South China Research Center of Unirule Institute of Economics is the first branch, and was established in Guangzhou in July 2012. As the most influential non-governmental think tank in China, Unirule Institute of Economics aims to support and promote high-quality research on economic theory and frontier socio-economic issues, and provide new institutional innovation solutions for China's reform. The experts of Unirule Institute of Economics include first-rate economists, jurists, sociologists, and scholars in other disciplines of humanities and social sciences. In this way, the South China Research Center can enjoy a relatively strong expert resource, and its public opinion dissemination platform also relies on the content of Unirule Institute of Economics. The experts in Weibo have tens of thousands of followers, greatly increasing the scope and intensity of the radiation of public opinion in the think tank.

Fourth, South Nongovernmental Think-tank is a non-governmental organization initiated by oeeee.com, Nanfang Metropolis Daily, and many non-governmental thinkers in 2009, whose aim is to bring together the people of insight in the Pearl River Delta and the South to become the distribution center of folk thoughts in the South. In September 2009, the Provincial Women's Federation and the Nanfang Metropolis Daily jointly established the "Non-governmental Think-tank of Network Policy of Guangdong Women's Federation". South Nongovernmental Think-tank has planned many offline activities, such as the "Non-governmental politics — the Mass Forum of Pearl River Delta Planning Outline" and "Happy Guangdong Workers and Farmers Forum". The politics platform of oeeee.com takes the advantages of online media to let government agencies aware of the problems of many vulnerable groups, thus fully exerting the role of think tanks and forming a

benign interaction between the public, think tanks and the government. Thanks to the good social influence and deep policy promotion, the online political platform launched by the South Nongovernmental Think-tank won the first prize of the 20th News Column of China News Awards in 2010, which brought a climax of discussing online politics in the field of news communication and government management.

IV. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF THE THINK TANK PUBLIC OPINION COMMUNICATION OF GUANGDONG PROVINCE

In the new media era, information is transmitted through words, audio and video, internet, communication, etc. In this environment, it is necessary to follow the development trend of communication technology to promote the results of think tank and realize the interactive relationship with the media and the public. Therefore, the author puts forward the following countermeasures based on the analysis of the status quo of public opinion dissemination in the think tank of Guangdong Province:

A. Building a "Think Tank Media" to Create a Proactive Platform for Guangdong Think Tank to Disseminate Public Opinion

Guangdong Academy of Social Sciences, Guangdong Social Sciences Association, Guangdong Provincial Economic Science Development Think Tank Promotion Association and other think tanks have accumulated a lot of experience in publishing journal literature. They are more mature in the use of traditional printing media. However, given the development of technology and the change of interpersonal communication methods of the Internet age, it is a must to pay attention to the construction of online media and the use of social media. The experience of Western think tanks can be drawn from. Western think tanks have always attached great importance to the construction of their own media. The Heritage Foundation encourages scholars to participate in commentary programs of radio and television. It also purchased 90-minute TV session from PBS in 1982 for the public opinion promotion of the foundation. The Foundation had established two well-equipped radio studios by 1994 and 1996. In 2001, Brookings built his own radio and television studios to facilitate access to electronic media for scholars. In the era of Internet communication, some Western think tanks have used the Internet to establish a new media communication platform. For example, the Internet media has become an important part of the Brookings Institution's global communication strategy with fast, interactive and globalized information communication. It's necessary to invest heavily in the design, maintenance and updating of the network. On the Internet, the audience can not only read the policy report of the institute, purchase books, but also listen to, watch the conferences organized by the institute, and record or video the scholars receiving interviews on various electronic media. As long as the audience registers as a member, they can receive the latest free policy information and invitation information of the conference regularly. These sites also allow visitors to download all research materials for free. In addition, with the

member list of the managers, list of all scholars and their contacts published by the foundation's website, the audience can communicate directly with these scholars conveniently. In 2009, the Brookings Institution officially launched the Chinese website, whose main purpose is to enhance the brand awareness and policy influence of the Brookings Institution in China. At present, Among the websites of think tanks in Guangdong, South Nongovernmental Think-tank has received good public opinion communication effect thanks to the professional operation of oeeee.com, other websites have not played the role of online media and audience interaction, as their content are limited in agency activity news. The website of the Guangdong Academy of Social Sciences is the only Guangdong think tank selected into China's top think tank list. So far, there is no official English webpage, which hinders the external dissemination of information. In the construction of online media, Guangdong's non-governmental think tanks have done a better job. The construction of online political platform initiated by South Nongovernmental Think-tank and oeeee.com is of great significance. At present, most think tanks have their own websites, some of which also open Weibo, WeChat, forums, etc. to enhance the participation of topics and arguments. The public also prefer Internet to express their views and opinions on social issues and government policies. This requires think tank to attach importance to the integrity and utilization of its own media in the network environment in the process of information collection, decision-making and thought dissemination, and realize the communication with the public and the active dissemination of ideas from the self-running media. The construction of the publicity and guidance of the think tanks in other places outside the province has also provided lessons for Guangdong. For example, Wenzhou Think Tank, which was awarded the title of "Local Practice Base for the Construction of a New Type of Think Tank with Chinese Characteristics" in January 2015, formed a multi-disciplinary think tank system with "one headquarters (City Advisory Committee and Municipal Party Committee Political Research Office), three networks (party committee government think tank network, university think tank network and non-governmental think-tank network). The think tank system covers traditional forms such as printing and publishing, organizing forums, and expert consultations in the public opinion communication mechanism, build a new media think tank platform, which integrates text, vision, Weibo, WeChat, mobile APP and other forms of media communication to create a "Wenzhou sample" for the construction of think tanks within China. With the diversification of new media forms and the rapid development of communication technologies, it is necessary to change the promotion strategy for traditional media in the study of think tank communication. It's necessary to take advantage of new media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and mobile smart devices. It's a must to possess the ability to "speak" in traditional media, and spread information on various new media platforms. Of course, traditional media still plays a vital role in the construction of the national image. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out effective publicity in accordance with the actual situation in

Guangdong Province, to gather voices in China and foreign countries through the think tank platform, and to focus on building an international business card for think tank, and promote strategies in international public relations in a proactive manner. Through the construction of Twitter accounts, Facebook accounts, Sina Weibo accounts, WeChat public accounts and other possible forms with many followers and international influence, the think tank brand can be deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. It's necessary to use interpersonal connections to obtain exclusive information or interpretation of policies that can enhance the influence of think tanks, and to enhance the visibility and communication power of think tanks through the dissemination of new media and traditional media.

B. Extending the Influence with the Authority of Mainstream Media Through Its Combination with "Media Think Tank"

Think tank is the high-quality view and source of thought of the media. The media is the carrier and promoter of the public opinion dissemination of the think tank. Therefore, the social function of the think tank and the media are consistent. Their cooperation and integration can realize the complementation of advantages. Well-known think tanks in Western countries have carried out such practices in the last century. In the mid-1970s, think tanks of American conservative felt that they did not have say in mass media. Therefore, the enterprise institute under the leadership of Shibir Barudi began to market their ideas to the public through the media. Barudi has created a TV commentary and newspaper column on policy issues. Researchers in some think tanks often receive media interviews for commentary, or appear frequently on television, and some become columnists for newspapers. Some think tanks and media with similar ideological tendencies have also formed a network of mechanisms. The Heritage Foundation has a close relationship with the Washington Times. The activities and opinions of the former are often reported by the latter. The former in turn spread the reports widely and publicize them. Such cooperation can be combined with the "media think tank" to achieve long-term mutual help between think tanks and professional media. The media think tank is a professional intelligence service organization specializing in media planning and research. In China, some media with authority and credibility will build their own think tanks. For example, the Xinhua News Agency World Problem Research Center promotes decisions of central government by taking advantage of the talents and network of news agencies, referring to the news editorial department, focusing on international issues and China's issues, and making empirical and comparative research. There have been successful examples of cooperation between think tanks and media in China, such as the cooperation between Zhejiang Public Policy Research Institute and Zhejiang Daily Economic News Department in 2010. At the end of 2009, Public Policy Research Institute of Zhejiang Province held the "Zhejiang Regional Development and National Strategy Seminar" in Beijing to collect suggestions for the framework of the "Twelfth Five-Year Plan" in Zhejiang Province. The internal and public reports written by the reporters participating into

the seminar from Economic Department of Zhejiang Daily aroused great response. Therefore, Zhejiang Daily and Public Policy Research Institute of Zhejiang Province have established a normalized cooperation mechanism. Guangdong Province has gained some experience in the joint cooperation between think tanks and media. For example, Southern Weekly has a special commentary section by scholars and experts to enhance the ideological depth of news reports. Several major media groups in Guangdong enjoy strong influence throughout the country. The Southern Newspaper Media Group has also established a news research institute. South Nongovernmental Think-tank is the proof of the influence of the media think tank. The think tank has its own height and depth when observing and analyzing public affairs, and has given out a rational and constructive voice, creating the credibility and influence of "non-governmental think tank". In recent years, South Nongovernmental Think-tank that has 57 official members of think tank and thousands of active participants has participated in the planning of 40-odd offline activities: "Non-governmental politics - the Mass Forum of Pearl River Delta Planning Outline" and "Happy Guangdong Workers and Farmers Forum" under the guidance of government officials. Rich in content, the politics platform of oeeee.com makes the problems of many vulnerable groups come into the view of government agencies. More importantly, some major issues involving the overall situation attract the attention of decision-making departments. To make timely summary and processing, General Office of Guangdong Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China has set up a network information resource office to report the summary to the leaders and relevant departments in time, forming a four-stage process structure of "question-answer-implementation-supervision" between network and government and a benign interaction between the public, the think tank and the government. It is precisely because of good social influence and deep policy promotion that the think tank has its own height and depth in observing and analyzing public affairs, and has issued a rational and constructive voice, which has created the credibility and influence of the "non-governmental think tank". The realization of its public opinion dissemination effect is inseparable from the participation of the two professional media, oeeee.com and Nanfang Metropolis Daily. In September 2018, Guangdong Academy of Social Sciences and the Southern Finance New Media Group, together with the Guangdong Provincial Development and Reform Commission and Hong Kong and Macao Affairs, the People's Government of Guangdong Province, initiated the first high-end think tank institution focusing on the research of Greater Bay Area, namely the Academy of Greater Bay Area Studies. It's possible to explore a new think tank operation model, deepen the cooperation between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, provide intellectual support for the economic development of Greater Bay Area, and help promote the construction of an open economic new system in the Guangdong Province through the "think tank + media + finance + government" approach.

C. Using the Human Resources of Think Tanks to Enhance the Radiation and Competitiveness of Public Opinion Communication

There are quite a few experts and scholars in the think tank. These experts and scholars act as public opinion leaders in the society. They often have a rich network of social relationships. Their influence through interpersonal communication is enormous, such as Zhang Wuchang, the senior consultant of Guangdong Think Tank Promotion Association and internationally renowned economist. He owns nearly 540,000 fans on Weibo, which is equivalent to a media. If the Guangdong Think Tank Promotion Association can open Weibo account and form a communication with Zhang Wuchang's Weibo, the scope of information dissemination of the association on the network can be expanded to a large degree. In addition, in the process of strengthening the construction of new think tanks with Chinese characteristics, Guangdong think tanks should actively introduce media talents. Members of Council on Foreign Relations of many well-known think tanks in the United States are directors of many well-known media in the United States, including The New York Times, The Washington Post, Time, Newsweek, Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), National Broadcasting Company (NBC), etc. Professor Zhu Xufeng in Tsinghua University, who has been tracking the dynamics of think tanks for a long time, once said that the transformation of media people into think tanks can create conditions for think tanks to enhance their influence. Think tanks have three kinds of influence: the influence of internal reference on policy decisions, academic influence, and civil influence, including the media and the public. At present, in China, the channel that indirectly influences decision-making through the media is available. Media people understand the movements of media operations and public opinion, and are proficient in spreading their voices, if the think tank employs the strategy of relying on the influence of media, and the identity of the media person is naturally a bright spot. The case of many media people transforming into think tanks also illustrates this point: Wang Wen, former editor of the Global Times, is currently working at the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, Renmin University of China; Wang Haiming, the former editorial director of the 21st Century Business Herald, now serves as the Secretary of the China Finance 40 Forum. The media experts introduced to think tanks include research-oriented academic experts and practical technical experts; while talents include local talents, foreign talents that introduced through flexible employment policy, and local talents that can be trained. Relying on new media and information tools, sharing and collaboration, and remote participation of expert intelligence can be achieved. It's a must to improve the employment system and post management system in the introduction of talents for public opinion, and comprehensively reform the recruitment, hiring, management and compensation systems; make full use of the advantages of interdisciplinary and integration, and build good research conditions and innovative atmosphere, so as to cultivate a group of top-notch innovative talents with profound theoretical foundations, broad academic horizons, and agile thinking skills on cutting-edge scientific issues.

The human resources of think tanks should also pay attention to the research-oriented talents who understand the media. These talents are often scholars majoring in news media in college, and a "professional academic think tank" for public opinion communication can be formed by relying on them, such as public opinion monitoring and communication management platform of South China sea, the subordinate of Collaborative Innovation Center of South China Sea Studies, a high-end think tank that comprehensively studies the South China Sea issue, and one of the first batch of collaborative innovation centers in the country. One of the platform management responsible persons is Professor Du Junfei from the School of Journalism and Communication of Nanjing University. He is also the director of Internet Public Opinion Lab. Li Liangrong, the current director of Communication Center of State Governance Research of Fudan University, which is the only research institution in China that focuses on "Communication and State Governance" and provides comprehensive decision-making consultation for China's participation in global governance, major institutional reform and policy operation also serves as a professor of Journalism, Fudan University. the only research institution in China that focuses on "Communication and State Governance" and the Fudan University Center for Communication and National Governance, which provides comprehensive decision-making consultation for national participation in global governance, major institutional reforms and policy operations. The current director of the center, Li Liangrong, is a professor of journalism at Fudan University. In addition, the Center for Internet and State Governance of Sun Yat-sen University established in November 2014, its director is Professor Zhang Zhian, the dean of the School of Communication and Design of Sun Yat-sen University. The center hosted the first Internet and Governance Think Tank Forum, where interdisciplinary scholars in the field of Internet research in China jointly discussed the frontier issues of Internet and national social development. Guangdong think tank should strengthen the introduction of media talents in the future construction, and make use of their professional knowledge and qualifications to enhance the public opinion communication competitiveness of think tank in the new media era.

V. CONCLUSION

In summary, the public opinion dissemination of think tanks in Guangdong Province should actively absorb new technologies and new media. The existing think tanks in Guangdong Province should deeply study the ways and promotion channels of cooperation with the media, make use of the information resources of the media to make the think tank's vision close to the society, and help think tanks to observe the society and lead the trend of thought with the independent insights, unique thinking and unique perspective of the media, and propose scientific countermeasures. It's also needed to establish a flexible and diverse think tank manpower reserve to enhance the radiation and competitiveness of new think tanks in Guangdong Province.

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