

# Does Social Media Expand the Traditional Role of Chinese TV Journalists as Gatekeeper on Weibo and WeChat J-accounts

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**Abstract:** *This study investigates how TV journalists negotiate their “gatekeeping” on ‘output’ stage and showcase various facets of roles during the gatekeeping process on Weibo and WeChat personal accounts (J-accounts). Based on a semi-structured interviews with journalists, we show the different uses of Weibo and WeChat, which are useful tools for journalists to share information, search news resources and check facts when conducting the journalistic gatekeeping. TV journalists – as “gatekeepers” – are unwilling to allow audiences to participate in news delivering on ‘output’ stage. TV journalists’ different performances on J-accounts show that they act as news spreaders, news gatherers and verifiers, which is coherent with the task of “gatekeeping” on TV. Journalists also perform as information explainers and rumor refuters, these tasks are beyond traditional “gatekeeping” on TV. Journalists adapt their use of social media to fit traditional professional norms as well as adapting those norms to fit the media logic of the social media platform. This research initially combines content analysis with interview to examine and compare different journalistic practice regarding various uses of Weibo and WeChat and reflects comprehensively facets of journalistic roles during gatekeeping. It contributes to the empirical analysis of various aspects of ‘gatekeeping practices’ in China.*

**Keywords:** *Chinese TV journalists, gatekeeping, Weibo and WeChat, journalistic practice, roles*

## 1. Introduction

New communication technology and social media have changed the way people receive news. The journalists’ J-accounts (journalists’ personal accounts) allow them to extend their journalistic practice to the social media. This alters the “gatekeeping” process online and the way audiences receive information regarding the highly interactive format. Existing research in the West focuses on how social media affect the “gatekeeping” and professional norms, and how social media integrate into journalists’ working routines (eg. Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton, 2012; Opgenhaffen and Scheerlinck, 2014; Lawrence et al., 2014). Scholars believe that the “gatekeeper” role is retained discarding exchanges with audiences (Singer, 2005). The use of social media can become part of the everyday toolkit for journalists, it leads to innovations in news gathering, helps to promote and distribute news content and it reshapes the relationship between journalists and their sources (Broersma and Graham, 2012). When using social media for professional purposes, Western journalists are guided by their professional norms but may not adhere to all of them. They may also reconceptualise their role as “gatekeepers” (Singer, 2005).

Existing findings about journalists’ social media practices in the West may not be transferable to countries like China where media must serve the Chinese Communist Party. How journalists perform during the gatekeeping process varies according to contextual pressures. In particular, in China, there is an ongoing debate about deviating from (Fu and Lee, 2016) and maintaining (Cui and Lin, 2014) gatekeeping roles. Chinese press experienced a series of reforms, moving away from the Party-state model towards a unique political-economic model (Jian and Liu, 2018). This contributes to the de-Westernization of journalism studies to interpret the interplay between social background, journalistic practice on social media accounts, and conceptual understandings of journalistic gatekeeping. Previous research in journalism studies on social media does not often involve WeChat, which is a new field for investigation. Because of the privacy of WeChat, journalists use it for different purposes, compared to Weibo. This research also initially compares the journalistic gatekeeping of TV journalism between Weibo and WeChat J-accounts. This research advances Yu’s (2011) work, which revealed general

categories of journalistic practice on ‘gatekeeping’ (gate-watcher, gate-poker and gate-mocker), and goes further to refine various aspects of ‘gatekeeping practices’ in China over the last 10 years. Additionally, little is known about the way TV journalists use social media as part of their profession. TV is the main source of information for Chinese people (Dong, 2009) and TV industry has undergone change, and many stations rely on advertising revenue. Chinese TV system is going through an internal revolution: many stations are managed as commercial enterprises.

We explore Chinese TV journalistic practices of “gatekeeping” on Weibo and WeChat J-accounts. Micro-blogging is a deliberate practice of Chinese professional journalists who, as “gatekeepers” of TV broadcasting, go beyond “gatekeeping” by using social media for TV reports while pursuing professional ideal. This research investigates 1) the negotiation of “gatekeeping” when TV journalists use Weibo and WeChat on J-accounts, and 2) how social media enable journalists to be within and beyond the “gate” compared with TV.

## 2. Literature Review

Professional norms including “gatekeeping” in China are a combination of Western professional norms, and an ideology specific to China. It includes Confucian thought (Pan and Lu, 2003), Maoist ideas (Lee, 2006), and Communist capitalism (Lee, 2006). To understand the negotiation of “gatekeeping” and journalistic multi-task practice of “gatekeeping” on social media, we introduce the meaning of “gatekeeping” and professional norms from the Western context. Then focus on the specific Chinese journalistic context.

### 2.1 Journalistic Gatekeeping and Practice

Journalism as an ideology and practice has been studied since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Conceptualizing journalism as an ideology means understanding journalism in terms of how journalists give meaning to their news broadcast. Different countries have their specific journalistic norms, journalism across genres and media types invoke more or less the same ideal system of value when discussing and reflecting on their work (Deuze, 2005). Journalists act as “gatekeepers” in performing a privileged task: deciding what information they uncover (Singer, 2010). Shoemaker explains that “Mr Gate” decides according to personal beliefs and knowledge of personal routines (Shoemaker et al., 2010, p.57). Hence, journalists routinely check reports for facts and balance. They pay attention to conflicts of interest, and promotion and protection of certain interest (Yu, 2011).

Wallace (2018, p.280) establishes a new model of gatekeeping on information flows online. He argues that journalists, individuals, algorithms, and journalistic organizations embed themselves into the negotiation of gatekeeping. He divides gatekeeping into three stages: “access information (input), selection processes (throughput) and publication possibilities (output)”. The present research builds on this new model of gatekeeping.

Social media transform the journalistic landscape in many ways: improving the speed of the news flow and providing open platforms to share information. We question whether social media change the way journalists adhere to “gatekeeping” and how they perceive the new tasks on the process of journalistic gatekeeping on social media.

### 2.2 The Journalistic Use on Social Media J-accounts During the Process of Journalistic Gatekeeping

Social media are part of the journalists’ toolkit (Opgenhaffen and Scheerlinck, 2014). Most journalists use social media to search for ideas or track an event. Social networking helps to discover resources and facts. Hedman (2015) explains that journalists use social media to obtain information about ongoing events. A new form of news is shaped by gathering information from collaborative environment, which can link social media and journalists’ practices (Hermida, 2013). In this collective environment, journalists can use the crowd’s wisdom to gather information quickly from diverse sources which they may not normally find or contact. Interaction can be considered one of the defining features of social media: it facilitates direct dialogue between journalists and audiences. Journalists can give feedback that benefits the production and delivery of stories on the accounts of a particular news organisation (Hedmen and Djerf-Pierre, 2013). Social media also help to deliver news and share traditional aspects of journalism. As a disseminating channel, social media is mainly related to breaking news. The live reporting of breaking news online becomes the standard practice for journalists (Canter, 2015). Some journalists’ private accounts inform about council meetings, trials, and live accidents, while others share photos and

opinions associated with breaking news. Journalists can use micro-blogs for verification and research (Hermida, 2012). Moreover, they can conduct fact-checking about elections, like clicking links (Lawrence et al., 2014). This can help them to enhance their professional norms, related to truth and accountability in social media. We argue that social media can be considered as ‘backup’ journalistic sphere that helps them perform as “gatekeepers” to search resources, ongoing events, communicate with audience, deliver information and verify contents.

### ***2.3 The negotiation of gatekeeping when using social media***

The Internet is both a threat and opportunity for professional journalism. The participation of audience and the openness and immediacy change the journalists’ roles (e.g., the “gatekeeping” role) and their professional norms (Stanoevska-Slabeva et al., 2012). The “gatekeeping” is altered because journalists can no longer control what audiences see and read on social media. Journalists’ role is shifting from “gatekeeping” to “gate-watching”, as audiences can now publish news (Bruns, 2003).

Yet journalists maintain a significant control: they select news for official and personal social media accounts (Broersma and Graham, 2012), the “gatekeeping” can be enhanced, rather than diminished (O’Sullivan, 2005). Audiences prefer to read information from established media operating within professional norms and trust traditional journalists who have professional skills and training.

Singer (2010) believes that social media extends the role of “gatekeeper”. Online journalism is collaborative: journalists collect and publish news, but they are neither the only ones to do this, nor the only ones who examine the validity of information: the role of “gatekeeper” is shared. This shared “gatekeeping” differs in all news organisations: journalists in local news organisations adapt the role of “gatekeeper” with audience interaction while journalists in national news organisations seldom do so (Lasorsa et al., 2012).

Journalists normalise their blogging to fit traditional professional norms and adjust professional norms and practices to the evolving norms and practice of social media (Lasorsa et al., 2012). We argue that the “gatekeeping” is not changed but challenged by the social media. “Gatekeeping” has been extended from news selection to news interpretation, judgment and verification. We investigate the extent of the negotiation of “gatekeeping” for Chinese traditional TV journalists.

### ***2.4 Journalistic practice and discourses in China***

Chinese journalism studies should be contextualized with reference to the Chinese system of news in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Cui and Lin, 2014). The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) spreads the ideologies of Marxism and Maoism and views the media as a tool to disseminate the guidelines of the Party (Winfield and Peng, 2005). Chinese journalists need to promote loyalty to the Party and the propaganda. Research about the normalization of professional norms on social media is documented in Western countries (Lasorsa et al. 2012; Singer 2005).

Weibo and WeChat are broadly used by Chinese TV journalists. Socio-technological developments in China can cause transformations in the journalistic paradigm. The “gatekeeping” is shared with citizens but the extent of the negotiation and of the new role which goes beyond the “gatekeeper” on Weibo and WeChat on the process of journalistic gatekeeping remain unclear. We discuss journalistic performance of “gatekeeping” and professional use on Weibo and WeChat. This leads to two main research questions:

*RQ 1: How do Chinese TV journalists negotiate the role of “gatekeeper” when using Weibo and WeChat J-accounts?*

*RQ 2: What are the new tasks during “gatekeeping” for Chinese TV journalists when using Weibo and WeChat?*

Since 1978, China’s market-oriented reforms have already changed the ownership, management, and ideologies of the press in China (Zhao, 1998). Market forces have transformed the role of mouthpiece as the only mission of journalists into one that is important but not dominant. Thus, news media have to pursue their economic interests and pay attention to their audiences and advertisers who can increase their circulation and advertising revenues (Zhao, 2008). Television broadcasting has come to operate under market rules and has been through successive phases of commercialization (Esarey and Xiao, 2011). Television stations used to be fully subsidized from governments but underwent a transition in

which subsidies were reduced. Journalists – especially TV journalists – are heavily influenced by enterprise-style management and economic forces.

The complexity and hybridity of the Chinese media system are also influenced by Confucian (Lu and Pan, 2003) and Western professional norms. Chinese journalists' professional cognition is based on the same premises as Western journalism, such as gatekeeping (Fu and Lee, 2016). While, Confucian ideology identifies Chinese journalists as guardians of society and educators of the masses.

### 3. Methodology

To answer the research questions listed above, this research uses qualitative research methods. An analysis of interviews with journalists and editors were conducted to reveal how do TV journalists in China perceive the role of gatekeeping and explain their new tasks of being gatekeeper. It is not easy to get this understanding directly from posts made by journalists. Thus, semi-structured interviews can offer a solution to further discuss journalists' perceptions and how they understand the impact of different forces.

For the first stage, we used purposive sampling. This research aims to discuss the professional behaviour of gatekeeping among TV journalists thus TV journalists who work on news programme were selected for the research. The second sampling technique was to locate former work colleagues and friends through my contact list on Weibo and WeChat and found several suitable potential interviewees. After communicating with them some of these journalists agreed to be interviewees. Snowball sampling was also used in this research, because some journalists recommended their colleagues or friends who were TV journalists on hard news programmes and might be willing to participate.

The journalists who were selected met the following criteria: they worked full-time and were employed on permanent or long contracts – full-time TV journalists are likely to have more insight into practices than freelance journalists who have second jobs.

Lastly, 35 journalists were selected for interview between September 2018 and January 2019. These comprised 29 face-to-face interviews and 6 telephone interviews. After the first round of interviews, several key themes started to emerge. To make sure that these could be explored in more depth, several questions were added and included in the second round of interviews. We employed thematic analysis to analyse the data. The interviews were transcribed verbatim into NVivo software and Word files. Three stages of thematic analysis were used in this research, following the research of Boyatzis (1998).

### 4. Result and Analysis

#### 4.1 *The negotiation of journalistic gatekeeping*

RQ1 asked about the extent of negotiation of “gatekeeping” on Weibo and WeChat J-accounts, our finding reveals that most journalists rarely communicate with audiences about news reporting. The ‘private messaging’ and ‘comments area’ are two key spaces for one-to-one interaction:

Using the comments area and private messaging are two ways to engage with my audiences on Weibo and WeChat J-accounts. (Journalist P)

However, three journalists said that they do not like to talk with the public, except with their friends, family members and colleagues. Journalist J mentioned that she replies less often to other people on J-accounts, because she has no sense of security to expose some information about news organizations (eg. business secrets). She said news organizations do not encourage journalists to expose inner document or decision. This suggests that the relationship between journalists and audiences are not close on Weibo and WeChat J-accounts. It supports the argument that journalists do not actively communicate with audience members on Weibo and WeChat J-accounts. The quote above reveals the reason for less interactivity between journalists and audience. News organisations do not encourage journalists to disclose the decisions behind news making, business secrets and inner documents. Journalists are less able to actively communicate when their audience asks about such matters. Secondly, journalists maintain the role of “gatekeeper” to control what is discussed in the public sphere and maintain superiority, due to the influence of Confucian ideology which let Chinese journalists be guardians of society and educators of the people (Tong, 2015). This sense of superiority extends to Weibo and WeChat J-accounts. Journalists believe that audiences are information receivers and monitor the diffusion of such information. The perception of “gatekeeping” from journalist J echoes the Western meaning, as Singer (2005)

mentioned – “gatekeepers” perform a privileged task to decide which information can be disseminated to the public.

Compared with Weibo, there is stricter “gatekeeping” on WeChat due to technical settings. On WeChat J-accounts, interaction also takes place in the ‘comments area’. The audience cannot participate in the news release. They can only discuss matters with journalists after the news has been published.

Discussion in the ‘comment box’ or giving the thumb for one issue are all possible on WeChat J-account, however, due to the specific settings of WeChat, it is hard to let them join in the process of news release. (Journalist F)

Due to the characteristics of WeChat, the audience cannot take part in the release of information. In some cases, journalists act as ordinary users, while keeping their traditional role of “gatekeepers” in J-accounts. They are reluctant to engage with their audiences or to share material from outside sources. Hence, different behaviours are caused by the established conventions of different countries and the settings of particular social media platforms.

#### ***4.2 Roles of TV journalists during journalistic gatekeeping process on J-accounts***

RQ 2 questions the new roles related to “gatekeeping” on Weibo and WeChat J-accounts. Indeed, journalists execute the “gatekeeping” in the same way they do on traditional broadcasting TV media when they deliver the information at the output stage. They take advantage of Weibo and WeChat to perform within or beyond the role of “gatekeeper” on J-accounts. TV journalists act as roles of 1) news spreaders, and 2) news gatherers and verifiers on J-accounts which are within the “gatekeeping” process (as the same as in traditional TV media). TV journalists also use J-accounts to extend their roles as 1) “gate-explainer” and 2) “gate-rumor refuters” before and after news delivering during the gatekeeping process. ‘Gate-explainer’ and ‘Gate-rumor Refuter’ can exist in the input stage. These behaviours are beyond the traditional “gatekeeping” that perform on traditional media. The social media promote journalists not only focus on the original task of gatekeeper to choose and deliver information but enable journalists to amplify their roles to maintain truth and accuracy when information passes “the gate” and increases audience rating when information on J-accounts is sent. Journalists can switch their roles on J-accounts and perform several roles.

##### ***4.2.1 Information spreader***

Information delivery is one of the journalistic practices on Weibo and WeChat J-accounts during the gatekeeping process. J-accounts can be considered as are multifunctional tools, but journalists typically use them to disseminate information, according to the interviewed participants. More than half of interviewees said that they re-posted or rewrote news information from their home organisations and other media, e.g. newspapers, news agencies and TV programmes. Journalists also re-posted information from other social media users. They seldom discuss news only found on J-accounts without permission from organisations, following the unwritten rules. “Gatekeeping” and “gate-watching” seem to co-exist on J-accounts.

According to ‘*the regulation of the further standardizing news gathering and editing*’ in 2011 (Bai, 2013), journalists cannot publish information online that have already been prepared for traditional media news, even when the news cannot be published on traditional media, e.g. the information has been censored, or it damages the image of their advertisers. Our research shows that several journalists ignore this rule on Weibo and WeChat J-accounts, because journalists can publish news information prepared by TV journalists for TV broadcast but that cannot be delivered on TV. China has no specific news law to regulate journalists’ behaviour (Xu, 2014): the loose regulation cannot fully control journalists’ behaviour because it is not as strong as the law. Journalists are unwilling to deliver news made only for J-accounts in private, because of inner organisational regulation and fear the responsibility for reporting fake news.

Some journalists use J-accounts for private purposes, while some of them use it to spread hard and soft news information. As journalist D expressed, he is a big fan of Manchester United, so he pays close to the latest football information. While Journalist C1 did not feel interested in posting entertainment information but was more inclined to convey hard news, tips about life and culture, because he identifies himself as professional journalist instead of amateur citizen journalist on J-accounts. The data demonstrate different journalistic behaviours: some reveal their professional identity to the public and others do not. Journalists with professional verification on Weibo J-accounts or with professional identities on WeChat J-accounts are more careful. They maintain professional practice and publish hard

news, like journalist C1 above, because their professional identity is exposed to the public. Journalists act as credible and reliable “gatekeepers” and feel the responsibility to provide valuable and accurate news. They must maintain their professional practice: sharing non-opinionated information and focusing on facts. Journalists’ statements represent the viewpoint of their organisations.

However, several journalists who do not display their professional identity said it was important to maintain professional practice and behave as a journalist. The statement of journalist R supported this finding. Journalists use J-accounts in different ways, depending on the exposure of their professional identity, the habit of their colleagues, and their individual preferences. The way journalists behave professionally on any kind of social media is not uniform. Some journalists do not focus on their professional image, because they do not take responsibility for publishing while not displaying their professional identity. If their colleagues prefer one type of social media, journalists behave in a professional way when posting information to avoid damaging their professional image and getting reprimands. Journalists’ individual habits and preferences also affect the use Weibo and WeChat. Some journalists are more likely to share soft news, while others prefer to deliver hard information.

The journalists’ use of Weibo and WeChat J-accounts varies. The WeChat J-account is more flexible and offers more privacy settings than Weibo J-accounts: journalists can classify friends into various groups. The boundary between the professional and personal behaviour is blurred on WeChat J-accounts. This can accommodate both professional and personal use compared to Weibo J-accounts. Though Weibo J-accounts has a function to show information to close friends only, our research shows that journalists seldom use this function.

#### **4.2.2 News gatherers and verifiers**

As the information should pass through the ‘gate’, TV journalists are required to search resources and verify the accuracy of the information before publishing, due to the influence of Western professional norms. Weibo and WeChat have become convenient, cheap and effective means to search for information through frequently updated news, online opinions and live videos. TV journalists use Weibo and WeChat to find sources for their TV programmes and to check facts, which can increase their accuracy.

Weibo stands out as an information goldmine for journalists searching for stories. Obtaining information is crucial for journalists: they use Weibo J-accounts for gathering news, learning and checking facts thanks to the openness whereby everyone on Weibo can look for on anyone’s main page. All 35 journalists believed that J-accounts is a valuable tool for news gathering.

I think there are two essential applications for Weibo J-accounts. One is searching for news. (Journalist C1).

Weibo J-accounts can be used to monitor trends, search for reportable stories. It facilitates communication with experts or celebrities, and with journalist peers. Micro-blog immersion helps journalists to react to ongoing events and to get a better understanding. As journalist F mentioned she can pay close attention to ongoing events, know the trends and follow official accounts by other news organisations and experts who help to find useful news resource.

WeChat J-accounts are not often used by journalists to gather news. More than half of the journalists reported that they do not treat WeChat as a space to search for news resources, because of the privacy of WeChat J-accounts. Information flow is slow, owing to the limited space for posting information. Journalists can get resources from their friends or their loyal audience on WeChat, but this happens only occasionally.

Weibo and WeChat are important aggregators for finding sources, but they are not the main instrument. Journalists get news from relevant government or industrial departments. Their work on TV media is organised so that journalists are in charge of different kinds of news, so they keep good relationships with the people who provide the sources in these departments. The hotline is another method to access information.

Regarding evaluation of the quality of information on Weibo and WeChat, journalists expressed concerns about credibility and impartiality. The low reliability results from the lack of effective means to verify information. Time is required to verify facts as journalist B. After checking the reliability of resources, they must change the communication format from the online short-version to TV-version (traditional format).

TV journalists’ role of “gatekeeper” on TV media is affected by western professional journalistic norms: they spread news, check and choose resources on J-accounts. Weibo and WeChat attribute them

new tasks related to “gatekeeping”. These new tasks help journalists to maintain truth and accuracy of information.

#### **4.2.3 Gate- information explainer**

TV journalists’ Weibo and WeChat J-accounts are a platform to interpret news. Due to the time limitation of TV broadcasting programs, journalists are required to use the inverted pyramid format to report news in a limited time. The limited time cannot allow TV journalists to showcase details, e.g. information background. 20 interviewed TV journalists said they can explain information thanks to the longtime keeping character online and long words admission on J-accounts. The story happening during or behind news reports can be exposed, which helps to understand information, e.g. discussion of governmental policies.

The J-accounts can show our long explanation which have no time showing on TV programs. This can help audiences to better understand what we are saying, especially for helping government to interpret the policy. The link or repost can be used. (Journalist C1)

Usually, journalists use links or reposts to support their argument, thus, we can see the increase of the transparency.

#### **4.2.4 Gate- rumor refuter**

The interviews show that TV journalists turn into rumour refuters or information correctors, which favours accuracy when the information passes through the “gates” on J-accounts. Weibo and WeChat provide space to express opinions, journalists point out and correct fake news and support valid news, instead of simply delivering information. In the case of Wuhan’s Coronavirus, the rumour was that the medicine- Shuanghuanglian injection- can cure this flu. Consequently, this medicine was out of stock within half day. After this fake information was refuted by TV journalists on J-accounts, citizens stopped buying this medicine and focused on cleaning hands and secure public gathering.

Since the raise of social media in 2009, the authority of “gatekeeping” has been challenged: the “gatekeeping” is shared with all online users who can deliver information. Sensational and exaggerated writing were salient at that time. This increased the number of fake news on social media. TV journalists struggled to judge the validity of resources. Owing to the ‘crowd mentality’, netizens cannot easily choose what they really want to read and cannot easily judge the validity of the news (Canter, 2015). Journalist N1 explained how journalists share the role of “gatekeeper” with audiences when the rise of social media at the beginning. After that, mainstream journalists realized the consequences of false information online and supported real news: they maintained the “gatekeeping” to select delicate news and supervised the validity of information on J-accounts.

## **5. Conclusion**

This research focuses on online “gatekeeping process” and normalisation of journalistic practice. It paints a comprehensive picture that reveals not only the breadth and depth of Weibo and WeChat J-accounts within or beyond the “gatekeeping”. We argue that the journalistic practice on Weibo and WeChat interact with socio-organizational factors. In the Chinese context, journalistic “gatekeeping” is not only normalized by Western professionalism, but also affected by the Confucian cultural and news organizational pressures.

This study has several implications related to Chinese media landscape and journalistic practice on social media. Weibo and WeChat are useful tools for TV journalists, providing them with unprecedented opportunities to deliver information, search for sources and check facts. Weibo and WeChat J-accounts also prompt journalists to (re)negotiate their professional norms. Journalists not only normalize their professional norms on Weibo and WeChat, they also adjust their journalistic practice to fit the norms of social media. This picture echoes Lasorsa et al.’s research (2012). Weibo and WeChat J-accounts are a spin-off platform helping journalists to perform as “gatekeepers” both on J-accounts and traditional TV. They are news spreaders, news gatherers and verifiers. Social media provide the platform for TV journalists to conduct their journalistic practice beyond the traditional “gatekeeping” process on TV. Weibo and WeChat help journalists to maintain truth to behave as information explainers and rumor refuters. TV journalists undertake several roles on their J-accounts, and these roles can be simultaneously transferred. The traditional role of journalists as “gatekeepers” remains unchallenged. This corroborates the claims of Canter (2015), Ali and Fahmy (2013) and Canter and Brookes (2016): the “gatekeeping” is maintained on social media and journalists are unwilling to share the role of “gatekeeper” with the

audience on J-accounts. Offline journalistic norms shape journalists' performance on Weibo and WeChat J-accounts.

Weibo and WeChat J-accounts allow different kinds of communication. Weibo J-accounts are more open than WeChat, Weibo J-accounts are frequently used as a platform to search resources and to check validity. Weibo J-accounts are also regularly used to communicate with strangers (e.g., celebrities) to find resources or ask about facts. Owing to its private sphere, WeChat J-accounts are mostly used to network with other journalists or acquaintance. WeChat J-accounts shows a mixture of professional and individual uses compared to Weibo J-accounts. WeChat's technical settings enable separation of followers into different groups. Journalists have more control on WeChat to choose whether to expose or conceal their professional or personal identity. This research denies Bei's (2013) who believes that the activeness of Weibo has subsided considerably since 2018, he claims that Weibo might not be the future of journalism.

This study highlights Chinese TV journalists' specific use of Weibo and WeChat and the related alteration of the "gatekeeping" process. Organisational, and cultural tensions and Western journalistic professional norms in China affects journalistic performance. Our findings help to understand how Weibo and WeChat J-accounts contribute to the transformation of "gatekeeping" and Chinese journalistic practice.

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