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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angela K. Y. Mak</td>
<td>The “Customer” Metaphor in Social Institutions in the Public’s Eyes: An Exploratory Study in Singapore</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augustine Pang  Yeo Su Lin</td>
<td>Crisis Management Consultancy: Exploration of the Expertise, Experience and Expediency of Consultants in Public Relations Agencies in Singapore</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chwen Chwen Chen</td>
<td>Animation “With Chinese Characteristics”? Exploring Chinese Animation on the Global Stage</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Ng</td>
<td>An exploratory study of different perception on the usage of text message lingo among male and female college students</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fanbin Zeng</td>
<td>The effect factors of the second digital divide—based on positive analysis among the college students</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manzie Vincent Doh</td>
<td>The Mass Media and Social transformation: Development journalism in the People’s Republic of China – An example to the World</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ran Wei</td>
<td>Reconsidering Media Displacement Effect: A New Typology for Multitasking Research</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suwichit (Sean) Chaidaroon</td>
<td>Analysis of Thai PM Abhisit’s Media Interviews: Lessons Learned for International Public Diplomacy while the Nation Is in Crisis</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usharani Narayana  Priti Kapur</td>
<td>Indian Media Framing of the Image of Muslims: Content Analysis of Indian English Language Newspapers</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waheeda Sultana</td>
<td>Web Journalism: The Changing Horizons of Journalism</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenge Liang  Xiaqin Li</td>
<td>Media Evaluation and Interpersonal Communication Pattern: Testing Cognitive Mediation Model of Beijing audience</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yan Yan</td>
<td>The Invisible Disaster: A Cross-Culture Comparative Analysis of Newspaper Photographic Coverage of Hurricane Katrina and Whenchuan Earthquake</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanqiu Zhang</td>
<td>Media Literacy in China: Research, Practice and Challenge</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhihui Tian</td>
<td>User-Created Content in China</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The “Customer” Metaphor in Social Institutions in the Public’s Eyes: An Exploratory Study in Singapore

Angela K. Y. Mak

Abstract: This study evaluated the public attitudes in Singapore toward the use of customer metaphor in social institutions through an online survey (646 respondents with a stratified distribution) and three focus groups. Results showed that respondents rated their acceptability among the social institutions (high to low ranking) as news media, hospitals, colleagues and universities, government institutions, primary and secondary schools, and lastly religious institutions. The rationales behind such rankings also relate to the political-economic structure and social-cultural values of Singapore. News media was ranked highest in terms of acceptability because of the government control of providing accurate and credible news source. The majority participants viewed that hospitals should not be totally marketed; however, a goodwill-based marketing is acceptable. Students shouldn’t be treated as customers but schools should be run as business. There was a clear consensus that religious institutions should not treat their followers as customers. Marketing in the government was generally from the money and the tax-paying rationale. In addition, the potential role of demographic variables in determining public attitudes produced benchmark data for future research in consumer behavior and implications in advertising and public relations practice.

Background
Traditionally, marketing – as an information subsidy – has been largely confined to the business context, where firms engage in transactions of tangible consumer goods and/or services with their customers (Kotler, 2005). A global financial crisis, China and India’s economic rises, and radical economic reforms among Asian countries have combined in recent years to raise questions about the fundamental nature of markets and economic systems in non-Western contexts. In particular, trends of social institutions moving toward privatization have emerged, leading us to the unanimous conclusion that marketing has transcended business boundaries and crept into social institutions (Kotler, 2005). Is marketing then acceptable in these social institutions, where their goods are sometimes bounded by moral responsibilities and obligations? Would marketing inadvertently bring along with it the customer metaphor into such institutions and render their audience as “consumers” or “customers”? Specifically in Chinese-speaking populations, in what ways traditional Chinese values remain a strong force in the belief systems of the public? These questions serve to establish the premises for social institutions in today’s context. In the face of intrusive marketing and communication, what are the limits that social institutions should draw? Coming from the perspectives of the receiving end, are there things that social institutions – as marketing communicators – can or cannot do?

Literature Review

The debate
In the academic realm, the debate was first purported as early as the late 1960s when Kotler and Levy (1969) introduced the idea of broadening marketing and the customer metaphor. Kotler (1972) explained how
this observable fact is possible whereby churches would market a “religious experience” to the congregation, tertiary institutions would market education and learning to students, and politicians would market an “honest government” to the public. This school of thought was met with opposition when Laczniak and Michie (1979) contended that a disruption to social order would arise. Luck (1969) contributed to the opposition stand and made the claim that “if marketing is so many things, then it is nothing.”

The discussion carried on through the millennium when Hutton (2001, 2005) put forth the view that marketing in social institutions would distort the purposes and roles they have in the society. Kotler (2005) defended the broadening position by contending such a movement would “free the marketing paradigm from the narrow confines of commercial marketing” and apply to many other contexts “in which exchange and relationship activities take place” (p. 114-116).

Marketing in social institutions

In the education sector, the opposition continued to arise. Rotfeld (2000) suggested that treating students as customers would render the students less responsible. Ritzer (1996, 1998) criticized that such a form of higher education would remove any meaningful contact between students and educators. Albanese (1999) argued that the problem of “dysfunctional feeding frenzy over marks” is one of the many “pathologies” that would ruin education should marketing be allowed.

In healthcare, the use of marketing can improve the disseminating information on the most cost effective treatments to consumers and among doctors (Kay, 2007). Herzlinger (2004) also spoke of how consumer-driven healthcare would allow transparency in the cost, and quality of services and treatments being offered. Porter and Teisberg (2004), however, elaborated on the limits of the consumer-driven model, which, although gives consumers choice, is limited to choice of health plans, and not choice of providers and treatments which are far more significant.

In political marketing, Scullion (2008) propounded that “consumer sovereignty” renders the public power which will meet “democratic ideals” because “citizenship can exist within a consumer culture” and that consumerism in politics can path ways for the voting public to undertake civic responsibilities. Contrary, Needham (2003) argued that consumerism on politics would “threaten the notion of citizens and associated democratic values” such as collective obligation, community, exchange of ideas to ensure optimal resource allocation according to principle, and a desire for societal improvement in contrast to simply meeting demands of the market.

In the context of religion, the phenomenon of church marketing has emerged that comes in the form of both online social media (e.g. www.churchmarketingsucks.com) and traditional media (e.g. Christian television advertising at the Super Bowl). Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry (1989) described how religious marketing would blur the boundaries between secularism and the sacred. Critics such as Kenneson, Street, and Hauerwas (1997) further argued that religious institutions face the danger of “selling out” their moral responsibilities in doing so.

In the marketing of news media, scholars have criticized the change in direction that news media in some democracies have adopted. As Yi and Sarvary (2007) put across aptly, the “traditional view on news consumption is that people seek accurate and unbiased information” (p. 613), but lately there arises another group of readers, otherwise known as “biased” consumers, who seek out news that is “consistent with their tastes or prior beliefs rather than the truth” (p. 611). Increasingly, news media outlets pander to the former and provide them with what they want to hear instead of what they need to know (McManus, 1994). By doing so, these media outlets practice “audience making” (Ettma & Whitney, 1994), where they sell or deliver audiences to the advertisers (Hutton, 2005).

James G. Hutton, in his book The Feel-Good Society, investigated the “customer” metaphor and marketing in social institutions, namely education, government, healthcare, news media, and religion, by providing succinct examples within the American context (2005): The national Parent-Teacher Association made headlines when it sold its name and logo for use in back-to-school advertising by Office Depot, a major office-supply retailer, The Diocese of Pittsburgh bought a 30-second ad that was broadcast during a Pittsburgh Steeler football game, and two physician partners in Seattle traded their traditional practice for a “premium” service, in which they charge wealthy clients up to US$20,000 a year, in cash, for primary care.

Case background: Singapore

After four decades of intellectual debates on the appropriateness of using the “customer” terminology in social institutions, in this globalization era, no empirical research has been conducted to further explore the subject in non-Western countries. Thus, an exploratory nature of this study was drawn from Singapore to
examine the fundamental question, “Should we treat students, patients, church followers, political constituencies, news readers, and others alike as ‘customers’?” Such debates are crucial to drive how public relations, advertising, and marketing communicators should practice in social institutional settings.

In Asia, the rapid economic and international trade development give rise to marketing across all private, public, and non-profit sectors. With over 70% of Chinese population, Singapore is known for its strong economy and has been positioning itself to be the “Asian” version of Switzerland. Singapore is also ranked the world’s sixth country in best healthcare service by World Health Organization (WHO, 2010) and has developed an efficient healthcare system through a unique combination of free market principles and careful government control (Lim, 1998). Healthcare policies are centrally planned and disseminated. With the newly setup “medical hotel” in 2010, it will further boost the medical tourism development.

Although Singapore is well-connected with the world through media publications, the local press and mass media are expected to define their function within the context of the national agenda; while playing an important part in educating Singaporeans regarding government ideology, policy, and action, they are also subject to rigorous regulations of the government (Bokhorst-Heng, 2002; George, 2009). The local media’s privilege in serving national agenda and constant self-regulation enhances its perceived credibility as trusted news source. Also, there is little competitive pressure for survival among the local media, as the major dailies, key vernaculars, and national broadcast stations are operated by two local media groups, namely Singapore Press Holdings and MediaCorp.

There are more than 1,200 private education institutes in Singapore and it is known to be the regional education hub in Southeast Asia. This multicultural city-state also offers freedom in religious worships such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Muslim. Also, as a leading city-state in the region, Singapore provides quality social and government services to their citizens. While Singapore is a global city, however, its Chinese cultural root makes it plausible that it would demonstrate more conservative values when it comes to religion, education, and so forth. Though Singapore has such a strong economy, its social capitalism is rather low and Singaporeans tended to be muted in bubbles because of the paternalistic government. Thus, it is timely to take a closer look at the extent to which the competitive market environment and consumerism growth contribute to such development.

**Research Questions**

1) How acceptable is marketing across the social institutions among the public in Singapore?
2) Are there any differences in the public attitudes with regard to the demographics?
3) What areas do the Singapore public favor and not favor the use of marketing in social institutions?

**Method**

Surveys were conducted via an online site in English. Participants were asked to respond on a five-point Likert scale (1 = “strong agree”; 5 = “strongly disagree”) to the following statements:

1. Hospitals and doctors should treat their patients as customers.
2. Colleges and universities should treat their students as customers.
3. Primary and secondary schools should treat their students as customers.
4. The news media should treat their viewers, readers, and listeners as customers.
5. Religious institutions such as temples, churches, and mosques should treat their members as customers.
6. Elected appointed government officials should treat their constituents as customers.
7. Retail stores should treat their shoppers as customers.

Respondents were also asked open-ended questions about why they believed that the various institutions should or shouldn’t be treated as customers as compared to their parents and grandparents’ beliefs, and why they answered questions 1-7 in the way that they did. Finally, a series of demographic questions elicited information about gender, age, and levels of education and income.

A total of 646 Singaporean adults (citizens and permanent residents) were surveyed with a stratified distribution. Among the participants, 46.4% are males and 53.6% are females. In the Singapore sample, 82% are Chinese, followed by 6.5% Malay, 4.5% Indian and 5.7% others, in which about 77.1% of their income are < USD3,000 per month. The age group breakdowns represent the general adult population chart from the government as follows: Under 20 years old (7.0%), 20 to 29 years old (30.9%), 30 to 39 years old (20.9%), 40 to 49 years old (15.8%), 50 to 59 years old (20.6%), above 60 years old (4.8%).
Three focus groups were also conducted to gather insights. Each focus group consisted of eight to 12 participants with a mix of background such as gender and race. A focus group guide was used first to find out their concepts and definitions of a “customer”. Participants were then asked to identify the potential “customers” of the different social institutions. Subsequently, participants were asked to discuss each institution in detail. Within each social institution, participants were asked to talk about their perceptions of the social institution treating its audience as “customers” and the implications, perceptions of the idea of marketing by the social institution and the areas which they favor and/or do not favor the use of marketing by those social institution.

Results

RQ1

Respondents rated their acceptability of the customer metaphor for various social institutions on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly agree; 5=strongly disagree). Retail stores had the highest acceptability of the customer metaphor (M = 1.44, SD = 0.71). News media had the second highest acceptability (M = 2.41, SD = 1.14), followed by hospitals (M = 2.50, SD = 1.26), colleges and universities (M = 2.89, SD = 1.19), governmental institutions (M = 3.00, SD = 1.24), primary and secondary schools (M = 3.46, SD = 1.13), and lastly religious institutions (M = 3.60, SD = 1.11).

In view of whether their opinions would be different from their parents’ or grandparents’, 41.3% (n = 267) of the respondents did not know if there would be any difference in opinions, 33.8% (n = 218) of them did not think there would be of any difference, and 24.9% (n = 161) think there would be a difference in opinions between them and their parents or grandparents. When asked for the reason why the respondents answered the questions in the way that they did, whether there might be anything in the respondents’ culture or religion or personal philosophy that might influence their opinions about treating various constituents as “customers”, the most commonly cited reasons are personal opinion and personal philosophy. The other reasons cited included religion, experiences, culture, upbringing, and education.

RQ2

A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to compare the acceptability between gender, age, income level, and educational level. For gender, the one-way ANOVA test showed statistical significances only on primary and secondary schools, M = 2.35 (males) and 2.61 (females), F(1, 643) = 6.86, p <.05. In short, females are more skeptical to the use of marketing targeting to kids and youth in schools.

Comparing between the age groups, respondents aged 39 and below are referred as group A (n = 379) and respondents above 39 as group B (n = 266). There was a significant effect of age on college and universities, M = 2.03 (below 39) and 2.20 (above 39), F(1, 643) = 6.15, p <.05.; religion, M = 3.37 (below 39) and 3.58 (above 39), F(1, 643) = 4.98, p <.05.; and government, M = 2.34 (below 39) and 2.53 (above 39), F(1, 643) = 4.22, p <.05. Overall, younger Singaporeans are more receptive in being treated as customers in social institutions compared to the older generations.

Comparing between the levels educational, respondents with junior college education or lower were categorized as group A (n = 226), and respondents with polytechnics or higher degrees as group B (n = 419). One-way ANOVA test showed statistical significances only on hospitals, M = 3.12 (less educated) and 3.30 (more-educated), F(1, 643) = 4.58, p <.05. For people who are highly educated, they are more cautious about hospitals marketing such as advertising claims on their services and treatments.

Finally, comparing between the levels of income, respondents with an income level of < USD3,000 per month were labeled as group A (n = 293) and above < USD3,000 per month as group B (n = 352). One-way ANOVA test showed statistical significances only on primary and secondary schools, M = 2.65 (poorer) and 2.36 (richer), F(1, 643) = 8.27, p <.05. In other words, those who have more spending power generally have a higher acceptance of marketing practice in schools nurturing younger kids.

RQ3

General views on social institutions

Hospital. The majority participants held the perspectives that hospitals should not be totally marketed: “(Hospitals) cannot be commercialized, because (the hospital’s responsibility is to) save life. It’s a noble cause (or responsibility)...a higher calling.” However, a goodwill-based marketing is acceptable:
As a customer of course I want to be served, I mean, I want the vendor to serve me with politeness, adhere to my needs and wants. As a patient, of course if I go to the hospital, I don’t want to wait too long you see. I want the doctor to be truthful to what, tell me about his observations, what I should do, what I shouldn’t do, advise me, so that I feel comfort, whether I should go on with the operation or not, or wait and see, you see.

**Education.** At the broader scale, respondents felt that students shouldn’t be treated as customers but schools should be run as business: “Customers have the right to reject the offers from a salesperson, but students cannot. For example, students cannot reject to do their assignment.” “I believe in the whole idea that individual students should be nurtured. You don’t give them unequal attention. You shower them with all the teaching you can do. Basically that’s the part where they are not considered as customers.” Such comments are largely influenced by the Confucius thinking. “The positive would be similar to the hospital one. It can better improve the services – the facilities and that kind of thing – which would benefit the students.”

The ethical responsibility of a school was brought also up:  
...if you start to treat them as a customer right, then you give them different values. You are talking, you are telling them that the whole world is about money that there is no other things that is involved. So you make, so you are going to make a society where the next twenty years it is going to be very cold.

**Religion.** There was a clear consensus among all participants that religious institutions should not treat their followers as customers: “It’s something scared, so it is a bit weird to put a price to it.” There was only one exception – service charge rate and quality of service: “In funeral services, people who give different payments get different treatment in the country.”

**Government.** For those who favor the idea, they usually come from the perspective of money and the tax-paying rationale: “We are taxpayers. The officers should utilize the money we paid wisely and do something that we want to get.” For those who disfavor, they believe the possible implications that “richer and able to pay citizens will stand to gain as compared to the poorer ones.” Some respondents expected the government to provide the same degree of service as any business would for their customers: “I think they are trying to treat the public as customers. In the community, the administration leaders would meet local citizens each week to listen to their concerns, complaints and suggestion, and try to help them to figure out their problems.” “In other countries if you don’t treat them as customers and give the majority what they really want, they may really kick you out of the next election.”

**News media.** Similarly to the government, participants had mixed feelings. “News media should treat citizens, who are interested in celebrity news which is all gossip and interesting stuff, as customers. The truth won’t be available as they would provide the news which the customers want.”

**Marketing techniques**

Business units utilize common marketing techniques to promote and publicize their products and services to their target audience. This is ubiquitous in the business world where corporations and organizations compete to survive and garner the most profits. However, can the same be said for social institutions in which their objective is in raising awareness of social needs and creating a better environment for the greater public? Participants had diverse views for the different social institutions.

In general, participants were receptive of marketing in all social institutions except religion, in which all participants felt that it is extremely unethical to market the religion to the general public. For example, “there should not be any marketing because there should not be a competition telling people which religion is better.” Educational institutions especially in higher education received relatively more positive feedback on the use of marketing and advertising of educational services, though some were skeptical about “product placement” during classes and in the school environment. Still, most respondents agreed that the use of marketing technique is acceptable as it allows students/parents to compare and choose a school which offers the best environment to cultivate a student’s talents.

In media institutions, marketing is acceptable on condition that it is factual and correct as it gives the readers information, enabling them to make rational and informed decisions. For instance, “it’s the choice of them (news media agencies) to pick their advertisers, provided what they are writing is factual and correct.”
For government institutions, it was generally agreed that marketing is acceptable for bigger countries such as America where everything is marketed. However, some respondents also believed that marketing from a government has to be credible, and the promises have to be genuine. The type of marketing messages determines whether a “customer” would find it acceptable or not. It appeared that participants’ acceptance of marketing efforts also differed based on each social institution. For instance, participants from the focus group sessions are generally supportive of marketing and advertising carried out by educational institutions, whereas for healthcare institutions, the acceptance differs based on the product or service being advertised. For example, aesthetic advertising is acceptable because it is focused more on the wants instead of the needs. On the other hand, some respondents were amused by the need of hospitals to advertise because more advertisement does not necessarily mean that the hospital is better. For example, 

You are able to say more than others doesn’t mean that they are better than others. So at the end of the day, what you market may not be what you can deliver. That’s number one. Number two, I think when you market, then who is going to bear the cost of the marketing? It is going to be passed onto the cost of the consumers, at that point is the patients themselves. So, is it fair? I am paying for something so that you can tell me something.

Still, there is no clear consensus with regard to marketing carried out by social institutions. Arguments of more information, credibility of information as well as type of information were the criteria mentioned in deciding whether or not marketing is acceptable.

**Discussion**

From the broadest perspective, the study revealed a rather consistent pattern in attitudes about the appropriateness of the customer metaphor. When one looks at the array of contexts – healthcare, education, media, religion, and government – there is generally strong agreement in certain contexts (e.g. media and college/universities) the “customer” designation is more appropriate than in other contexts (e.g. religious organizations or primary/secondary education). Such ranking orders of the acceptability of the customer metaphors among the social institutions are in line with the economic and political development of Singapore. Specifically, news media was ranked highest as its agenda setting is monitored by the government, which ensures trust and credible information. Hospitals were ranked second because of the rapid development of positioning itself as the regional medical hub ([http://www.singaporemedicine.com](http://www.singaporemedicine.com)). Colleges and universities were ranked the third as Singapore has a highly competitive market in attracting local and foreign students in pursuing degrees, diplomas, and certifications. The levels of acceptance of the customer metaphor among the social institutions are also influenced by the social and cultural values such as Confucius thinking. For instance, it is highly unethical to market any religion and younger students (in primary and secondary schools) should not be treated as customers.

At the same time, there were statistically significant differences in demographic factors in playing a role in determining attitudes. For example, females and senior citizens are less receptive in marketing in social institutions, whereas those with less purchasing power (low levels of education and income) are more receptive. In particular, respondents who are highly educated would favor the marketing techniques in primary/secondary schools. This reflects a boost in the branding efforts among schools for early education in the last decade.

Respondents generally believe that the fundamental goals and objectives of social institutions should not be changed because of the practice of marketing. For example, hospitals are run to treat patients, schools are meant to nurture students with equal attention, and governments should care for their citizens. When it comes down to the use of marketing techniques, respondents tended to recall their “feel-good” or “feel-bad” experiences when interacting with people from the social institutions such as doctors in hospitals, teachers in schools, and priests/pastors in religious organizations. Hence, such examples can be inferred that Singaporeans are not concerned much about the overall use of customer metaphor adopted by social institutions, but they pay attention to the specific moments they encounter or through hear-say examples.

Interestingly, many respondents in both the online survey and focus groups could not articulate the rationale for their attitudes. Some gave answers such as “It’s obvious (without further explanation) or “It’s just common sense.” In addition, they don’t see much difference of their views compared to their parents’ or grandparents’. With the Western influence in boosting the economy, younger Singaporeans have also acculturated the Western marketing practice (i.e. consumer culture), which they may just take it for granted.
Still in areas such as religion and education, their views are influenced dominantly by traditional Chinese values.

The results of this study point to particularly vivid differences in healthcare, education, and news media context of what specific areas are more and less acceptable in practicing marketing. This exploratory study sets the first parameter in measuring the acceptability of marketing in social institutions from the public view in a Chinese-populated context and provides specific areas for consumer marketers and policy makers to “draw the lines.” However, given that this study was conducted online only and it was not a random sampling, some segments of the population would have been missed out. Future studies could further explore these areas related to the larger socio-political-cultural contexts and explain such differences among “Chinese” in other cities and countries, such as Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan, as well as other Chinese-speaking populations such as Malaysia and Indonesia. Also, compare and contrast general public views with the views of service providers would provide more insights for the current marketing situation among social institutions.

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Crisis Management Consultancy:
Exploration of the Expertise, Experience and Expediency of Consultants in Public Relations Agencies in Singapore

Augustine Pang
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Abstract: By most accounts, crisis preparedness in organizations globally has been appalling (Burnett, 1998; Pinsdorf, 1995). The situation is not different in Singapore (Wu & Dai, 2001). With crisis expertise often lacking from within organizations, many resort to engaging public relations (PR) agencies to help. This study, which is inspired by Frandsen and Johansen’s (2008) study in Denmark, aims to evaluate the contributions of consultants from PR agencies. Adapting from the indicators to assess professionalism proposed by Lages and Simkin (2003) and Sallot, Cameron and Lariscy (1997) and integrating them with variables from the Contingency theory (Pang, Jin, & Cameron, 2010), this study seeks to examine: 1) The level of expertise of consultants in offering crisis management consultancy; 2) The level of experience of consultants offering crisis management consultancy; 3) The value and expedience of the consultancy services offered. Findings showed that agencies in Singapore hired consultants based on skills such as writing, speaking and ability to manage the media. For some, lack of direct experience was compensated by in-house training. The level of expertise and experience of consultants from the international agencies appeared higher than those from local agencies as they had the backing of an international network. However, as the majority of agencies had only managed few crises, it was difficult to assess the value these consultants added. Studies examining consultants in PR agencies are rare. It is hoped this study would trigger research and help build a repository of literature in Asia.

Introduction
By most accounts, crisis preparedness in organizations globally has been appalling. If the US, a First World economy, can be used as a benchmark, studies found overall poor crisis planning through the years. In the 1980s, among all organizations, less than 50 per cent had any crisis plans (Fink, 1986). In the 1990s, among the Fortune 1000 Industrial and Fortune 500 service organizations, only 53 per cent had crisis plans (Pinsdorf, 1995). Among the Fortune 1000 organizations, less than 60 per cent had crisis plans (Tiller, 1994). Among the largest profit-making organizations in the US, up to 70 percent of them had not made any crisis plans (Burnett, 1998). In the 2000s, only the larger organizations had crisis plans (Cloudman & Hallahan, 2006). Considering 90 percent of all crises were preventable (Wilcox & Cameron, 2005), this inertia is even more alarming. In Singapore, another developed economy and financial center situated at the heart of Southeast Asia and at the crossroads of Asia, the situation is no different. Arguably the only study that has examined organizational preparedness across organizations (Wu & Dai, 2001) has found that crisis preparedness was woefully lacking.

With expertise to prepare for crisis often lacking from within organizations, many may resort to engaging external help, or outsourcing functions to public relations (PR) agencies to help prepare, plan and execute crisis response (Rudgard, 2003). These agencies provide counsel and perform services for an agreed fee; and the agencies can range in size from one or two-person operations to global giants such as Weber Shandwick, which employs almost 3,000 professionals in 81 offices around the world (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009). Wilcox and Cameron (2009), citing a previous report that noted that more than 80 per cent of the respondents in the US now work with outside PR agencies, argued that more and more communication functions are outsourced. Another study cited by Wilcox and Cameron (2009) reported that Fortune 500 organizations spend 25 per cent of their PR budget for outsourcing. “Almost 90 per cent of the companies use outside PR counsel to varying degrees,” (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009, p. 109). The most common reasons given for outsourcing were first, as argued above, to utilize expertise and resources not found within, and second, to gain extra help during peak
periods or in times of need. Other reasons include managing crises, rapid business expansion into new markets, and difficulty in justifying the hiring of a specialized PR department (Rudgard, 2003). Some organizations have also resorted to working with several agencies simultaneously to draw out the best talents and services (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009). Clients of PR agencies can include global companies, industry associations, professional services firms, governments, and other large organizations (Croft, 1997). The agencies may work with an existing in-house PR department or if such a department does not exist, undertake the entire PR effort on behalf of their clients. For agencies on crisis management, most consultants are sanguine that they were “well informed about their clients’ board level policies and plans” (Lages & Simkin, 2003, p. 302).

With such a heavy reliance on PR agencies, this study, which is inspired by Frandsen and Johansen’s (2008) study in Denmark, aims to evaluate the contributions of consultants from PR agencies. As Brody (2001) wrote, how can one be “assured of practitioner proficiency?” (p. 6). Adapting and integrating indicators to assess professionalism proposed by Lages and Simkin (2003) and Sallot, Cameron and Lariscy (1997) with variables proposed by the Contingency theory of strategic conflict management (Pang, Jin, & Cameron, 2010), this study seeks to examine: 1) The level of expertise of consultants in offering crisis management consultancy; 2) The level of experience of consultants in offering crisis management consultancy; 3) The value and expediency of the consultancy services offered.

The research design comprised two stages. First, archival search of the websites of the agencies that professed to offer crisis consultancy was conducted. Only agencies which were members of the Institute of Public Relations of Singapore (IPRS), the only accrediting body for PR practitioners in Singapore (www.iprs.org.sg), were accessed. Second, those that claimed to offer such services were contacted and face-to-face interviews were conducted. Of the 41 agencies accredited by IPRS, 21 were interviewed. Nine were local agencies; three were regional and another nine international agencies. All 21 interviewees were senior executives in their respective agencies, holding the position of chief executive, managing director, general manager or head of practice.

This study is significant on three fronts. First, while there is a plethora of studies examining the expertise of practitioners, particularly in-house (Berger, Reber, & Heyman, 2007; Bowen, 2009; Bussy & Wolf, 2009; Kim & Hon, 1998; Moss, Warnaby, & Newman, 2000), the profession (see Tobin, 2004), or education (Peterson & Mak, 2006; Rawel, 2002), few studies have examined the expertise of those who provide advice. Lages and Simkin (2003) argued these consultants, or “invisible players influencing many organizations and shaping PR practice” have “never been examined per se” (p. 305). This is arguably one of the few studies to assess consultants in offering crisis consultancies through a case study of agencies in Singapore. Second, when utilizing the services of consultants, a given assumption many clients may hold is the consultants come with stronger resumes than in-house practitioners. While it may be true in some cases, this study hopes to provide a deeper insight into the quality of the consultants and their organizations. Third, it is hoped this study would trigger research in other countries. Much work remains to be done to build a repository of literature to understand the practice of PR agencies, particularly in Asia which is undergoing tremendous change as far as the field is concerned (see Pang & Mak (Eds.), 2009; Sriramesh & Vercic (Eds.), 2003).

Literature Review
Public Relations (PR) Agencies
They are variously called firms (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009), consultancies (Chay-Nemeth, 2003) or agencies (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009) – and for the purposes of standardization, they shall be called agencies here – but the idea is the same: These organizations provide communication counsel and services to clients for a fee. Some have even positioned themselves as providing “thought leadership” by publishing papers or data-driven reports on issues or trends (“Consultancy firms,” 2010). In most developed economies, they are ubiquitous, with as many as 7,000 such organizations reported in the US (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009). Though some are one or two-man outfits, the more prestigious ones have global reach, setting up offices all over the world (Croft, 1997). Hill and Knowlton is argued to be the “first-ever international PR agency” (Rudgard, 2003, p. 459).

Many are profitable, charging clients either on an hourly basis plus out-of-pocket expenses, a retainer basis or fixed fee basis. Edelman Worldwide brought in about US$325 million in revenues in 2006 (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009). Currently, the world’s top 5 PR agencies in terms of earnings are Weber Shandwick, Fleishman Hillard, Ketchum, Burson Marsteller, and Edelman (Council of Public Relations, 2002).
These agencies provide a variety of services, including marketing communication, branding and corporate reputation, events management, media relations and analysis, government relations, internal communications, digital and social media, financial relations, executive speech training, research and evaluation, and last but not least, crisis communication.

In crisis communication and image management, some of the services offered have made impact on international relations. For instance, China was said to have utilized PR agencies to help it generate a better image in news coverage in the mainstream US newspapers like The New York Times, Washington Post and Los Angeles Times (Zhang & Cameron, 2003). Zhang and Benoit (2004) found that Saudi Arabia had hired international consultants to revamp its image in the US after 9-11. More recently, China was reported to have hired consultants to embark on a PR campaign to repair its image damaged as a result of the “Made in China” product recalls (Cai, Lee, & Pang, 2009).

**Hiring PR Consultants**

Wilcox and Cameron (2009) argued that a major consideration for organizations to hire the services of agencies is the quality of consultants, according to a survey of Fortune 500 corporate vice-presidents. Organizations expect consultants to (1) understand their business and industry, (2) respond to their needs and request in a timely manner, (3) work within the organization’s budget (p. 120). Besides delivering creative and quality work, good returns on investment, and rendering outstanding client service, organizations assume the talent present in agencies, which can be operationalized in “high-quality staff” (p. 120), “variety of skills and expertise” (p. 121), “special problem-solving skills” (p. 121) and “credibility” (p. 122), can provide the cutting edge services they need.

Yet, it is plausible that the assumed talent and expertise may be compromised. First, agencies are not able to hire and retain good, quality staff (Rudgard, 2003). Second, agencies hire consultants who do not have direct experience and expertise for the job. Third, as a result of the lack of experience and expertise, consultants rely on “strong direction by top management” (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009, p. 122) who more often than not have many clients to service thus not being able to render the desired attention. Four, the consultants themselves “lack full-time commitment” (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009, p. 122) because they have to service many clients at the same time. Five, consultants only have “superficial grasp of a client’s unique problems” (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009, p. 122) because they have to service many clients at the same time. Additionally, the “high” turnover of staff (Rudgard, 2003, p. 472) means that new consultants spent more time learning about their accounts than providing creative and strategic counsel to organizations. Rudgard (2003) argued organizations expect a “high level of knowledge retained within” the consultancy partner, and this process of “training and passing essential knowledge onto a new team” could be “too much to bear” (p. 472). “The bottom line is if staff turnover at the agency is high, it can have a detrimental effect” (Rudgard, 2003, p. 472) on organization-agency relationship.

As Lages and Simkin (2003) argued, given that services offered by consultants “implied paid expertise” (p. 304), how does one measure the level of expertise, experience and expedience of the services of consultants? To do so, indicators to assess professionalism proposed by Lages and Simkin (2003) and Sallot, Cameron and Larisey (1997) were adapted and integrated with variables proposed by the Contingency theory of strategic conflict management (Pang, Jin, & Cameron, 2010).

**Contingency Theory of Strategic Conflict Management**

The contingency theory of strategic conflict management, which began as an elaboration, qualification, and extension of the value of symmetry propounded in the excellence theory, has, over more than a decade, come into its own and emerged as an empirically tested perspective (Pang, 2008). A public relations theory that later evolved into a crisis communication theory, it has been used as the theoretical lens to analyze how organizations adopt a position or stance along a continuum which has, at one end of the continuum, advocacy, and at the other end, accommodation, “at a given time regarding a given public” (Pang, Jin, & Cameron, 2010, p. 527). The theory offers three sets of variables that can influence the organization’s position on the continuum, the predisposing variables; situational variables; and prescriptive variables.

While it has been used to analyze how crises were managed inter-organizationally (see Jin, Pang, & Cameron, 2006/2007; Reber, Cropp, & Cameron, 2003) as well as intra-organizationally (Pang, Cropp, & Cameron, 2006), what is instructive of this theory to this study is the positing of internal variables to examine the levels of expertise and experience of practitioners. The theory offers a matrix of 87 factors, arranged thematically, that the study could draw on. Besides characteristics examining the organization and dominant coalition were internal variables measuring PR department and practitioners. The variables examined in this
study included if the practitioner had college degrees; if they were communication trained (in PR or journalism); if they had experience dealing with crisis; communication competency; and level of trust established with clients.

Constructs for Professionalism of PR Consultants
Lages and Simkin’s (2003) study sought to examine the core constituents of corporate PR, as distinguished from possible overlaps like marketing PR, and what were the underlying driving forces. The study argued that there were three levels of PR – at the individual practitioner level, at the industry level, and at the agency level, with the academic level reiterating the three dimensions. Lages and Simkin (2003) found several constructs that were relevant to practitioners at the individual, consultancy and industry levels. These were opportunity to engage in managerial PR activities; understanding the strategic needs of clients; conforming to industry standards; length of stay in the job; qualifications; quality of PR graduates.

Professional Standards in Public Relations
Sallot, Cameron and Lariscy’s (1997) study to examine the level of professionalism among educators can also be adapted to consultants, based on Lages and Simkin’s (2003) argument that academic PR reflects practice at the individual, consultancy and industry levels. The authors sought to understand what PR educators perceived professional standards in the field. Twenty-four indicators were measured, ranging from individual proficiency, technical competency, salaries, accreditation, accountability, ethical standards, to PR models practiced. The study narrowed down to a list of 14: seven indicators from educators, and the other seven from practitioners. The common indicators among the two were salary, research competence, education/skills and training, ethical performance, and gender and racial equity. From these, what is instructive to the study could be narrowed down to education/skills and training; technical skills; and research competency. Ethical performance is assumed and subsumed under Lages and Simkin’s (2003) conformity to industry standards while gender and racial equity are not applicable in this study.

Assessing Expertise, Experience, and Expedience
Drawn from insights from the literature, this study seeks to examine expertise, experience, and expedience based on these criteria:

Expertise:
- Quality of graduates and exposure (Lages & Simkin, 2003)
- Qualifications (Lages & Simkin, 2003)
- College degree/education (Sallot, Cameron, & Lariscy, 1997; Pang, Jin & Cameron, 2010)
- Past training in journalism or PR (Pang, Jin & Cameron, 2010)
- Training in technical skills (Sallot, Cameron, & Lariscy, 1997)

Experience:
- Engagement in managerial activities (Lages & Simkin, 2003)
- Length of stay in job (Lages & Simkin, 2003)
- Experience in dealing/consulting for crisis (Pang, Jin & Cameron, 2010)
- Communication competency (Pang, Jin & Cameron, 2010)
- Research competency (Sallot, Cameron, & Lariscy, 1997)

Expedience:
- Meeting strategic needs of clients (Lages & Simkin, 2000)
- Conformity to industry standards (Lages & Simkin, 2000)
- Level of trust established with clients (Pang, Jin & Cameron, 2010)

Using these indicators, this study seeks to examine:
RQ1: What is the level of expertise of consultants in offering crisis management advice and training?
RQ2: What is the level of experience of consultants in offering crisis management advice and training?
RQ3: What is the value and expedience of the consultancy services offered by consultants to their clients?
Method

The strength of qualitative research lies in its ability to provide descriptions of people’s experience which are often complex and intangible, such as behaviors, beliefs, feelings, thoughts and reactions. This method allows the collection of data from respondents when the phenomenon under study cannot be directly observed or measured or whose role in the research issue is not readily apparent. In PR, qualitative research has the potential to facilitate the increasing collaborative dialogue between PR scholars and practitioners. As this tool is associated with the subjective nature of social reality, such an approach is effective in obtaining information about the opinions, attitudes and social contexts of the target group being examined. It does so by providing insights and perspectives into the research topic, enabling researchers to also look at issues in the same way as the examined group (Daymon & Holloway, 2002; Weerakkody, 2009). It is therefore useful to adopt qualitative research methods for this study, which was conducted in two stages: First, online archival search of agencies that offered services; and second, face-to-face interviews with consultants.

Online Archival Search

The aim of archival search was to identify the websites of agencies that offered crisis services in Singapore. Only agencies that were affiliated to, or were institutional members of the Institute of Public Relations Singapore (IPRS), the only accrediting body for PR practitioners in Singapore, were accessed. This allowed us to focus on accredited pool of agencies from which we selected our target group for examination. Archival search was conducted in February 2008.

In-Depth Interviews

To investigate more into the information found on the web, interviews were conducted to complement and bolster the data collection process (Eysenbach, 2005). Face-to-face interviews were chosen over focus groups or field studies because of its usefulness in facilitating the exploration of the consultants’ background, training and contexts within which they operated. It allowed the understanding of the constructs that interviewees used as basis for their views on a situation or issue, and the evidence was based on the interviewees’ interpretation of their experiences (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). A semi-structured interview structure was adopted, allowing some degree of freedom and flexibility in adding questions posed from the prepared list of questions and varying the wording or order of the questions.

Data Collection Process

Data from the online archival search provided an overview of the range of services offered by agencies. Attention was paid to those with mentions that pertained to crisis-related services, such as crisis communication, crisis preparedness or crisis management consultancy. Of the 41 agencies accredited by IPRS, 34 were listed or confirmed by an office staff over the phone that they offered crisis consultancy. They were approached, and emails requesting for an interview were then sent to the most senior executive in the agency. This was followed by a phone call to confirm receipt of the email and agreement to be interviewed. For those whom we did not get to talk to on the first call attempt, follow-up calls were made. Of the 34, we were unsuccessful with 11 agencies. Some turned down our request to be interviewed because of time constraints; others said crisis advice was not their significant business arm; yet others persistently avoided replying our emails and returning our calls.

Only 21 agencies agreed to participate. Face-to-face interviews with the consultants were carried out over a period of four months from March to July 2008. A list of about 25 questions aimed at understanding interviewees’ expertise, work experience and expediency as crisis management consultants was crafted and posed to all interviewees. For expertise, we fielded questions on interviewees’ educational qualifications and past training which included questions like how many people in your agency were competent to provide crisis consultancy; what were the qualifications of your consultants who advise clients on crisis; how many years had they been working in the agency; where and how did they acquire their crisis management competency; what sort of people did they look for when recruiting and was having crisis knowledge or experience important; and was preference given to those with previous journalism or PR background?

For experience, we posed questions like how long had the agency been offering crisis consultancy; what kinds of crisis services were offered; how many clients had the agency advised on crisis so far and did they provide this service to specific or selected industries; did they work with freelance consultants; could they describe an example of a successful and an unsuccessful consultancy offered? For expediency, we asked questions like how involved were the consultant during the crisis and what role did they play; how did the clients show their appreciation for the advice provided; did Singapore’s practitioners have what it takes to
provide crisis advice?

All the interviews lasted between one and two hours. Most were eager to talk and very forthcoming as they showed interest in the topic. However, there were also occasions during the interviews when interviewees digressed from the questions and did not address the crux of the matter, often preferring not to give specific details or numbers. All 21 interviews, which were conducted at the interviewees’ offices or at public venues such as cafés in malls, were recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. On average, we managed to amass about 10 pages of data (12 font, double spacing) from each interviewee.

Sample

As crisis consultancies were mostly handled by consultants with supposedly vast experience in crisis, only senior consultants were approached. All 21 interviewees were therefore senior executives in their respective agencies, holding the position of chief executive, managing director, general manager or head of practice. Ten were males and 11 were females with each boasting at least 10 years of PR experience prior to assuming their current positions. Two-thirds of them (14) were Singaporeans while the other one-third (7) expatriates who accepted postings from their headquarters to work in Singapore.

Care was also taken to ensure that there were representations from local, regional and multinational agencies. There were therefore nine from local agencies, three from regional firms with operations in other parts of Asia, and nine from multinational agencies with global networks. The number of years the agencies has been operating in Singapore ranged from six months to 36 years.

Findings

Expertise

College degree/education. In terms of educational qualifications and background, 16 interviewees held at least a bachelor’s degree; three had diplomas and two were high school graduates. Of the 16 degree holders, only three studied PR or communications at the undergraduate level. The other 13 were educated in disciplines such as accountancy, economics, geography, humanities, journalism, law, library and information system, philosophy, political science and sociology.

Past training in journalism or PR. With regard to past training and skill sets, we found that the majority of the interviewees were equipped with a variety of skills, both managerial and technical, prior to joining their current agencies. Other than only three who joined the profession with little knowledge about PR from their previous careers as a lawyer, librarian and an army officer, the other 18 interviewees had managed PR before. Those who had knowledge of PR acquired it mainly from having practiced in agencies, government departments/ministries or as in-house practitioners in private organizations.

Of the 18, five were also former journalists. When probed on why they switched to PR and what value a journalism background brings to consultancy, all mentioned their good writing skills, personal contacts with the media and strong corporate networking. Understanding how the media works is essential in PR, especially when it comes to pitching of stories and getting the needed publicity. One interviewee further attributed her expertise in managing crises to her days as a journalist in the Middle East where she had to cover international affairs and highly sensitive events; while another who had also worked as a political journalist in Australia found herself managing crises created by lobby groups. As crises are very complex and time is often the essence, journalists like herself were trained to think on her feet and understand crisis issues quickly. One interviewee said,

“I worked as a journalist for many years. I first worked for the government in Australia as a political journalist and then I worked for the lobby groups before moving into PR, so my background is very political…I believe that nothing else is able to teach you how to think on your feet like politics especially when you are questioned in the parliament, or when faced with a crisis … We had train crashes, bus crashes where a lot of people were killed. There were strikes by the pilots and a lot of other problems … It was a fantastic portfolio and in a crisis, the phone
would ring non-stop from 6am to 12 midnight and people complain about why they are not given a story like others, so I was pleased to be part of that because such experience is hard to come by.”

Quality of exposure. In terms of total staff strength in the 21 agencies, the numbers ranged from three to 50. Eight agencies hired a total of 10 staff or fewer, while 13 employed 11 or more. The number of staff competent to consult on crises varied: one agency had 10, one had seven, one had six, five had five and 13 had fewer than five.

Insert Table 3 about here

Qualifications. All the interviewees reported that they and their colleagues had the expertise managing crises prior to joining the agency. They hailed from different training and educational backgrounds. When asked for the qualifications of their colleagues, the interviewees were unable to provide exact information. They either could not recall or gave vague and doubtful details, rendering the data collected imprecise. As to where the interviewees and their colleagues acquired their skills in managing crises, all 21 interviewees reported that it was mainly through work and on-the-job training. None had studied crisis communication as a specialty or went to institutions to learn how to manage crises although the few who studied communications in school took crisis as one of many communication subjects.

As such, when it came to recruiting staff, all the interviewees reported that they did not insist on candidates having crisis management knowledge or experience. They were of the opinion that other skill sets are more critical, such as writing, speaking and the ability to manage the media. Reasons being that the bulk of their clients’ work was related mostly to routine publicity, events, media and issues management. None of the agencies specialized in crisis consultancy work only. And if they did accept crisis cases, these were always handled by the senior executives hence there was little need for junior consultants to be equipped with crisis management knowledge. One interviewee commented:

“We don’t have a dedicated team to work on crisis, so we don’t hire people specifically to handle crisis. If there is a crisis, the consultant who is working on the project will be the more suitable person to also handle the crisis but that also depends on his or her work volume. For agency, we need people who can write with personality … (more importantly), that person must have writing skills, someone who is not afraid of getting her hands dirty, get the work done, very hands-on, very outgoing and someone who is creative. People with journalism or PR experience will of course be very useful and it does not matter that they do not have crisis experience.”

Another said:

“My prerequisite is for people who can write well, speak well and good at what they do in terms of PR and media affairs. That’s the most important because when it comes to crisis, crisis is something far and in between, and when we have to handle one, I will train the people under me.”

Interviewees from the multinationals also commented that they provided in-house crisis courses which were specially tailored to equip their staff as part of their career development, thus discounting the need for potential recruits to have knowledge on crisis management or experience. However, in the event that specialized crisis skills were needed, they would fly in their colleagues from other offices within the same international network. One such consultant from an international agency shared,

“We don’t let anyone handle crisis management if they do not have extensive experience in issues management. They are likely to be leaders in managing issues or have started leading in issues management for a number of years before they are qualified to come on board and help with crisis advice. Here, they also have to be trained internally and we give out certification. We practise this throughout all our offices in the world. Our agency is the only firm that does this certification because we have a reputation to protect.”
Ten interviewees further elaborated that, in addition to basic communication skills, they also looked for potential recruits who were matured, independent with deep knowledge of the industry. This meant that they hardly or never hire fresh undergraduates with no industry experience. They preferred those who were already in middle management with at least five to six years of experience either from other PR agencies or in-house. It was further emphasized that the educational background of the candidates was not particularly important as a potential recruit with an economics background, for example, could be just as valuable as one trained in communication. This is because, while non-communication graduates may not have gone through the rigors of an education in communication, they brought with them expertise in other fields which sometimes helped to enlarge their understanding of the organization’s business. Such a mindset was valued in consultancy work because a consultant could almost immediately “connect” with the client and fully appreciate the organizational issues at hand, thereby providing counsel that was relevant and solutions which were appropriate. An interviewee said,

“We don’t normally say we are looking for specific crisis communication people. When we look for people, we look broadly for those with seniority and with certain job competencies. We look for important skills and we expect those who we are hiring for senior positions to have some crisis communication skills but we do not seek out crisis experts. It does not matter what background they come from or what were they trained in. Across the globe, we have hired lawyers, pharmacists and physicists and while we have some people who studied communication, we aim to have a pool of talents that can contribute to the overall business.”

Six interviewees from this group of 10 also mentioned that while it was tempting to hire candidates with a journalism background because of their good writing skills and media contacts, they may not necessarily be good PR practitioners. For consultancy work, they needed people with a variety of skill sets and expertise, people who could speak and write well, had the personality for the job such as outgoing, creative, task oriented and a good conversationalist and shrewd negotiator capable of drilling down to issues with focus and clarity.

Unlike other PR services, crisis jobs were unpredictable and did not merit incurring extra operating and overhead costs. This also explained why the interviewees felt that until demand for such services increase, their existing pool of consultants capable of providing such a service is sufficient for the time being.

Training. When asked how the senior executives mentored the junior executives or guided them in their work, only two interviewees from two multinational agencies were able to say they had a formal and strict training curriculum where junior executives had to attend weekly or monthly sessions as part of training. The objective was also to expose and train their juniors on the methodologies adopted by the agency to ensure consistency and professionalism when managing crises. Another 16 interviewees shared that their mentoring of junior consultants was rather informal or semi-formal, i.e., tagging along for meetings and learning from the seniors. The juniors were also encouraged to ask questions from their observations and invited to attend internal discussions. The other three interviewees said that they had no mentoring program whatsoever for junior executives because the latter were never involved in crisis work because of the confidential nature of such cases.

Insert Table 4 about here

Experience
All 21 interviewees reported that their agencies offered the whole assortment of PR services like strategic advice, media and issues management, events management, corporate branding, reputation management and crisis consultancy. When asked to describe the types of crisis work offered, the interviewees mentioned crisis preparedness and training, risk assessment, crisis manual production, media management, production of publicity materials, message positioning, crisis rehearsals and simulations.

Communication competency. Not all the interviewees, however, reported that their agencies had the capability to offer the full array of these crisis services. In cases where certain expertise was needed, they would collaborate with affiliates or external partners. Of the 21 interviewees, 11 embarked on such tie-ups with freelancers or business collaborators as they were of the view that such joint efforts complemented the skills and expertise of their small in-house crisis teams. The other 10 either handled all the crisis work by themselves or for the multinational agencies, they would seek assistance from overseas colleagues as their firms’ international network was large enough to provide all the crisis expertise required. One consultant from an
international agency shared,

“We have a crisis management head within the network and if required, she runs the training module and she will get involved in the training and crisis as well as the strategic counsel like giving advice directly to the CEO and working out an action plan for the client. She is an individual supported by the regional team."

Twenty interviewees shared that their agencies offered crisis consultancy since the first day of operation, while one commented that her agency only started taking on crisis jobs in 2007 after being in operation for two years. This was due to existing clients’ requests for such services. All 21 interviewees mentioned that they generally offered crisis consultancy across industries although seven said that their expertise tended to lean towards those in finance, marine and energy, aviation, technology and shipping.

Charges wise, two interviewees reported that they did not impose additional fees for managing crises if their clients were already on retainers. This was due to goodwill and was extended as part of thanking clients for their loyalty. Eighteen mentioned that they charged for crisis jobs and this amount was separate from existing retainer fees. Their charges were based either on project basis or hourly rate which could range from S$5,000 to S$65,000 per project or S$250 to S$1,000 per hour respectively. One interviewee was reluctant to divulge any information on charges as he felt that such details were confidential and varied widely depending on the type of crisis work and clientele.

All the crises that the 21 agencies said they handled were either retainer clients’ or referrals. None gets crisis cases from “walk-ins”, reinforcing their earlier statements that crisis consultancy was not their core business, hence the reluctance to over-invest in this area.

Length of stay in job/engage in managerial activities. In terms of the interviewees’ length of stay at the current agency, the shortest was three months and the longest, 23 years. As for their daily work activities in the office, all mentioned managerial. Their seniority meant that they had to manage subordinates, conduct internal meetings, counsel clients, solicit for business and also oversee the routine operations of the organization.

Research competency. Research was not one of the activities in the string of work mentioned.

Experience in dealing/consulting for crises. When asked the number of crisis cases that their agencies had handled so far, the responses varied. Two agencies had yet to handle a crisis. This was because one had just set up the agency a few months before this interview was conducted, while the other had yet to receive any such requests despite professing that it had the needed expertise and experience. Two took on only one case so far; two worked on two crises since joining the agency; seven had between three to six such jobs; one had to deal with eight crises; two had managed about 20 or more such work; and five between one and eight crises for their clients every year.

For the other 19 agencies, 12 managed only between one and eight crises for their clients so far. This meant that where experience in managing crises was concerned, few agencies could truly boast of having the familiarity that came with practice. Also, when probed on the number of repeated crisis clients who had used their services, all the interviewees were unable to comment. This could be either due to their inability to recall the numbers on the spot as such accounting of clients’ businesses reside with other colleagues or they did not keep track of such figures.

Many interviewees also had difficulty differentiating between issues and crisis management. After all, some crises develop out of issues and the line between the two could be blurred. This was evident when interviewees were asked on the number of crisis cases they had advised at the time of the interview and that 14 interviewees mistook issues management for crisis management when they provided details and description of cases that they had managed. Some examples given were managing the negative publicity in the media with an aim to play down the severity of the issue, or the handling of complaint letters that were published in the forum page of the national English newspaper in Singapore. Other descriptions were vague and inconclusive.

While the 67% of the interviewees might have thought they had managed a crisis when all they did was to manage the media before the issue developed into a crisis, those who actually managed crises, the other 33% or seven of the interviewees, appeared experienced. This group possessed extensive experience and years in managing crises associated with major catastrophes and disasters, such as plane crashes, collision of ships out in the open sea, collapse of highways and food poisoning incidents.

Each boasting between 20 and 30 years of crisis experience throughout their working years, these
interviewees were also the ones who provided consultancy to the more crisis conscious clients from sectors such as shipping, aviation, marine and energy. When sharing their crisis know-how, the interviewees were able to relate real life encounters where they were directly involved in life-threatening situations and where challenges and personal safety was sometimes at stake. When managing crises, the communication role that they played appeared almost indispensable. Many times, they narrated they found themselves an essential part of the rescue operations team, frequently giving advice on the recovery efforts, in addition to managing all communication with the organization’s internal and external stakeholders. These interviewees were also older in age, likely to be in their 50s and had worked in different industries where they previously held senior positions prior to joining their current agency. One such interviewee commented:

“I worked with the government. Whenever there’s a crisis, helicopters will be sent to bring me to the jungles to find out what is happening and I have to investigate the matter and report back. When a plane has crashed and burning in the deep forests of a neighboring country, just 200 yards away from a village, you have to handle the crisis with care. Not only was I tasked with communication issues, I had to handle legal, grassroots and community concerns. As the spokesperson, I would be quoted by different newspapers and agencies and this was pressurizing as they are diplomatically sensitive.”

**Expedience**

Given the rather mixed portrait of Singapore consultants’ level of expertise and experience in handling crisis, we moved on to assess the expedience or the value these consultants bring to their clients.

**Level of trust established with clients.** All 21 interviewees were positive that they had built very good rapport and were able to meet the needs of their crisis clients most of the time. One of the reasons cited was their promptness and quick response to crisis situations and also the depth of their involvement when it came to handling the work.

All the interviewees shared that during crises, they often liaised only with the Chief Executive Officers as it was most necessary that their advice must be conveyed to the one who called the shot. This would also reduce waiting time for permission to act, which often happened when they had to report to less senior executives, thus jeopardizing the smooth management of the crisis. The direct access to the Chief Executive Officers that the interviewees enjoyed was proof of the high level of trust that the consultants had with their clients.

**Meeting the strategic needs of clients.** The interviewees were also honest enough to share that while some of the crisis cases they consulted on were successful, others were not. Those that failed to pull off were sometimes due to inaccurate judgment calls on their part, clients’ refusing to fully co-operate or clients’ hesitance to carry out counsel due to budgetary constraints etc.

When asked how their clients showed their appreciation for their good work and if they were rewarded with good testimonials for example, all 21 reported that they hardly received any form of formal recognition after the crisis work was over. The reasons given were that consultants were paid to do the job; and clients did not wish to be reminded of the crises, preferring instead to leave the whole saga behind. In some cases, the clients would send a “thank you” email or took the consultants to a meal but the best form of appreciation for the interviewees would be for the clients to continue using their services. One interviewee remarked, “ Occasionally you might get a chief executive appreciating you but it will not lead to anything else. The trouble with managing crises is that nobody wants to talk about the incident after it is over.”

**Conformity to industry standards.** We also asked the interviewees for their views on the preparedness of organizations in dealing with crises and whether they thought Singapore’s consultants had the necessary expertise and experience to provide such a service. All 21 interviewees were of the opinion that they could definitely do more to help organizations if only there was greater demand for advice and work on crisis.

On how qualified Singaporean consultants were in offering crisis management advice, three interviewees felt that they did not possess enough local industry knowledge to answer the question; while the rest of the 18 were positive that the local consultants were capable of providing counsel on crisis. However, they were also of the view that the international agencies had an advantage over the local agencies as they had greater access to “borrowing” expertise and knowledge because of their size, global network and staff strength.

**Discussion**

*Expertise: Emphasis on Generalization than Specialization*

Based on qualifications, skills sets, and hiring requirements, it would be fair to conclude that there are more
consultants who are generalists than specialists. For a start, very few were trained in communication. With only three or 19% of the people interviewed had some form of communication education (in this case defined as having taken courses such as PR or communication as core academic subjects at the university), this figure is only slightly higher than the 14% of Singapore’s top in-house practitioners who had studied communication (Yeo & Sriramesh, 2009). It supports Yeo and Sriramesh’s (2009) observation that the general perception even among practitioners is that one need not be trained in the discipline in order to be able to practice it. This study also refutes the commonly held belief that consultants were necessarily more qualified in terms of education. Further, all gained their experience through work experience and on-the-job training. None had studied crisis communication as a specialty or went to institutions to learn how to manage crises although the few who studied communications in school took crisis as one of many communication subjects. This finding is hardly surprising as PR is not offered at tertiary institutions in Singapore until the formation of the School of Communication Studies at Nanyang Technological University in 1992, now renamed Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information (Pang & Yeo, 2009), with crisis communication only offered there in recent years. Those who were trained in this area were educated overseas.

The limited crisis work available also fuels the impression that there is no need for crisis specialization as it does not justify the costs. Besides, the perception that no one learns to manage crisis in the comfort of the classroom but out in the corporate world (Sriramesh, 2004; Yeo & Sriramesh, 2009) remains an urban legend. So agencies focus on general services, accentuating on traditional competencies like media relations, event management, writing and producing corporate literature (Pang & Yeo, 2009), and hire people who need not necessarily have the requisite training and who can pick them up along the way. It is no wonder that in Singapore, media relations is the top revenue earner for agencies, followed by strategic planning and counseling and even management (Chay-Nemeth, 2003). This mirrors the larger dilemma the profession faces in Singapore: That some practitioners still face issues of justifying their existence in less enlightened organizations (Yeap, 1994). Those who managed to cross that hurdle are valued for their technician functions (i.e., the generalists) than their expertise to provide strategic counsel (i.e., specialists) (Lim, Goh, & Sriramesh, 2005). No wonder Chay-Nemeth (2003) still described the field as being in the “preprofessional” (p. 89) stage.

Experience: More Rules-based than Reasoned Action
It is a chicken-and-egg situation: Because the profession is still suffering from a “credibility-deficit” (Pang & Yeo, 2009, p. 96), there is less specialized work like crisis consultancy given to the consultants. And only a rarefied few who have proven to be both generalists as well as specialists could boast of being approached to manage crises for their clients. As for the rest, some appeared to mistake crisis work for media work. This perception that managing the media was equivalent to managing crisis was hardly surprising. To the clients, the media were capable of fuelling and amplifying the severity of issues, thus inflicting damage to the clients’ reputation which would in turn lead to the boycott of the products, loss of profits and in the more some cases, collapse of the organization. This correlation of media relations to crisis communication supports what Wee, Tan, and Chew (1996) found to be the essence of PR work, that organizations in Singapore “still tend to equate PR with media coverage, which explains why media relations was the most involved function of all the functions...” (p. 272). Perhaps this explains why many organizations in Singapore do a “poor job” (Lim, Goh, & Sriramesh, 2005, p. 324) at managing crises.

In countries where PR is a professional practice, much of the best practices were tested “through experience as well as theory and research” (Heath & Coombs, 2006, p. 197). Heath and Coombs (2006) further argued that relying solely on best practices and discounting “theory and research based on principles of practice” is a “mistake” (p. 197). Given that research is hardly used in crisis work, mirroring the “infrequent” use of research in the field (Lim, Goh, & Sriramesh, 2005, p. 324), most of the experience gathered in the course of work remained at best, best practices or rules-based with accepted dos and don’ts. That may work for those who have gathered extensive experiences, who are individuals who are highly in demand in international settings (Nair, 2005). In general, findings showed that the level of expertise and experience of consultants from the multinational agencies are comparably higher than local agencies. They had handled more crisis cases; they had available crisis expertise within their international networks; and they had more comprehensive in-house training to equip their staff. For the rest with lesser experience, the competitive edge that they can possibly utilize is employing a more sophisticated and scientific approach to offering crisis services: Integrate research with practice, and moving away from “accepted wisdom and ‘seat-of-the-pants’ thinking to reasoned action:
decisions guided by principles and theory” (Heath & Coombs, 2006, p. 197). However, given the “constraints in budget, time, and manpower as well as the general lack of understanding of the value of research” (Lim., Goh, & Srijamesh, 2005, p. 324) as well as clients who were not willing to pay for it, one way to make up for this is to hire people who understand the principles and theory, those trained in communication and had chalked up some years of corporate experience instead of those who came from other social sciences or science backgrounds. While all could conceivably perform the job, it is argued that those with the educational pedigree and necessary experience could perform the job better on both counts, as technicians and as strategic counsels.

Expedience: Value-add or Maintenance Mode?

Given that the majority of the consultants interviewed had managed only eight or fewer crises in their years of operation, with only about a third boasting more experience and expertise, it is difficult to assess if agencies had offered value-added services in crisis consultancy, or they had merely provided adequate services. Intuitively, we would argue that they would have provided at least adequate service. Evidentially, published case studies of agencies (see Chay-Nemeth, 2003; Rudgard, 2003) have demonstrated their competence. Anecdotally, one is hard pressed to recall any negative publicity or law suits arising from misconduct or negligence of professional services offered by agencies to organizations in the mainstream media compared to law, for instance, where lawyers have been hauled to court for professional negligence (for instance, see “Jailed lawyer struck off the rolls,” 2010) or medicine (for instance, see “SMC suspends doctor for misconduct,” 2010).

Contextually, the agencies’ abilities to offer value-added services are hampered not just by available talent but the country in which these agencies operate in. Interviewees said that in Singapore, only two types of organizations seemed to value the need to be crisis prepared: (1) The bigger and more internationally renowned organizations who fiercely protect their corporate reputations and; (2) Those which are in crisis-prone industries like those in the aviation, shipping, marine and energy sectors. The interviewees were also of the view that the most senior executives in the organizations as well as its head for PR and communication would usually determine if the organization and staff believed in preparing for crisis. The more aware they were of the consequences and damage that crisis could cause, the more willing they were in seeking consultancy help. Otherwise, it was tough to sell the concept of crisis preparedness, especially to the smaller and medium-sized local organizations. This difficulty is due to multiple reasons. First, many local organizations tend to adopt a utopian and myopic attitude which led them to artificially believe that nothing bad would happen to their organizations; and even if something unfortunate did happen, the crisis would be managed and the Singapore government, with its strong paternalistic instincts, would intervene and come to their rescue. These organizations remained complacent and callous. Second, most small and medium-sized enterprises in Singapore were more concerned with profitability and operational issues than crisis planning. Hence, they did not have the financial muscles or resources to invest in consulting for a possible crisis that did not seemed imminent. Third, many organizations have yet to fully appreciate the value of PR, let alone understand the need to prepare for crisis. Fourth, these organizations equate crisis management with media management which means that they needed only to focus on managing the media as that would help them take care of certain aspects of a full-blown crisis, thus rendering the other and more critical aspects of crisis consultancy unnecessary and a waste of money. Fifth, instead of taking a preventive approach, some local organizations would rather counter the negative publicity created by the crisis with more marketing and promotional efforts in the hope that such endeavors would drown out and make the public forget the unpleasant incident. Sixth, there were also those who thought they were already crisis prepared because they had produced a crisis manual, with no wish to go beyond. These are classic signs of organizations that rationalize the need for crisis preparedness (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992) and reinforce Wu and Dai’s (2001) findings on the level of crisis preparedness among organizations in Singapore. So what can be done? Unfortunately, little. Like the interviewees said, only when organizations were hit by crises would they seriously consider seeking advice.

Conclusion

This study has examined the level of expertise and experience of consultants in agencies; and the value and expedience of the consultancy services offered in Singapore. As an exploratory study, it has shed critical insights into the profiles of the consultants and the range of crisis work they do. The questions, however, remain: First, are consultants working in agencies necessarily more qualified than in-house practitioners? Two, if not, why hire consultants?

From our findings, it does not appear that consultants are necessarily more qualified than in-house
practitioners as far as crisis consultancy is concerned, although some take pains to hire who they regard to be
experienced (in other or related areas) practitioners compared to organizations that are more willing to hire
new graduates. So, if they are not more qualified, why hire them for crisis consultancy? For a start, they
provide aggregated and integrated communication services that many organizations lack (Rudgard, 2003).
In-house practitioners, often stretched with technical functions, may need the extra help agencies offer.
Technically, most would be able to offer an en suite of crisis services at the drop of a hat because that is what
the agencies do. Then there is the distinction between the expertise and experience of consultants in local and
multinational agencies. The latter offers established practices, big-name accounts, and institutional
knowledge which the former may lack, particularly the smaller practices. But the local agencies have intimate
knowledge of the local media and culture (Rudgard, 2003) and are able to provide more personalized services
while the multinationals focus on “large, lucrative international clients” (Rudgard, 2003, p. 472). Regardless,
both face the same problem: Demonstrating “value” to clients (p. 473). When the need arises, which should
organizations hire? All things equal, like a patient, one should go to the doctor who has the necessary expertise
and experience, and one is most comfortable with and trusts the most.

At the end of the day, the state of agencies and in-house are reflections of the state of the PR profession in a
country. If the profession is valued, the consultants and practitioners would be more empowered and that
would spur them to upgrade their expertise and enhance their experience so that they provide good value to
organizations. The converse is true.

When crisis hits, one hopes to secure the services of a well-trained crisis doctor – not one who is half-baked.

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### Appendices

Table 1: Breakdown in representation of participants from types of agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Agencies</th>
<th>No. of Consultants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local (only operates in Singapore)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional (Singapore and offices in Asia)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multinationals (Singapore and offices in all over the world)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Educational background of senior consultants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Area of Discipline</th>
<th>No. of Consultants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s or postgraduate degree</td>
<td>Public relations or communication</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accountancy, economics, geography, humanities, journalism, law, library and information system, philosophy, political science and sociology</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Journalism / Public relations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Certificate</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Breakdown in number of staff competent to provide crisis consultancy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of staff competent in crisis consultancy</th>
<th>No of consultancies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Types of mentoring relationship between senior and junior executives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of mentoring relationship</th>
<th>No of consultancies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Formal and structured | 2
--- | ---
Informal | 16
None | 3
**Total** | **21**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of crisis cases</th>
<th>No of consultancies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 or more</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1 and 8 every year</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5: Breakdown in number of crisis cases handled as at time of interview**

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Animation “With Chinese Characteristics”?
Exploring Chinese Animation on the Global Stage

Chwen Chwen Chen
Vincenzo De Masi

Abstract: Chinese animation has a long history whose birth dates to the early 1920s. However, as traditionally targeting to a domestic audience for a long time, it is not as much well known as the Japanese and American animation, which have dominated the international market for a long time, and the Korean animation, another consolidating Asian animation industry. In this paper, we aim at exploring and discussing the development of animation industry in China and its recent expansion on the international stage under the framework of the going-out strategy. Taking some successful domestic animation series as examples, we focus on the narrative and stylistic differences of Chinese animation models with respect to the more developed Japanese and American ones. Indeed, although in the imaginary culture the Japanese and American animation production and narration models appear to be in opposition to each other, it is possible to distinguish a number of common points not only between these two traditional animation models but also an increasing hybridization of narrative and aesthetic patterns which characterise the Chinese animation as well. In our analysis, we call attention on a number of Chinese animation series that are successful domestically and internationally. On one side, the large success these series meet with the audience cannot be explained only by the large support the Chinese government is providing to this sector, but it relies mainly on the market demand, which includes the use of narration and production characteristics, which are typically considered Chinese ones. On another side, this success is based on an optimal combination of Chinese and foreign (specifically, Japanese) efforts, know-how, and expertise: this is the case of the animation TV series Romance of the Three Kingdoms, which is considered by critics as one of the best animation productions from the quality point of view.

Keywords: animation canons hybridization Chinese animation going-out policy.

Introduction
Traditionally, the main target of the animation products in China mainly is children and youth aged from 4 to 14 years. Two recent surveys reveal that young people living in Shanghai, who often and/or sometimes watch animation series, account for 86.3%, while youth living in Beijing who have the same habit, are 80.8% (Blue Book, 2008). These data show not only that animation in China has become not only a popular consumption and entertainment product with the young audience, but also imply that animation is today a relevant source of advertising revenues for the Chinese broadcasters. In addition, animation in China has also important implications from the point of view of communication strategies of the Chinese government since it plays the role of vehicle of China’s cultural values and Communist Party of China (CPC) propaganda on global scale.

Indeed, in his keynote speech to CPC’s 17th National Congress on 15 October 2007, President Hu Jintao states that the CPC must “enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country to better guarantee the people's basic cultural rights and interests [and that] culture has become a more and more important source of national cohesion and creativity and a factor of growing significance in the competition in overall national strength” (Nye, 2008). Hu’s statement clearly indicates China’s willing and vision for international expansion by means of its culture and all that is related to it, using what political scientist J. Nye in the late 1980s called as ‘soft power’, defined as “a nation winning influence abroad by persuasion, attraction and appeal (culture, diplomacy, foreign aid, trade, and investment) rather than by threats or military force” (Nye, 2005).

Our choice to focus on Chinese animation, in particular under the form of TV series, is mainly based on
three motivations. Firstly, since early 2000s the Chinese government has explicitly recognized the animation sector as being strategic under the framework of the construction of the national identity and the collective imaginary of Chinese nation. Consequently, it is strongly supporting this area by means of a great number of administrative and economic measures. Secondly, the characteristics of the Chinese cultural industry and, in particular, the traditional tendency of the industry itself to address mainly to a domestic market make the canons used to build up animation products in China very stringent and evident, if compared to the mixture of models which characterize the modern Japanese and American animation schools. In addition, from the point of view of aesthetics, Chinese animation appears to represent today a clear hybridization of some canons which traditionally have shaped the Japanese and American animation models (Benecchi, 2005).

Even though, from a narrative point of view, it provides some specific canons which are strictly associated with China’s history and culture.

As we show later in the paper, the clear References to Chinese traditions and culture, on one side, and the use of modern production and marketing techniques, on another side, can explain the appeal of some Chinese animation products not only in China but in other countries as well.

**Chinese animation as hybridization of canons: a background**

To understand the role Chinese animation plays today on the global stage and how it can be viewed as a clear hybridization of the traditional Japanese and American canons, it is necessary to consider the history of animation in China since its birth. Our reconstruction of the history of animation in China is limited and partial: our purpose is to show how animation in China has developed, how it influences the Japanese animation since its birth, the extent to which both models are interrelated and mutually affect as to canons but even in narration and production.

Animation in China, which is strongly connected with the political events of the Chinese history, is traditionally considered a cause combining education with recreation. The origins of the Chinese animation are associated with Wan Brothers (Wan Laiming, Wan Guchan, Wan Caocen e Wan Jihuan), who are considered the pioneers in this field as they have created some animation shorts in the 1920s for advertising purposes. Since the beginning, the Wan Brothers believe that animation can be used to widespread culture, education and fun in the country and use for the first time typical Chinese characters and canons. Wan Brothers’ first animation short, in black and white, is *Shuzhendong Chinese Typewriter (shuzhengdong huawen daziji)*, which is realized in 1922 for Shanghai Commercial Press.

In 1924, they create *Dog Treat (gou qingke)* for China Film Company and *New Year (guonian)* for Shanghai Tobacco Company. The Wan Brothers, still influenced by the animation models which are very close to the American ones, produce two shorts in 1926: *Paperman Makes Trouble (Zhiren daohuan ji)* and *Uproar In The Studio (Danao huashi)*.

The Chinese animation does not have any direct stylistic influences of the Japanese anime until 1936, when the Japanese invade the eastern costs of China. In that year, the Wan Brothers create about 30 animated shorts for advertising such as *Gou Zenthan* and *Tongbao suxing*. China’s first full-length animation film is *Princess Iron Fan* created by the Wan Brothers in 1941. Created during the Second Sino-Japanese War and World War II in drastic conditions, this first film has even influenced the Japanese anime master Osamu Tezuka, who quits his studies as medicine student at the university to devote himself to the animation after the vision of Wan Brothers’ shorts.

The cultural aesthetic canons of China are already present in this first animation movie. Based on a Chinese classical novel *Journey to the West (xi youji)* attributed to Wu Cheng’en, the story of Princess Iron Fan are recurrent in Asian culture: for instance, the monkey king Sun Wukong, one of three companions of monk Sanzang, inspires the creation of the Japanese character Son Goku of the well-known Japanese manga and anime Dragon Ball. Another example is the pig Zhu Baijìe that has inspired, in turn, characters of many Japanese and Chinese anime, such as the main character of 3D animation TV series *Pig-xia* broadcast by CCTV since 2007.

The 1950s are considered the golden years of the Chinese animation: in fact, the Shanghai Animation Studio is created. Their foundation is promoted by Tei Wei, who integrates the canons of the traditions of the Beijing Opera in his animation. For instance, in The Conceited General he includes the mask of Sun Wokong which, since then, would be used in other Chinese animation movies.
It is only with the Japanese author Tadahito Mochinaga, who used to live and work in Shanghai in those
years, that we can talk of the first and real hybridization of the Chinese and the Japanese canons: his Thank
You, Kitty (1952), which is created for Shanghai Animation Studio, is a good example of the mutual influences
of both the schools.

Because of the Cultural Revolution from the late 1960s to mid 1970s on one side, and the opening
towards the foreign markets of the Japanese (Benecchi, 2005) and the American animations in the 1980s on
another side, the Chinese animation goes through a long and difficult period but it has soon recovered from the
slump thanks to the governmental policies in the recent years.

The Chinese animation, which is considered hybridization today, usually employs styles and canons, which
recall the Japanese animation together with 3D animation techniques, which distinguish the American
models. For example, the Chinese animation TV series Astro Plan, being broadcasted on Hunan TV since the
last January, appears to be a copy of Macross, a very well known Japanese animation series that dates to the
1980s. In Astro Plan there is even the character Lockon Stratos of the Japanese anime Gundam. Other examples
are Kou dai xi yuu, which is copied from the game and anime Blue Dragon, and the latest animation version of
Xin Ling Zhi Chuang, which appears to be a copy of the Japanese original Byousoku 5 cm: many photograms
are as same as the original ones. Conversely, the Chinese animation series Storm Rider Clash of the Evils shows
how the Japanese style is present and mingled with the canons of the traditional Chinese culture. Another
example of successful hybridization without copying is Astro Boy: although it is produced in Hong Kong-based
Imagi studio, this animation movie is a coproduction between USA, Japan and China.

The regulatory framework: from protection to “going-out” policy

Although animation in China has a long history and produced a significant influence on the animation of other
Asian countries, first of all Japan, from which Chinese animation has been affected in turn, it is only in recent
years that animation is acknowledged by the central government as a relevant economic sector and a strategic
vehicle to widespread the Chinese cultural traditions in the international markets. This mainly explains the great
efforts the Chinese government has devoted and still devotes to animation in China.

At an earlier stage, the regulatory policies in the sector of animation in China have been characterized by a
defensive approach aiming at limiting the “invasion” of foreign animation TV series, first of all the Japanese
anime, which dominate most TV channels of western countries and China during the 1980s and 1990s. The
commercialization (chanyehua) of television in China leads in the early 1980s to an explosion of TV channels
and, consequently, a shortage of contents like the foreign TV drama series, the foreign animation series are
suitable to meet the increasing demand for contents and the needs of advertisers.

The defensive approach of the national animation industry from the “invasion” of foreign animated products
still characterizes the policies in the field of animation today. However, in addition to this attitude, since
2004-2005 the Chinese government has adopted a more proactive attitude that consists in strongly supporting
the internationalization of Chinese animated products as vehicle of external propaganda (Sun, 2010).

The first official measure targeted to animation dates to 1996, when GAPP and the Propaganda Department
of CPC jointly launch the “Project of the publishing of Chinese Children Animation” (Project “5155”) to build up
five animation publishing bases in the northern, southern, central, western and eastern regions of the country.

It comes to October 2000 that animation is officially recognized as “industry” at the 15th CPC meeting. For
the first time, the Chinese government adopts a change of policy and establishes new rules: a system of quotas is
created to limit the number and the time for TV channels that air foreign animation series.

In addition, broadcasters that import foreign animated series are subject to monitoring and approval. The
economic relevance of animation is subsequently recognized in the 10th Five-Year Economic
Plan (2001-2005); the document clearly states that animation is a sector to be fully developed.

In 2003, SARFT, by means of the Notice about strengthening the administration of imports and broadcasting
of animated products, establishes that every broadcaster cannot broadcast more than 40% of foreign animated
TV series. The Notice represents a further step into a systematic management of the foreign animation products
from the point of view of import and broadcasting.

The Chinese scholars usually consider 2004 as the year of birth of animation industry in
China; indeed, starting from 2004, the Chinese government has adopted specific policies to foster the
development of animation in China. First of all, SARFT issues in March the Notice about the administration and
planning of theme of domestic animated TV series aiming at “promoting the development of the domestic animation industry, strengthening the administration of the domestic TV animated series, assuring the good growth of the production and a good guidance of the public opinion”. The Notice establishes that:
- a system of monitoring and control of the themes of the domestic animation TV series be set up starting from 1 July 2004;
- only the organizations with a license to produce radio and TV programs can produce animation series and animation TV series without prior approval from SARFT (i.e., without the distribution license) cannot be broadcast;
- SARFT and its offices at provincial level are jointly responsible for the approval of the themes of animated TV series.

Secondly, SARFT issues in April the Several opinions about the development of the domestic film and TV animation industry, which is considered the main regulation of the sector. The Several opinions stipulate that:
- at least 50% of the total broadcasting hours of children and youth-dedicated TV channels must be devoted to animation series, and the domestic animated series must be over 60% of the total animation series aired;
- film and TV drama channels which broadcast 30 minutes of the domestic animated series between 5 pm and 7 pm can air additional 30 seconds of advertising in the prime time (6 pm-10 pm). In case they broadcast 60 minutes or more of domestic animated series they can have 60 additional seconds to air advertising;
- animation products are included under the framework of the “going-out” strategy, which aims at promoting and strengthening the internationalization of Chinese media organizations and Chinese cultural products in the international markets.

An immediate effect of this regulation is that two months later, more than ten domestic and foreign private organizations entered the Chinese animation industry (Qing, 2006).

In 2004 the Chinese government further fosters to build up a national animation industry by approving on one side, the creation of three new satellite animation TV channels (Hunan GBS Satellite Television, Beijing Kaku TV, Shanghai Toonmax TV) so that by end of 2004, China accounts for 50 TV channels airing animation series. On another side, 9 national animation industrial bases (e.g., in Beijing, Shanghai, Hunan) and 4 animation training bases (e.g., Communication University of China in Beijing, Beijing Film Institute, Gulin Arts Institute and China and China Art Institute) are established to promote the production and the training in animation. By end of 2009, the number of the national animation industrial bases and animation training bases accounts for 20 and 7 respectively (Blue Book, 2009).

In 2005, which is considered a year of development of animation industry in China, SARFT issues in June the Concrete measures to promote the development of the domestic animation creation. The new regulation establishes that each channel must air domestic animated TV series in the prime time (5 pm-8 pm) and the ratio of foreign and domestic animated TV series is 1:1.

While strengthening the broadcasting of domestic animation series, the Chinese government adopts a number of measures aiming to limit the airing of foreign animated series. Indeed, according to two new rules issued by SARFT in 2006, no foreign programs of kind such as live action can be broadcast in the Chinese market and no foreign animation series are allowed in TV container programs.

In addition, the State Council issued in April of the same year the Different opinions on the support of the development of domestic comics, games and animation industry which recognized ACG (animation, comics, games) industry as high technology sector and is given preferential tax and support policies.

From 2007 up to date, the “going-out” strategy has been reinforced under the framework of building up of the national creative industries. To this purpose, SARFT and China’s Ministry of Commerce jointly issue “A guiding catalogue to the export of cultural products and services” (Wenhua chanpin he fuwu chukou zhidao mulü). This catalogue includes two important documents: one is the “Catalogue of important companies for the export of national cultural products 2007-2008” (2007-2008 niandu guojia wenhua chukou zhongdian qiye mulü) and the other one is the “Catalogue of important items for the export of national cultural products 2007-2008” (2007-2008 niandu guojia wenhua chukou zhongdian xiangmu mulü). The former indicates 14 animation production companies as key companies to export national cultural products, while the latter includes animation TV series such as The 3000 Whys of Blue Cat (Lan mao guqi sanqian wen) and Journey to the West (Xi youji) as national animation products to be exported worldwide.
More recently, SARFT has issued other measures to further speed up and support the development of the domestic animation industry: one of these goes back to February 2008, when SARFT issues the Notice about strengthening the administration of broadcasting of animation TV series, which stipulates that the ratio between the national animation series rebroadcast and the foreign animation series should be above 7:3 and extends the prime time devoted to animation series: from 1 May, the prime time is one hour longer, from 5pm to 9pm.

This regulation shows clearly the efforts of the Chinese government to allow for more margins that better meet with the needs of broadcasters and at the same time to foster the production of domestic animation series. As a result of regulatory and industrial policies, many animation production companies have flourished: today, they are estimated to account for 1500-2000 (state-owned and private).

**Animation industry in China today: an economic overview**

According to SARFT data, in six years, the domestic production of animation TV series has increased from 21,800 minutes in 2004 to 171,816 minutes in 2009, with an average growth rate of 114% per year. The data also show that by end of 2008 there are four animation-dedicated TV channels and 34 youth local TV channels, which broadcast 8,000 minutes of domestic animation products every day.

Among these, the four animation TV channels broadcast all together 2,600 minutes every day, while seven channels of CCTV broadcast every day domestic animation series for a total of 686 minutes. SARFTS estimates say the above-mentioned channels together with more than 300 local TV channels, which show the domestic animation series aired for the first time, account for more than 40,000 minute broadcasting time every day (Blue Book, 2009).

Chinese animation as a relevantly driving economic force for China’s television market is clear when figures of advertising revenues are also considered. Indeed, the advertising revenues from animation series have increased steadily. According to the latest data, in 2008 CCTV-Children’s ad revenues account for more than RMB200 million, followed by Beijing Kaku TV with RMB120 million, Shanghai Television’s Children channel with RMB90 million and, last but not least, Hunan GBS with RMB70 million (Blue Book, 2009).

Under the large efforts of the Chinese government, the export of Chinese animation has emerged as a market trend in recent years as well. According to Blue Book (2008), the exports of Chinese animation TV series account for 30 series totaling 2244 episodes in 2007, an 11.11% increase from 2006. These exports are valued at RMB73.543 million, a 42.85% increase from 2006 and are mainly targeted to Europe and North America. The titles exported include Zhejiang-based Zhongnan Animation Group’s Sky eye (tian yan), whose broadcasting rights worth RMB15 million, have already sold to 20 foreign broadcasters; Little Health (Xiao kangkang) and The Bug (Chong chong) of 335 episodes – on imitation of 1994 Disney’s animation film A Bug’s Life– both produced by Shanghai Media Group, have been broadcast on Singapore’s television.

Another successful animation export is Sunchime Cartoon Group’s The 3000 Whys of Blue Cat (lan mao guqi sanqian wen). This animation series, whose first part dates to 1999, accounts for a total of 2,500 episodes now. The seventh part is now being broadcast on 720 channels at the same time with an audience of about 100 million people. According to Lu (2009), the success of Blue Cat is mainly explained by a detailed and throughout market survey, so the series meets with the domestic demand. Sold to 36 countries including US, South Korea, Taiwan and UK for a transaction amount worth US$11.360 million, the Blue Cat is a good example of hybridization the Chinese studios adopt to produce simple products that are difficult to be recognized as typical Chinese ones from the stylistic point of view.

Another successful animation export is Shaolin Kids (Zhonghua xiaozhi): originally produced by Shanghai-based private studio Fantasia Animation in 2000, it is the first animation TV series almost entirely financed by foreign investments (France) while the plot and the characters strongly recall Chinese traditional elements. Broadcast for the first time in October 2007 in China, this animation series is one of the most viewed foreign animation TV series on the French Channel 3. The broadcasting rights worth RMB40 million, are sold to broadcasters of 30 countries: besides France, they include German ZDF, the Canadian broadcaster and Disney channel.

In general, the recent Chinese animation TV series take into consideration many genres and mix with styles and canons used by the American and Japanese cinema. Although these series aim to create products with hybrid canons, they hardly have positive impact on the audience.
The Romance of Three Kingdoms: a successful mix of Chinese traditions and modern techniques

The Romance of Three Kingdoms is a coproduction between China and Japan in the field of animation TV series that gained the approval of the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT). The production costs, which account for nearly RMB50 million, are equally distributed between the Chinese and Japanese partners. The Chinese partners involved are China International Television Corporation's Beijing Glorious Animation and CCTV Animation, which are responsible for the production and distribution of the animation series in China. The Japanese partners are Takara Tomy and Future Planet, the world's fifth game vendor and the TV programs distribution company with a long-standing experience in the international markets, respectively.

Aired on 1 August 2009, the Romance is 1,300 minutes long for a total of 52 episodes and requires two-year work. Unlike the previous animation TV series, the Romance is firstly broadcast on CCTV-8, CCTV's TV drama channel, instead of CCTV-Children; for the first time in China, the target of animation series is not the youth but the adults' audience. This animation series is also being broadcast on CCTV-Children, CCTV-1, CCTV-4 and CCTV-HD from September 2009 and will be shown on the four animation dedicated TV channels, the biggest 8 satellite channels and the great number of local TV channels. Up to date, almost 200 local broadcasters have already purchased the series. It is being broadcast in Japan from NHK from October 2009 and more than 40 broadcasters from 20 countries including Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and many Arabic countries, as well as in the main European countries, have purchased the broadcasting rights or are on negotiations.

The business model underlying the Romance is unusual with respect to other domestic animation series. The common practice in China follows a linear pathway and consists, firstly, in the production by the domestic animation production studio; secondly, in the broadcasting of the series and, finally, in the merchandising. Conversely, the international practice consists in joint investments for every step of the value chain; this allows for reducing risk for the animation production studio and, at the same time, more negotiating power.

Examining the figures associated with the Romance, both producers and distributors of the Romance estimate to reach total revenues of RMB410 million within three years. Some 61% of the total revenues should come from the merchandising. The remaining is divided as follows: CCTV is expected to gain up to RMB70 million within three years from the sale of broadcasting rights in China. The revenues from the distribution rights and copyrights in the international markets, which are due to the Japanese Future Planet, are estimated to amount to RMB90 million within three years. Put differently, one minute of the Romance is priced RMB123,000 on average, which is far higher than the average price of RMB30,000 per minute of another successful animation series, Journey to West produced by Beijing Glorious Animation.

Based on the masterpiece of the same name by Ming-Dynasty author Luo Guanzhong, on the complex and tense political struggles that marked the Three Kingdoms period (AD 220-280), the animation version of Romance is far distant from the TV drama and other precedent versions: the aim is to make the animation series a “brand” of its kind, which can be immediately recognized by the audience. To this purpose, the characters of the animation series are recreated; for instance, the design style is far from the Japanese ones, above all the great eyes, which characterize the Japanese animation characters. Furthermore, the series focuses on the combinations of colors such as black, brown and red, which make the series more recognizable and more appealing with the international audiences. All this is produced in high definition.

Interestingly, all these features of the Romance are based on the agreement with the Japanese partners. Indeed, Japan is aware that its animation and comic industry has gained great influence from the Chinese history and culture and this influence will be growing in coming years. Just consider that today it is very easy to find in the Japanese anime some Chinese cultural References and canons that go back to a previous version The Records of Three Kingdoms, with some odd singularities.

For instance, one of the first Japanese animation products that refer to The Records of Three Kingdoms is Sangokushi (1985); this series of 47 episodes is based on the famous manga Sangokushi by Yokoyama.
The latest Japanese animation that speaks about the Three Kingdoms is the anime titled “SD Gundam Sangokuden, Battle Brave Warriors” (2007); the characters of the Chinese novel are present but they are starred by the robot Gundam and the whole story is told through the battles among the rival robots. The interests in the story of the Romance can be explained by the awareness both the Chinese and Japanese partners share to belong to common Asian traditions and roots. Unlike the individual heroes, which characterize the American animation TV series and movies, the Romance emphasizes on the efforts of a group of three friends and how each one helps one another to overcome problems and achieve goals: the community spirit, and not the spirit of the single person, is at the ground of the Asian culture. Both the Chinese and Japanese partners recognize it is time to widespread the Asian culture and values in the world.

This animation series fully satisfies the conditions stipulated by SARFT to start co-productions: absorbing foreign capitals, knowledge and ideas, technology as well, while strengthening China’s characteristics, stories, styles and images, China’s spirit as well. The choice of Japan as partner of the coproduction is not by chance as well. Actually, Chinese government’s going-out policy is guided by the wider principle that stipulates to “have influence on influential people, have influence on influential media, borrow ships to go overseas” (yingxiang you yingxiangli de ren, yingxiang you yingxiang li demei ti, jiechuan kua hai) (Wang, 2009). This explains the partnership with a traditional political and economic rival not only in animation but also in other fields of communication such as broadcasting, for instance China Radio International (Chen, Colapinto and Luo, 2010).

Conclusions

In this paper we address the issue of how, from an aesthetic point of view, Chinese animation can be considered as a clear hybridization of the Japanese and American canons that have traditionally dominated the animation models for two decades. The animation TV series Romance of Three Kingdoms is an excellent case of hybrid animation canons that, in combination of modern techniques of production and marketing, has gaining the favor with the international audience. The winning factors of this series are, in fact, the quality of the images and the narrative plot, as well as the use of the canons of the Chinese historical culture and traditions. All this is well mixed with a simple style that recalls the typical canons of the Japanese anime but with some important differences, which make this series a ‘Chinese brand’ from the aesthetic point of view. The technique used shows the backgrounds in 3D and the characters in 2D (a technique used above all in the Japanese anime).

In sum, the story of the Romance is based on the original Chinese novel but it is told by using international viewpoint and technology so that it can become an animation classic not only in China and Japan but also in western countries so to overcome the cultural discount. The success the exported Chinese animation products generally meet in Asia and in most western countries calls for some final considerations that are related to the Chinese animation industry itself.

Despite the huge efforts of the central government, animation industry in China in general suffers from a number of problems that are interrelated. Firstly, the returns are too low with respect to high investments the production of animation series of quality requires. This is also associated with the returns’ uncertainty, which often discourages the animation studios to take the risk in investing in high-quality products. Secondly, the value chain of animation industry in China is still underdeveloped (Qing, 2006; Lu, 2009). The issue of concern is not only about the capitalization of the industry, the output, the broadcasting hours allowed, China’s animation industry is relatively young, and in spite of Chinese government’s supports and preferential policies, it still needs to learn how to deal with market mechanisms and practices. The cooperation with foreign partners is helpful to learn the most modern marketing and distribution techniques and know how, but this is not enough until China’s animation industry is able to find out its ways to overcome the shortcoming that affect itself. Thirdly, as Yin and Tan (2009) point out, the main problem is creativity. In this paper we show that generally the Chinese animation series appear as copycat of the Japanese ones and this is usually the idea the

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international audience has in mind when talking about animation made in China. This explains why the Chinese government is pushing authors and producers to create contents and stories of high quality, which can be exported and recognizable as ‘original’, ‘brand’ Chinese animation products. A change of mentality seems to come when we consider the words of Jimmy Tse, chief executive of Top Art Investment Ltd., specialized in merchandising of Chinese animation characters: in occasion of the China-Japan anime summit held at the 2010 edition Tokyo anime fair, he says that now the Chinese people are starting to think, ‘How come I’m manufacturing for someone else? Why are we not creating anything ourselves?’” (Mainichi Japan, 29 March 2010).

These words seem to find their ground in the reality as the cases of successful Chinese animation series we analyze in the paper, with a deeper analysis devoted to the Romance, show: the Chinese animation products with an original story and high quality techniques yield great success not only in China but also around the world.

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An exploratory study of different perception on the usage of text message lingo among male and female college students

Daniel Ng

Abstract: With the advent of technology, we become accustomed to stay within our social circle almost 24/7. New social media includes text messaging and social networking sites are overwhelmingly accessible and convenient. Text messaging has been the norm of communication among college students. This exploratory study attempts to investigate the perception and usage of text messaging lingo among college students. Results are mixed; yet vary interesting insight appear to be significant and worthwhile for future studies.

Introduction
Averagely speaking, a person expresses an initial interest in email, social media, instant messaging (IM), texting, and chat rooms is getting younger and younger. Reports estimate that over half of the workforce in the U.S. uses IM communication while at work (Holtz, 2005). However, the new troops of online users consist highly of mere younger populations who are now some of the first testers to use the latest and greatest social media emerging on the Internet, with the dominating age-range set between adolescents 12 to 24 years old (Targeting, 2007). After age 24, studies show a significant drop-off in IM and social media participation (Targeting, 2007). Research also estimates that almost 55 percent of American kids age 12-17 claim to visit social networking sites regularly (Shields, 2007).

The expansion of the Internet’s reach through laptops and cell phones has bombarded today’s society with an all-encompassing way to communicate with one another—anyone, anytime, anywhere. As we in the United States use IM more and more to communicate with our peers, the uses of media technology are shaping who our next generation will become. This cohort of segment is transforming into what some might describe as the quintessential communicators of the future (Livingstone & Bober, 2005). A number of elements lend themselves in aiding this trend, and as it currently stands, it does appear that the movement is getting larger and stronger.

A corresponding factor in this growth of social media usage appears to be a strong need for numerous friendships and peer-group affiliations by young people during their developmental years as a way to battle feelings of loneliness and depression (Spitzberg, 2006). Having that being said, text messaging seems to be the communication avenue of choice to appropriately satisfy this fixated need of theirs, as well as their needs to personally express themselves (Carrington, 2005). A large faction of this increased amount of time spent on the computer is greatly contributed to by a person’s individual need to stay in constant contact with their pals (Chung, 2005).

Compared to the past, today’s society has adapted to text messaging and social media in ways that other generations have not. They’ve grown accustomed to the habitual nature of such technologies and have customized the Internet to fit in with their own wants and desires (Carrington, 2005). Among the most basic of these needs seems to be a way to acquire some sense of acceptance, popularity, and/or belonging, whether it be with peers of their own age, or other online forming relationships and bonds (Spitzberg, 2006). Nevertheless, text messaging is a bottom-line result of a person’s developmental needs to socialize, even while in the confines of their own home, on-the-go of everyday’s life.
Literature Review

A New Online Language

While participating in such Internet activities, users form and/or maintain their friendships through the use of jargon-like speak that only someone as acclimated to the web as they could possibly understand (Spitzberg, 2006). Whether it be the development of a shorthanded system of acronyms used to efficiently type and communicate quickly with all of their buddies or more simply, a system of new words and spellings that they feel uniquely and personally associated with, children of today are creating another language of their own that in essence, could affect the way they communicate for years to come (Spitzberg, 2006). Not only that, but this newly forming language could ultimately make its way over into the commonplace use of everyday language, if it hasn’t already. That’s up to one’s own subjective standpoint.

As younger users “gather” with their other peers on the web, they generate a social atmosphere that’s uniquely all their own (Livingstone, 2005). Just as phone communication has been exploited by everyone for years now, today’s younger generation has embraced IM, as well as all other social media, as the new ways to communicate with one another, whether it be with someone across the country, or even in the next room (Carrington, 2005). While different factors, such as demographics like sex and age, largely impact the way youngsters are using their Internet communication tools, they all share a basic understanding of their mutually-created online lingo and slang (Shields, 2007).

Examples of this online vernacular include everything from harmless shorthand to alarming, coded-acronyms. Even AOL’s IM system, most commonly known as AIM, has its own AIM acronym dictionary (Olsen, 2007). Some of the more basic examples include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2DAY</td>
<td>Today</td>
<td>LOL</td>
<td>Laugh(ing) out loud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFAIK</td>
<td>As far as I know</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATM</td>
<td>At the moment</td>
<td>NM</td>
<td>Not much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRB</td>
<td>Be right back</td>
<td>OMG</td>
<td>Oh my God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUL8R</td>
<td>See you later</td>
<td>PXT</td>
<td>Please explain that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUZ</td>
<td>Because</td>
<td>QL</td>
<td>Cool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EZ</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2G</td>
<td>Got to go</td>
<td>SOL</td>
<td>Sooner of later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR8</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>SWAK</td>
<td>Sealed with a kiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTG</td>
<td>Got to go</td>
<td>TTYL</td>
<td>Talk to you later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAND</td>
<td>Have a nice day</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDK</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>UR</td>
<td>Your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J/K</td>
<td>Just kidding</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>What</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Okay</td>
<td>WE</td>
<td>Whatever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMAO</td>
<td>Laughing my a-- off</td>
<td>WL</td>
<td>Will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WTF</td>
<td>What the f---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As one can tell from this list, there are shorthanded examples that simply involve cutting and/or dropping out letters or characters determined to be unnecessary when decoding, writing, or reading a message. Words ending with or containing --er-- might be reduced merely to end in or contain a basic --r-- (AIM, 2007). Examples of this include every (evry) or whatever (whatevr). Another take on this is with words beginning with --ex--, which is dropped and replace with just --x--, such as explain (xplain) (AIM, 2007). The same sort of thing occurs with a word ending in --ing--. The --g-- is easily dropped off (AIM, 2007). In this situation, words such as writing or catching would be spelled as --writin-- or --catchin--. Furthermore, words that contain or sound as though they contain a numerical word within them need just replace that portion of the word with the numeric character, such as everyone (evry1), today (2day), or great (gr8) (AIM, 2008).

Youngsters are also making greater use of grammatical characters in their typing/writing (Randall, 2002). It substitution for terms such as --at-- , a greater number of frequent IM and social media adolescents are using the online symbol --@-- (AIM, 2007). Other common examples include --#-- for --number-- , $ for --money--,
Concerns of Internet Lingo

In comparison to the harmless shorthand techniques described above, other, more secretive lingo in the realm of IM and the Internet seem to be almost anti-parent or parent-proof if you will. While it isn’t rocket science, by the time a list of common terms in compiled and codes are actually cracked, the fast-pace generation of tomorrow is already a step ahead of their parents, creating a widening inventory of acronyms and codes (Livingstone & Bober, 2005). Kleen and Heinrichs (2008) examined the use and understanding of the shorthand acronyms and text message language. The questionnaire was distributed at two separate universities. The researchers found that nearly all students at both Universities routinely carried a cell phone, and only a few (7.4%) at university A had not ever sent a text message. All at university B had sent one. Students identified speed as most important reason for using text lingo. Students believe that shorthand was appropriate to use in emails and text messages to family and friends. Students had a variety of opinion on misunderstanding caused by the text messaging shorthand.

On the other hand, parents are turning to websites for help such as Teenchatdecoder.com, Teenangels.org, and NoSlang.com for their acronym dictionaries (Olsen, 2007). Such sites comprise over 6,000 acronyms for parents to look for in their children’s online chats (Olsen, 2007). Lists compiled on such sites include alarming acronyms like the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASL</td>
<td>Age, sex, location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BF</td>
<td>Boyfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD9</td>
<td>Code 9 (parents in the room)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOS</td>
<td>Dad over shoulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GF</td>
<td>Girlfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNOC</td>
<td>Get naked on cam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IWSN</td>
<td>I want sex now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L)MIRL</td>
<td>(Let’s) meet in real life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M or F?</td>
<td>Male or female?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOS</td>
<td>Mom over shoulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIFOC</td>
<td>Naked in front of computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P911</td>
<td>Parent emergency/alert (parent in the room)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAW</td>
<td>Parents are watching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIR</td>
<td>Parent in room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS</td>
<td>Parent over shoulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRON</td>
<td>Porn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRW</td>
<td>Parents are watching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2R</td>
<td>Send to receive (meaning pictures/video)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TD2M</td>
<td>Talk dirty to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDTM</td>
<td>Talk dirty to me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Apart from safety issues which regard these alert-like codes as negative effects on a developing child’s speech, other concerns about IM and social media deal more with the simple destruction of the human language (Spitzberg, 2006). Linguists feel that abbreviated, shorthand messaging techniques used on the Internet and while texting could saturate Standard English as a language, possibly altering it forever (Trujillo, 2003). Online language has developed into a short-hand that all but obliterates the Queen’s English (Thurlow, 2006).

Rumsiene (2004) works to define the status of “Internet English” by examining the features. This is done by analysis of online chat conversations. Electronic discussion is often written as if it is spoken and little to no editing is done before sending. It is spontaneous and informal like spoken conversation. The new language used is an alteration of the English language that uses “lexical units composted of initial letters of the words in a phrase” (ex- LOL, laugh out loud), “symbols representing words in cases when the pronounced name of a symbol completely or approximately corresponds to the articulation of another lexical unit” (ex- 4, for), and the “inclusion of homophonetic units as part of longer lexemes or set phrases” (ex- l8r, later). Rumsiene concludes with seven statements that define the status of internet English. 1. The universal application of computer technologies has led to the development of the electronic discourse. 2. Prosodic and paralinguistic elements are not present in the Internet discourse. 3. The information-and-skill culture is denoted by the key value of an individual’s freedom to create. 4. Members of the Internet society are formally equal despite the existence of the hacker cult. 5. Various symbol play, omission, abbreviations, neologisms and other means of word building and transformation help create a unique vocabulary. 6. The key features of an electronic discourse text are: foregrounding of particular elements, symbol and word economy, and understandability of the message. 7. The Internet English is close to spoken language and the two kinds of language are mutually influenced.

Several articles indicate that younger generation uses IM and other social media on a frequent basis often use bad grammar, poor punctuation, and improper abbreviations in academic writing. This is called by researchers as CMD, that stands for computer-mediated discourse (Thurlow, 2006). College’s are reporting higher rates of illiteracy and teachers of our country are saying that papers are being written with shortened words, improper capitalization and punctuation, and as mentioned before, characters like --&--, --@$-- and --@-- (Jameson, 2007). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports that average reading scores in students who are 17 years of age have dropped since 1990, with the number of high-level readers decreasing from 41 percent to 38 percent in 2004 (Jameson, 2007). Even verbal SAT scores have reportedly fallen in uneven rates since the 1940s (Jameson, 2007). However, establishing casual relationship as well as correlations is still being questioned. This notion triggers a certain degree of skepticism and is indeed necessary to clarify with further studies.

Perhaps the scariest part of this is that many adolescents are using their IM language without even realizing it. IM and social media lingo is becoming so commonplace, younger generations are putting it down on paper and slipping it into everyday conversations without even giving it so much as a second thought (L’Abbe, 2006). Frequent use of these new technologies has reached a point where today’s younger generation no longer recognizes their online jargon as anything unusual or out of sync with proper, daily conversing (L’Abbe, 2006).

And it isn’t strictly today’s youths who are the only ones have trouble making the distinction between when to use formal and informal communication lingo (Randall, 2002). Anyone who uses
online media as an everyday means with which to communicate are consequently using informal abbreviations and lingo in more formal situations (Livingstone, 2005). However, seeing how younger generations comprise the majority of today’s IM and social networking audience, the issue most commonly concerns and addresses them.

**Attitudes toward technology**

Text messaging is a new persuasive form of communication. Younger generations seem like cannot live without it. Mahatanankoon and O'Sullivan (2008) explore text message user’s abilities and attitudes toward the technology. They found that users who were confident in their ability to send and receive text messages thought positively about the technology and saw it as a convenient as well as a swift way to communicate. However, negative feeling and attitude were held by users who were not confident in their control and ability to use text message. Through surveys the researchers examined four factors: prior experience and knowledge, instrument, length of use, and desire for social control. The researchers found that perceived control is an important factor that may lead to explain why the reasons that some people adapt to new technology more quickly than others.

Oskman and Turtianen (2004) found through a series of interviews that youngsters such as teenagers believe the mobile phone is the most important device in their everyday lives, in regards to communication. They found that mobile phones contribute to social live and also increase independence and autonomy. The mobile phone interconnects and has crossing functions with other mediums for communication and this makes the mobile phone more appealing and relevant to teenagers. Teenagers use the mobile phone to connect with their social groups and often even see the mobile phone as the symbolic representation of the community they are a part of. Grinter and Eldridge (2003) examines everyday text messaging habits and usage. The research shows that young adults do not often have multiple simultaneous conversations via text message and also examines three primary conversation types: chatting, coordinating communications, and planning activities. Most of these text conversations end in another form of communication such as telephone or face-to-face interaction. The researcher also discovered that though the youngsters may have many contacts in their address books, they usually only text message with a select few. Grinter also examines shorten word forms in texting and found that four methods for shortening words emerged: traditional abbreviations; using a number, letter, or symbol to make a sound; dropping a single letter; and ad-hoc acronyms.

**Social and psychological effects**

Having all these fast and convenient ways to communicate, it puts a person into almost a 24/7 alert mode. Youngsters may fall into a psychological mode of “out-of-touch” if there has no in or out text messages at all for them. Or, it creates a psychological stage of “mania” on the other hand. Reid and Reid (2004) examined the social and psychological effects of text messaging and found that there is a distinction between people who prefer talking and people who prefer to text message and their motives for using mobile phones. They administered a questionnaire to 982 respondents and found that text messagers often had a close texting circle, with whom they had nearly constant text contact with. Text messagers also tended to be more socially anxious and lonely, and were more likely to disclose their “real-self” via text than other means of communication. In this, texting allows people, who would not otherwise express themselves
create or maintain productive relationships.

One who is a “social bee” obviously loves the test messaging the most. As Barkuus (2005) examines young adults use of text messaging or SMS and how SMS helps to manage their social lives. This study used 21 participants, who wrote in journals describing their sent and received text messages each day. After this in-depth interviews were conducted. Barkuus found that the participants use text messaging to “manage their social lives by allowing them to for example control self-representation and overcome shyness” (p. 2). The researcher found that text messaging provides conciseness, flexibility, and have become an integrated part of the participants’ lives.

Lewis and Fabos (2005) explored instant messaging, literacies, and social identities by monitoring (through interviews and video taped IM sessions) seven teenagers instant message use in their daily lives. The researchers looked for language use, social networks, and surveillance patterns. They found that the youngsters manipulated tone, voice, word choice, and subject matter on the language level. For social network patterns they found that the teens used the instant messages to enhance social relationships and enhance their social status. For surveillance, the researchers found that “they circulated texts among buddies, combated unwanted messages, assumed alternative identities, and overcame restrictions to their online communication”(p 471).

Among college students, Ling and Baron (2009) look at the emergence of text messaging and compared text messages to IM messages send by universities’ students. They found, through student recordings of exact text messages sent and IM messages sent in a journal, that text messages were on average longer than IM messages. However the researchers attribute this to the fact that IM messages are often sent in sequences. The researchers also found that while the IM messages recorded did not contain many (only 4) abbreviations or IM lingo, the text messages contained 47 abbreviation cases. They also found that contractions were not used in text messaging 93.9% of the time and sentences were punctuated 39% of the time.

In view of variations between genders, Nysveen, Pedersen, and Thorbjorsen (2005) investigated gender effects with the use of mobile chat services. The researchers used a survey of 684 users to find that contrary to their hypothesis; male users found expressiveness and usefulness as main motivators for use, while females used social norms and intrinsic motives, like enjoyment as main motivators of use. The researchers inferred that male users may use chat services as means to flirt or express personal identity and values. The findings of this study could be used for marketing professionals in the future for mobile phone feature differences for phones targeted toward males and females.

**Motives of using mobile messaging among college students**

Leung (2007) explored college students’ motives in SMS mobile messaging. Factors looked at included: SMS usage reasons (gratifications), SMS shortcomings, unwillingness to communicate face-to-face, and demographics. With a random sample of 532 college students, the researcher found that students who were the most frequent users of text messaging were attracted by its convenience, low cost, and usefulness in coordinating events. Users were found to be male with high household income, who were more socially anxious; however, users who use SMS for social event coordination were not socially anxious and were more likely to communicate face-to-face. Usage of SMS during idle times was found to be highly linked with affection; users sent messages of support or affection during these times. Leung found SMS to be a social technology that increases sociability in its users.
Baron (2004) examines gender differences in college students’ instant messaging use and also offers a linguistic profile of American college student IM conversations. The researcher found that females generally use longer IM and have longer IM conversations than males. Females also took twice as long to end conversations as males. The researcher also found that females use more un-contracted lexical form, punctuation, and emoticons than males. In conclusion, females were much more talkative and expressive than males, but this follow the past research on female and male communication patterns so this is not surprising.

Like Kleen and Heinrichs (2008) nearly all students involved in this study used text messaging. In relation to Balakrishnan and Yeow (2007) males who believe that texting is difficult do NOT use texting for convenience, to save time when coordinating events, and believe that texting is not easy and user friendly, and does not allow for privacy. Females who believe that texting is difficult also believe that it is difficult to understand what people are saying when they text and difficulties affect their usage, they do not believe that texting is easy and user friendly, they do not think that texting is convenient, and they do not use texting to avoid talking on the phone. Students in this study also tend to believe that text lingo is appropriate for email and text messages to family and friends. Rumsiene (2004) defines Internet English by examining its features, which are similar but separate from traditional English. The student participants in this study differentiate the two languages but, males believe that overall text usage negatively affects their usage and composition skills while females don’t think that text usage overall negatively affects their spelling and composition skills, but they do think that using lingo does.

Kumar and Lim (2008) examined age differences in mobile service perceptions; specifically a comparison of Generation Y and Baby Boomers. The researchers used a convenience sample of college students and a web-based survey of Baby Boomers. They found that young people are emotionally attached to their cell phones (until a newer model is produced) and that to Generation Y the mobile phone is a form of self-expression and individuality, while for Baby Boomers use their mobile phones to make voice calls and rarely use the other features the phone may contain. For marketers, this means that they should add features and capabilities for ads targeted to Generation Y and they should focus on economic value for Baby Boomers.

Balakrishnan and Yeow (2007) examined gender and age effects on text messaging satisfaction. Interviews were conducted with both male and female users between the ages of 17 and 37. The researchers found that male were less satisfied than females, and younger participants were more satisfied than the older participants. About half of the male interviewed said that current entry modes were tedious and time consuming. Females reported more time spent texting and sending more messages in a day. Some females attributed ease of use to females having smaller fingers. Younger users were more satisfied with the navigation of texting than older users. Younger users were also more accustomed to using and knowing the language and syntax of SMS communication. These results centered around text message entry methods and the results indicate that entry could be improved by “catering to local dialects, reducing key overload or introducing a better method for text entry” (p. 1).

Faulkner and Culwin (2005) studied texting activities among 565 mobile phone users by use of questionnaire and diary logging. These researchers found that not only is text messaging used by many people for a varying range of activities it is also a preferred method of communication by some. They also found that text messaging declines with age and women seem to use text messaging more than men.
Research Questions
Based on what it’s revealed through literature, it appears that certain areas of using text messaging among college students are still remained undiscovered. The purpose of this study is to gain a broader understanding of the usage pattern of college student’s usage of text messaging. Thus, the research questions involved are as follows: Who do college students text? Why and how do college students use text lingo? Are there any differences in usage between gender groups? If so, what are these differences? What are the difficulties in use? Are there differences in perceived difficulties between gender groups?

Hypothesis
It is hypothesized that males and females use text messaging for different reasons; therefore, the followings are hypothesis are being set up to investigate:

H1: Females use more text lingo than males when doing text messaging.
H2: Both genders (male and female) use more text lingo with a younger audience such as their younger siblings and peer friends.
H3: Both genders (male and female) are more inclined to believe the more they text help positively on their English.
H4: Both male and female college students agree positively that text messaging can create less confrontational.
H5: Both male and female students consider text messaging to stay actively with their own social circle.

Methodology
In order to answer these research questions a simple survey was created. The survey featured five categories of questions including: frequencies, motivators, difficulties, usage, and demographics. These categories were used to determine by examining the research questions and finding the main core reason behind it.

These five categories help to measure variables that can be used to determine differences in groups. A survey questionnaire is built based on these five areas. The survey is consisted of fifty Likert-type scale questions with five levels (i.e. strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree).

The survey was then distributed in junior and senior level advertising classes at a large mid-western state university. These majors were all under Strategic Communication that includes advertising, public relations, and some marketing business areas. They were taking full load at school. Some held part-time jobs on or off-campus.

Upon data collection each survey was entered into SPSS Statistics software 17.0 and basic analyses were run.

Operational Definitions
The operational definition of text messaging in regards to this study is: sending and receiving short (160 characters or less) written messages from mobile phones or handheld devices.

The operational definition of IM lingo in regards to this study is: the use of known short hand or acronyms when messaging someone either via computer or mobile device (ex- LOL, laugh out
Results and discussion

A total of 146 surveys were completed. Five surveys were declared invalid due to the incompleteness of the questionnaire. Statistical software (SPSS) was run which rendered the results.

Both hypothesis, H1 and H2, are somewhat supported; however, it depends on who the receivers might be. If they text to parents, then messages will have less IM lingo. On the other hand, if texting to peers, the situation may not be the same. Also, it may be affected by certain situation during the time of communication. This may mean that older age group is being stereotyped. This maybe true that older age group is not very familiar with IM lingo; thus, parents may trigger youngsters to use full English language. Modern IM lingo is not suitable for older age group. Obviously, this may indicate that parents uses less IM lingo to communicate.

The H3 is supported that both genders (male and female) tend to believe and think the more they text help positively on their English. Nevertheless, it seems believing is one thing which is just the opposite. The result indicates that there is a significant negative correlation on males between usage (as a whole) and composition skills and English usage skills. Does this mean male users have poor English usage skills because of using too much of IM lingo? Does female users have positive English usage skill due to more usage of IM lingo? Such area deserves for further investigation.

The H4 is partially supported. Only female college students agree that by using text messaging which can help them to minimize confrontation or less confrontational among friends. On the other hand, male college students do not think that’s the case. Does this mean male users dislike confrontation and would rather use face-to-face communication? Does this also mean female users are less likely to have face-to-face communication? Are all these scenario situation-specific such as boyfriend and girlfriend when confronting conflicts? It does intrigue to have further research possibilities.

The H5 is supported. Most of the male and female college students like to text and they believe that by using text messaging which enable them to stay socially active within their “inner” circle of influence. Most of them do believe it is vital for them to stay connected all the time by using text messaging. This seems true that because of the advancement of technology, IM or text messaging is indispensable.

The followings are the summarized results:

** TABLE – 1 is here **

** TABLE – 2 is here **

Limitations/Future Research

Due to the way the survey was created there are a few limitations to this study, therefore producing a few very important opportunities for further research on this topic. First, although the text message use frequency was very high for both genders, the frequency was not quantified by asking how many text messages each participant sent. This could have effected the interpretation of the statement not only participant to participant but also could have effected the interpretation of the statement by the two gender groups. A future study might want to conduct follow-up focus groups to gain thick yet rich qualitative data on the differences between the two gender groups.

Another interesting suggestion for further research, due to the lack of quantification, would be
to use qualitative studies to explore the context of the IM lingo. For example, what kind of IM lingo is being used by each gender. Perhaps, a follow-up study might not be just limited to qualitative, it can also be quantitative as well. However, qualitative studies might be more valuable so that the researcher could probe more and get more in-depth look at the IM lingo usage between the genders and specifically look at the differences in specific lingo use in each gender.

The findings suggest that though females are often thought of as more social, when it comes to technology females are more practical or pragmatic. The female gender group tends to use text messaging out of convenience rather than for sociability or social skills building. Conversely, according to this study males tend to use text messaging to enhance social skills or sociability. Unlike females, males tend to incorporate as well as adapt to technology into their social life. A further study could be built on a theory of social differences in genders.

**TABLE - 1**
Usage and Difficulties of general text messaging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males who believe that the more they text the better their English composition skills become and also believe that texting increases their spelling* and English usage skills*</td>
<td>Females who believe that the more they text the more careful about spelling they become and also believe that their English usage skills* and compositions skills* also become better the more they text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males show a negative correlation between usage (as a whole) and composition skills and English usage skills*</td>
<td>The more frequently they use texting there is a negative correlation with spelling and English composition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males who believe that texting is difficult also believe that difficulties affect their usage of text messaging*</td>
<td>Females who believe that texting is difficult also believe that difficulties effect their usage* and that it is difficult to understand what people are saying when they text*.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All findings are significant at 0.05 unless noted with and * (significant at 0.01)

**TABLE - 2**
Usage and Motivators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males who believe that texting increases their sociability use texting to keep in touch with old friends, make new friends, because it is convenient, because it saves time when coordinating events, because it is cool*, because it is easy and user friendly, because all of their friends text*, because texting is fun*, because they are bored*, and because they</td>
<td>Females who believe that texting increases their sociability use texting to keep in touch with old friends*, make new friends, because it is cool*, and because it allows for privacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Males who text out of convenience also text because it saves time when coordinating events*, is easy and user friendly*, increases sociability, all their friends text, and because they can send a message to all friends at once*.

Females who text out of convenience* also text because it allows them to keep in touch with old friends, saves time when coordinating events*, because it is cool, it is easy and user friendly*, all their friends text*, they can send a message to all of their friends at once*, they are bored*, it allows for privacy*, and to avoid talking on the phone.

Males who text because it is cool, text because their friends text, it is fun*, and because they are bored*

Females who use texting to keep in touch with old friends also use texting to make new friends*, because it is convenient, and because it is cool

Females who use texting to avoid confrontation also use to save time coordinating events*.

All findings are significant at 0.05 unless noted with and * (significant at 0.01)

References


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The effect factors of the second digital divide----based on positive analysis among the college students

Fanbin Zeng

Abstract: Based on a survey on students of Jinan University (N=302), this study focuses on the factors of using of internet---the second digital divide among college students. The survey shows that birth place has great positive effects on the time of using internet among students. The students bored in city have more using time of internet than those are not in city. Though education has great effects on the using level of internet, the direction is negative, which means that the students with less education use more time on internet. And the motivation of internet based on uses and gratification theory has great positive effects on the index of using internet about studying and working. Especially, the sensibility factors of internet using, including the attitude to the internet and the internet self-efficacy, have great positive effects on the using level of internet, including the time of using internet and the index of using internet about studying and working. And the education of college parents, the level of
internet knowledge, and the motivation of traditional media based on uses and gratification has no effects on the using level of internet.

Key word: Digital divide; Knowledge gaps; Uses and gratification; Attitude; Internet self-efficacy

Digital divide can be divided to two kinds: The first Internet access on the digital divide refers to the gap, also known as "accessing divide"; the second digital divide exists between the using of Internet, also known as "using divide". Early research focused on the digital divide in the "accessing divide", although "accessing divide" research for the study of technology diffusion is applicable, it does not help us understand the social consequences of technology diffusion. On the other hand, having the same physical access does not necessarily mean exactly in the same manner and according to the same extent to using the Internet. If people lack of the motivation, skills, or confidence, similarly it will also have access to use the premise of the gap. With the increase in the penetration rate of Internet access, digital divide research has begun to shift from the first gap to the second gap. Up to December 2009, the scale of Chinese Internet users has reached 384 million, and Internet penetration has been further enhanced to 28.9%. Compared with the developed countries, although there is a great distance in penetration rate, it has reached a high level. In this article, if our research only analyzes the first digital divide, it is insufficient for understanding the situation of uneven allocation of knowledge resources. So we must turn it into the second digital divide --- the Internet using.

For the second digital divide, western study mainly focuses on the following aspects: (1) the socio-demographic factors of Internet use. Such as Fox and Madden find that young people tend to use more communication and interaction tools compared with other age groups based on the analysis of age between different Internet users (Fox&Madden,2005. Based on the analysis of socio-economic status, Madden and Van Dijk found that people in high-level socio-economic status use more advanced Internet tools in order to achieve access to information, continuous learning and self-service purposes., however, the population in the lower socio-economic status tend to use the Internet as a tool for entertainment and chat (Madden,2003; Van Dijk,2005). Compared with other populations ,Madden and Rainie found that minorities or people of color are lacking behind in the use of e-mail, access to political and health information, online shopping and so on , but leading in download music, online games and access to information on sports based on the analysis of race of nation (Madden&Rainie,2003.However, ,different racial and ethnic gap between the use of the Internet in undergraduate groups is very small (Jaskson,2001;Cotton&Jelenewicz,2006) .(2)The psychology factors of Internet using. Hamburger concluded that outward-looking men prefer to use the Internet for leisure activities, but nervous women are more like using social networking services (Hamburger & Ben-Artzi,2000).However, some studies found that personality factors as Internet use have little effect(Hyles & Argyle ,2003).In the self-confidence,
the studies have pointed out that in adolescents (13-18 years old) especially in male adolescents the self-confidence in Internet use is a very important factor (Broos & Roe, 2006). Other studies pointed out that compared with age, sex and skills, self-confidence has a weaker influence (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). (3) Analyzing the social network of Internet use, Rojas found that the negative attitudes of relatives and friends of the negative to the new technology using in the Internet play a negative role in poor families and young people of Spain (Rojas, 2003). (4) Analyzing the skills factors of Internet use, most studies have shown that internet age and the network frequency are important factors to affect using the Internet functions according to the analysis of the experience, (Peter & Valkenburg, 2006; Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008).

In mainland China, the study of digital divide began in 2000, which first appeared in the library and information science and economic management disciplines. So far, there are hundreds of research articles about digital divide based on various disciplines from the perspectives of their own aspects. But most of the research focused on the first digital divide, only a small part focused on the second digital divide.

The studies on the first digital divide mainly focuses on the following aspects: (1) On the concept and measure of digital divide, for example, Zhu Jianhua defined Digital Divide as "Internet users among all sectors of society (the network users) the average percentage of difference" (Zhu Jianhua, 2002), but Jin Jianbin took standard deviation and mean value of the business (S. D / Mean) of the level index value of information development between regions as the specific measurement of the digital divide (Jin Jianbin, 2003). (2) On the factors of digital divide, Researchers concluded that influencing factors in the international digital divide include the level of economic development, national knowledge development capabilities, openness and communication technology introduction level, and the domestic factors in digital divide include the level of economic development, urbanization and other information technology utilization (Hu An gang, Zhou shaojie, 2002; Wang mingfeng, 2005). (3) On the influence and countermeasure of digital divide, for example, Huang Aihua pointed out that the Internet itself does not have the tendency to expand or close "knowledge gap", but because of many external factors, its fast, efficient and convenient unique advantages to traditional mass media, the original has been formed under the several times influence of the "knowledge gap" (Huang aihua, 2002). Therefore, Researchers put forward lots of countermeasures such as government leadership, improving education, introduction of policies, advocacy, seeking support, facilities, etc. (Hu yanping, 2002; Wang Quanli, Fan Yongqing, 2008).

Studies on the second digital divide mainly focus on the following aspects: (1) Using indicators to measure. By examining eight operation ability of Internet user, Zhu Jianhua reflected their overall network usage skills (Zhu Jianhua, 2002). (2) Analyzing its influencing factors, for example, Wei lu pointed out that network knowledge had a prominent influence to the Internet use intention (Wei lu, 2008). (3) About the social influence of second digital divide, Wei lu pointed out that compared with Internet access, Internet use for people has a greater influence on knowledge acquisition.
In all, the western studies on the second digital divide have broken through the past socio-demographic situation, economic conditions and other factors, extending to various factors. However, Internet adoption and use of foreign and domestic situation are very different, it can not be directly applied to other areas.

The domestic digital divide research deficiencies exist in the following areas:

First, it is lack of detailed operational definition of the second digital divide measurement.

Though the measurement of the first digital divide has outcome, it can not be directly applied to the second digital divide. At the same time, some studies have measured the certain Internet skills, but without a comprehensive measure.

Second, the theoretical and empirical researching is lacking. Considerable parts of theoretical research articles have not experience material support, and are lack of questionnaires, interview surveys to gather first-hand observation.

Therefore, this research seeks to make up for the shortcomings of existing research, selects college students as an example for the empirical analysis, takes a comprehensive measure to the situation of the second digital divide, analyzes the various factors, and finds out the prominent factors.

Theoretical framework

Firstly, based on the knowledge gap theory. In 1970, P.J.Tichenor found that mass communication might actually expand the knowledge gap among members of different social status. According to this study, P.J.Tichenor put forward the Knowledge gap theory and pointed out that knowledge gap regarded groups’ socioeconomic status as the major variables which used to study effects of media communication. He thought that with the increasing information disseminated to the society by mass media, people with different socio-economic status got the media knowledge at different levels. People with higher socio-economic status will be faster to get such information than those with low socio-economic status. Therefore, the knowledge gap between the two kinds of people will show a tendency to expand rather than shrink. The theory developed into a complete theoretical framework later. The factors affected the knowledge gap were sorted into two major inspects, that is, macro level (community, social and national levels) and individuals level (individual's subjective sense). At the macro level, socio-economic conditions will determine the existence of the knowledge gap in the different groups. For undergraduates, they neither participate in the social division of labor, nor do they have their own personal income. Therefore, their socio-economic situation has much relation to their birthplace, educational level of their parents and other family-related socio-economic backgrounds. In the group with the same socio-economic status, individual factors which including education, professional network knowledge will played an important role in the formation of the knowledge gap. Education is universal knowledge for a person and network knowledge is specifically referred to the expertise gotten by using network. According to this theoretical framework, we conclude the following
assumptions:

Hypothesis 1: the higher the level of education their parents got, the higher the level of their internet use.

Hypothesis 2: Students born in urban have a higher level of internet usage than those born in rural.

Hypothesis 3: The higher the education level of students, the higher the level of their ability to use internet.

Hypothesis 4: The more expertise the students got, the higher the level of their ability to use internet.

Secondly, Use and gratifications as the theoretical framework. Based on psychological motivation and psychological needs, uses and gratifications theory combining psychological and sociological knowledge explains the behavior that audience use media to meet their needs. And the theory points out the social causes and psychological motivation that made the audience to accept the media. In 1974, Katz studied the logic of media use and gratifications in the book named personal use of the mass media. The logic include seven aspects: (1) Social and psychological needs; (2) people's needs; (3) the expectation that comes from demand; (4) expectations point to the mass media or other sources; (5) These sources lead to different forms of media exposure (or participate in other activities); (6) meet the needs caused by the exposure; (7) other consequences arising with the gratification of needs.

Researchers with different opinions from Katz put forward different interpretations to the gratification. They argued that gratification is personal psychological needs and expectations. The result of the two arguments formed the hypothesis of “Use and gratifications theory”. The hypotheses hold that the audiences are active in the process of receiving the media information and that they have a variety of needs and expectations for different levels and angles of information, such as access to information, entertainment or for social activity. If some of the audiences use certain media to satisfy their needs, or the harvest exceeded expectations, then the media would have a stronger effect on these audiences. Based on Use and gratifications theory and innovation diffusion theory, Zhu Jianhua put forward a new theory of media demand balance and pointed out that only if the audience found traditional media can’t meet their certain important needs and the new media can meet their needs, they will start to continue using this new media. It is said that people use the Internet because traditional media can not meet their needs and the internet was able to meet their needs. According to this theoretical framework, we make the following assumptions:

Hypothesis 5: The less traditional media (including newspapers, radio, television, film) meet individual needs, the higher the level of students using the internet.

Hypothesis 6: The more internet meet individual needs, the higher the level of college students using internet.
Thirdly, Self-efficacy and attitude theory. Jet Ajzen (1993) came up with a general definition of attitude, “Attitude is a person's like or dislike the tendency to an object, behavior, individual, unit, event, or the detachable part of the personal world, This concept emphasis on attitude’s Measurability, attitude is not only a simple concept, it relate to intension, composition, direction, and other factors. There are lots of factors affecting attitude intension, of which the importance is the key, for example, We can measure user attitude towards Internet from the measurement of the internet importance to users life, work and study. User attitude towards Internet plays an important role about how to use Internet. Internet self-efficacy is associated with the attitude, both belong to the emotional concept, just self-efficacy focus on the individual's confidence and judgment. Bandura defined "self-efficacy" as a generalization ability, which the individual depend on to integrate individuals cognition, society, behavioral skills effectively and use various actions to achieve different purpose" (Bandura, 1986). Similarly, Martocchio and Dullebohn defined it as a task that the individual integrate its motivation, cognition, and action plan so as to estimate the personal task-competition ability “This definition method emphasizes three key characteristics of self-efficacy. Firstly, the self-efficacy is a belief to personal ability, the emphasis of this ability lie in decision-making instead of the consequence evaluation of this behavior. Secondly, self-efficacy concerns the whole results, instead of certain skill or skill level to the whole results. Thirdly, self-efficacy concerns the evaluation about what you will be able to do in your future, instead of what you have done in the past. According to the theoretical framework of self-efficacy theory and attitude, we put forward the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 7: For college students, the higher regarding the value on the Internet, the higher the use level of internet

Hypothesis 8: For college students the higher regarding the self-efficacy on the Internet, the higher the use level of internet

Variables and measurement

Questionnaire data acquisition and basic information

In this study, data was taken from the intercept survey of students (including undergraduate, graduate, doctoral) in Jinan University. The interviewer of questionnaire were graduate who select “Internet and new media studies" and undergraduate who select "Internet Journalism". These students were divided into two groups, one for the interviewer and one for supervisors. Each interviewer completed 5 questionnaires and was required to complete the questionnaire number. Each interviewer and supervisor had to sign on each questionnaire. After training, each interviewer conducted an intercept survey at canteen, library, classroom building or dormitory in Jinan University at different time in May, 2010. In the survey, questionnaires were filled out by respondents on the spot and then recovered. Recovery of 335 questionnaires were distributed, of which 302 valid questionnaires,
the survey completion rate was 90.1%. Then, we used SPSS version 13.0 software for statistical analysis of the survey results. Sample of the basic data was showed in the table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>111 men (36.8%), female 191 (63.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>20 and below 29 (9.7%); Age bracket of 21-22 115 (38.1%), 23-24, 125 (41.4%), 25 years old and over 33 people (10.9%); average age: 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>Freshman and sophomore 29 (9.7%), juniors and over 131 undergraduate students (43.4%), graduate students and over 142 people (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political landscape</td>
<td>Communist 105 (34.8%), Democratic staff 3 (0.99%), Communist Youth League 91 (30.1%), 103 people (34.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment status</td>
<td>Enrollment of 199 in mainland China (65.9%), Hong Kong's enrollment were 66 (21.9%), Macao's enrollment of 26 people (8.7%), Taiwan's enrollment and 5 (1.7%), other regions outside the enrollment 6 people (1.99%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Obviously, the key demographic variables of view, the results of this convenience sample is good (all the data in this study can be obtained authorization to researchers) Meanwhile, the data show that the minimum of the average online time is 1 hour, the minimum net age of is 1 year. Combined with the popularity of the University internet, it can be drawn in the sample that students all have access to internet, that is, there is no difference between access internets, that there is no gap between the first digital divide.

**Dependent variable**

In this study, the analysis object is college students’ second digital divide, that is, the use of the Internet gap. Use of the Internet's early research focused on the gap in the gaps in time of using internet (Nie & Er-bring, 2000; Robinsonetal, 2000). However, it is observed that equal access time does not necessarily mean the same way that people use the Internet (Moy, Scheufele, & Holbert, 1999). Internet time is the amount of use of the Internet, while purpose is the quality of the Internet usage. Therefore, dependent variable of this research includes the following two dimensions:

The time of using Internet, Measurement question is that "How much average time do you spend online per day?" Internet time is a continuous variable.

The purpose of using Internet, According to the research needs, we are mainly to focus whether the conduct of using Internet is to obtain knowledge related learning or living. Therefore, this article uses the following questions measure: As following actions, your frequency is (1 = never use, 2 = rarely used, 3 = sometimes used, 4 = more frequently used, 5 = often used). 12A, use e-mail to learn and study life-related information; 12B, participate in online chat, discussion and learning things about life;
12C, through a search engine in Internet search and learn living-related information; 12D, visit relevant website, BBS that published professional knowledge and related to learning and living; 12E, to use blog for uploading articles about study and life. For this purpose Internet access will be directly changed into online behavior and learning, life, the extent of knowledge related to measurement. All items will add up to a subsidiary of another branch dependent variable, work-related Internet use index also belong to a continuous variable.

**Independent variable**

1. Family socio-economic background variables: (1) parental education level. Past research showed that educational level of parents affects the acquisition of cultural knowledge of young people (Feng Xiaotian, 2005). In order to better explore the influence that the educational level of parents have on young people skills of the internet, we take any college and above the standard level of education as standard, father or mother received any college education and higher level = 1; received any college education= 0. (2) birthplace. As the use gap of the Internet between city and non-urban becomes different, we set urban = 1, the general urban and rural = 0 for the assignment.

2. Knowledge of variables, (1) education level (continuous variable). According to different educational levels accepted by years of education about the assignment: freshman or sophomore = 13, junior or senior = 15 master = 17. (2) The level of internet knowledge. Internet knowledge is the use of internets of expertise, which may be related to knowledge and education levels or may not. Internet knowledge can be defined as a range of internet characteristics which formed within a certain period of time (Po-tosky, 2007). Internet knowledge, including the daily use of the Internet is closely related to two aspects: to know what is on the internet knowledge and what can be done through the internet (Page & Uncles, 2004). These two dimensions can be referred to as declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge (Best, 1989; Page & Uneles, 2004). Declarative knowledge refers to the knowledge people have on the specific internet-related terms such as Cookies, browser (browsers), while procedural knowledge refers to the knowledge people have about how to operate the internet to implement tasks. In this study, whether know the following knowledge or not is a measure on the declarative knowledge. A, know “worm" virus, such an internet? B knows what is "sticky"? C, know what is Cookies? D, know what a "proxy server"? E, know what is the internet video in the "buffer"? Know that = 1, do not know = 0. In the same way, procedural knowledge is measured by the following questions: A, know how to deal with the "worm" virus B, know how to post "top"? C, know how to use Cookies? D, know how to set the "proxy server"? E, know how to deal with internet video the "buffer" of this phenomenon? Know = 1, do not know = 0. Support item score and then the sum of knowledge for the internet variable value.

3. The media used to meet the needs of motivational variables: (1) traditional
media (newspapers, radio, television, movies, etc.) it can meet the needs of the following areas (1 = completely satisfied; 2 = half satisfied; 3 = half satisfied, half not satisfied; 4 = most of meet; 5 = completely satisfied), the branch option A, understand the domestic and international news events; B, to obtain personal information (such as shopping, tourism, investment, medical and health knowledge); C, get the work / study information (such as employment, education, work or study to improve the level of knowledge and skills); D, entertainment or personal hobbies (such as playing games, listening to music, sports, news); E, express their own views on a variety of public affairs; F, enhance emotional exchanges (meet new friends, maintain relationships with existing friends), the sum of the actual scores assigned to meet the audience demand for the traditional media, variable motivation. (2) whether the Internet can meet the needs of the following areas (1 = completely satisfied; 2 = half satisfied; 3 = half satisfied, half not satisfied; 4 = half satisfied; 5 = completely satisfied), the branch option A, about domestic and international news events; B, to obtain personal information (such as shopping, tourism, investment, medical and health knowledge); C, get the work / study information (such as employment, education, raise the level of work or study knowledge and skills); D, entertainment or personal hobbies (such as playing games, listening to music, sports, news); E, express their own views or advice on a variety of public affairs; F, enhance emotional exchanges (meet new friends, maintain and have A friend's relationship), the sum of the actual scores assigned to meet the audience demand for Internet motivation variable.

4, Attitude and self-efficacy variables, (1) attitude to the internet. To “how important Internet in your life, work / study?” this option is measured as following ① most important = 5; ② very important = 4; ③ indifferent or do not know / hard to say = 3; ④ not very important = 4; ⑤ unimportant = 5. (2) Internet self-efficacy. This study used six items to measure personal confidence in their evaluation of the use of the Internet, including online activities, such as information search, and to communicate, to solve practical problems. We asked respondents to mark their statements in five Likert scale on the six degree of agreement, the greater the number the higher the extent of that agreement, of which 1 represents "completely agree" and 5 represents "completely agree". The specific projects: A, I am confident that I can use the web search to get the information I need; B, I am confident that through the internet I can solve practical problems; C, I am sure the internet is a good tool to communicate with people; D, I am confident that through the internet I can complete something that needs to be done; E, I think that I can use internet equipment well; F, Even there is no help, I can complete related work through the internet. And then sum up the scores as self-efficacy variable.

5, Demographic characteristic variables. (1) Sex. M = 1, female = 0. (2) Age (continuous variable)

*Variable distribution*
Table 2  The distribution of variable values (N = 302)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable name</th>
<th>The distribution of variable values</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent variable (continuous variables)</strong></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet time</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning, work-related Internet use index</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent variable (type variable)</strong></td>
<td>1 (frequency/percentage)</td>
<td>0 (frequency/percentage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (male = 1, female = 0)</td>
<td>111(36.8%)</td>
<td>191(63.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father education (1 = college or more, 0 = non-college)</td>
<td>199(65.9%)</td>
<td>103(34.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother education (1 = college or more, 0 = non-college)</td>
<td>233(77.2%)</td>
<td>69(22.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birthplace (city = 1, the general urban and rural = 0)</td>
<td>149(49%)</td>
<td>153(51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent variables (continuous variables)</strong></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of their qualifications</td>
<td>15.75</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet level of expertise</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to use traditional media to meet the demand</td>
<td>17.99</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet use to meet the needs of motivation</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude to the Internet</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet self-efficacy</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dependent variable access time, and learning, work-related Internet use index of dispersion coefficient (the standard deviation of the sample data and the corresponding average ratio) 0.56 and 0.18, is larger than dispersion coefficient (both 0.08) of age and education level. This shows that the dispersion of the sample data is relatively large. It also said that there is a sizeable gap in Internet use level among college students (time spent online, and learning, work-related Internet use index), that is, relatively large second digital divide.

**The analysis of dependent variable factors**

In this study, as the dependent variable is continuous variable, independent variable is category variables (dummy variables) or a continuous variable, the use of linear regression analysis to time spent online and learning, work-related Internet use index as the dependent variable regression variables respectively, table 3 and table 4 were out:
Table 3 Analyzing factors of the time of using internet (linear regression analysis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internet time</th>
<th>B(Non-standardized regression coefficients)</th>
<th>Std. Error(Standard deviation)</th>
<th>Beta(Standardized regression coefficient)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family socio-economic background variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father education (Non-college above = 0)</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother education (Non-college above = 0)</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of birth (General town and country = 0)</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable level of knowledge</td>
<td>Educational level</td>
<td>-0.44</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>-2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet level of expertise</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the media to meet the demand variables</td>
<td>Motivation to use traditional media to meet the demand</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to use Internet to meet the demand</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.65</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude and self-efficacy variables</td>
<td>The attitude to Internet</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet self-efficacy feelings</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic variables</td>
<td>sex (female = -0.11</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4  Analyzing factors of learning, work-related Internet use index (linear regression analysis)

| Family socio-economic background variables | B(Non-standardized regression coefficients) | Std. Error(Standard deviation) | Beta(Standardized regression coefficient) | t | Sig.  
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---|-------  
| Father education (Non-college above=0)     | -0.52                                    | 0.47                          | -0.07                                    | -1.09 | 0.28   ।  
| Mother education (Non-college above=0)     | 0.83                                     | 0.54                          | 0.10                                     | 1.52  | 0.13   ।  
| Place of birth (General town and country=0) | -0.63                                    | 0.41                          | -0.09                                    | -1.54 | 0.13   ।  
| Variable level of knowledge                | 0.30                                     | 0.19                          | 0.11                                     | 1.60  | 0.11   ।  
| Internet level of expertise                | 0.06                                     | 0.05                          | 0.07                                     | 1.28  | 0.20   ।  
| Using the media to meet the demand         | -0.07                                    | 0.04                          | -0.09                                    | -1.56 | 0.12   ।  

Constant 6.45 2.68 2.40 0.0
Adjusted R Square 0.185
F 7.188
Sig 0.000
Table 3 and Table 4 show that the predictors factors of five independent variables which are family socio-economic background variables, the variable level of knowledge, media use variables to meet the needs, attitude and self-efficacy variables, demographic characteristics of the variable on the Internet on college students predicts 18.5% (Adjusted R Square), the predictors factors of Learning, work-related Internet use index of factors predicts 20.6% (Adjusted R Square). Though these predictors factors are not much more, its regression equation can be tester by F(Two regression equations’ F test are notable, Sig < 0.000, F through general research for the 0.001 significance level test of hypothesis).

However, the dependent variable in the interpretation of different time, a specific interpretation of each variable is different. According to some previous study experience, this study sets the significance level of each variable at 0.05, which is if Sig is less than 0.05, it is through the test of significance. Therefore, time spent online for students, family socio-economic background variables in this group, father education (Sig = 0.50) and maternal education (Sig = 0.81) failed in the test of significance, and for learning, work-related Internet use index of the result of variables, family socioeconomic background variables of the father in this group education (Sig = 0.28) and maternal education (Sig = 0.13) did not pass the same test of significance, hypothesis 1 failed to pass testing. But another variable the place of birth (Sig =0.00 ) toward time spent online for students passed the test of significance. But the place of birth (Sig =0.13 ) toward learning, work-related Internet use index failed to pass the test. The place of birth in the regression equation, the Beta is 0.32, which shows that the urban student’s Internet time is longer than that non-urban. But in dependant variable------ learning, work-related Internet use index, the college students’ birth place has not marked influence. This shows that though the place of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>variables</th>
<th>meet the demand Using Internet to meet the demand</th>
<th>0.13</th>
<th>0.05</th>
<th>0.17</th>
<th>2.66</th>
<th>0.01</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic variables</td>
<td>The attitude to Internet</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internet self-efficacy feelings</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sex(female =0)</td>
<td>-1.00</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-2.59</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>age</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.61</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R Square</td>
<td>0.206</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>8.062</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
birth may influence their online time, it does not affect their using aims, the purpose should own to other reasons. So hypothesis 2 is tested partly.

Knowledge of these variables in the education level of college student’s time spent online Beta is -0.18, Sig is 0.01. Although the significance test passed, the standardized regression coefficient was negative, indicating that the lower education level of the students, the more time online long, that is to use the higher level, with the hypothesis 3 in the opposite direction. Therefore, it is not through hypothesis testing, and education level with study, work-related Internet use index of Beta 0.11. Although positive, but the Sig is 0.11, it did not pass the significance test, therefore, hypothesis 3 does not pass inspection. Another variable internet professional knowledge of web-based time (Sig. = 0.19) and and learning, work-related Internet use index (Sig. = 0.20) both had no significant effect due to variable, hypothesis 4 is not through testing. That is to say, college students with professional knowledge of the internet using has nothing to do with internet use level.

Among using media to meet the needs variables, using traditional media predicts students time spent online (Sig. = 0.09) and with learning, work-related Internet use index (Sig. = 0.12) had no significant effect, that is to say, hypothesis 5 failed in the test. Using internet to meet the needs predicting on college students time spent online (Sig. = 0.52) also had no significant effect, but with learning, work-related Internet use index (Sig. = 0.01) there are significant effects, and Internet use motivation and learning to meet the demand, work-related Internet use Beta (standardized regression coefficient) was 0.17, that is, the Internet use to meet the needs of the higher motivation, students with learning, work-related Internet use index higher. Hypothesis 6 was tested partly.

Attitude and self-efficacy in this group of variables, on the Internet, the impact on students access time values in the Beta is 0.16, Sig was 0.00, meaning that students on the Internet, the higher the value of their online time more high, and it is through the test of significance. While on the Internet, college students with learning, work-related Internet use index of value , Beta is 0.18, Sig is 0.00, meaning that the value of university students on the Internet, the more high, with learning, work-related Internet use, the higher the index, and it passed the test of significance. Therefore, hypothesis 7 was tested. Another independent variable self-efficacy of college students value in Internet time, the Beta is 0.13, Sig is 0.03, meaning that the higher students on the Internet self-efficacy, the higher the time spent online, and can be significantly tested; and self-efficacy variables and learning, work-related Internet use index of value in the Beta (standardized regression coefficient) was 0.24, Sig was 0.00, meaning that students on the Internet, the higher the value of self-efficacy, with study, work related to the higher level of Internet use, and it passed the test of significance. Therefore, hypothesis 8 was tested.

Demographic characteristics of these variables, the gender impact of college students time spent online (Sig. = 0.76) failed to pass the test of significance, with learning, work-related Internet use index (Sig. = 0.01) but passed the significant test, indicating that men and women with learning, work-related Internet use were significantly different; the age of the impact on college students time spent online (Sig.
= 0.60) failed to pass the test of significance, with learning, work-related Internet use Index (Sig. = 0.54) also failed to pass the test of significance.

**Conclusion and Discussion**

In summary, we can see that as to the dependent variable the internet use level can be divided into the amount of time and as the level of Internet quality measurement indicators and learning, work-related Internet use index. According to the second part of the theoretical framework and underlying assumptions, the third part of the variables measured, the third part of the combined impact of factors, we may draw the following Table 5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Variable group</th>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Internet time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learning, work-related Internet use index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The theoretical framework of the Knowledge Gap</td>
<td>Family socio-economic background variables</td>
<td>Parents educational level</td>
<td>Hypothesis 1: the higher the level of education their parents got, the higher the level of their internet use.</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Birth place</td>
<td>Hypothesis 2: Students born in urban have a higher level of internet usage than those born in rural.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Variable level of knowledge</td>
<td>Educational level</td>
<td>Hypothesis 3: The higher the education level of students, the higher the level of their ability to use internet.</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Internet knowledge</td>
<td>Hypothesis 4: The more expertise the students got, the higher the level of their ability to use internet.</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses and gratifications</td>
<td>Using the media to meet the</td>
<td>Using traditional media to meet the</td>
<td>Hypothesis 5: The less traditional media (including newspapers, radio, television, film)</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>Demand Variables</td>
<td>Demand</td>
<td>Hypothesis 6: The more internet meet individual needs, the higher the level of college students using the internet.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude and self-efficacy of the theoretical framework</td>
<td>Attitude and self-efficacy variables</td>
<td>The attitude to Internet</td>
<td>Hypothesis 7: For college students, the higher regarding the value on the Internet, the higher the use level of internet</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internet self-efficacy feelings</td>
<td>Hypothesis 8: For college students the higher regarding the self-efficacy on the Internet, the higher the use level of internet</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic variables</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hypothesis 6: The more internet meet individual needs, the higher the level of college students using the internet.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hypothesis 6: The more internet meet individual needs, the higher the level of college students using the internet.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ Through the 0.05 significance level hypothesis testing; × Not through the 0.05 significance level hypothesis testing

Table 5 shows that the theoretical framework of the ditch by the knowledge derived assuming only “birthplace of the city's college students than non-city internet to use a higher level,” through the test, which indicates that the level of Internet use as a measure of the second figure divide "using ditch", with the first digital divide "accessing divide" different. "Accessing divide" of factors that include education, education, income, socio-economic status variables and geographical variables, however, these factors "using ditch" in the impact becomes weaker, or even not significant, or it is significant but in the opposite direction, such as education, especially for college students is especially true of this group. This is due to present the University commonly connected to the Internet, and to provide free Internet access, these favorable conditions for the lower socio-economic status variables on access restrictions, to the behavior of students using the Internet different more reflected in the difference on other factors. This conclusion is the development of the different groups of second digital divide related factors point of view. In previous studies, for young people, the second digital divide in Internet use in some significant impact on
the socio-economic factors status, such as Jochen Peter and Patti M. Valkenburg on 749 13-18 year-old German youth multivariate analysis of questionnaire data obtained with high socio-economic status and cognitive ability of young people, more use of the Internet for access to information, and less for entertainment, but with lower socio-economic status and cognitive abilities of young people, the more use of the Internet for entertainment, and less access to information (Peter & Valkenburg, 2006). For example, Jiang Yu in September 2005 to December, in Beijing eight district 217 high schools’ students (between 13-18 years old) were studied using stratified multistage cluster sampling method, using the Internet experience and obtain a Internet at home in high school students of 1276 questionnaires were obtained higher family socioeconomic status families, their children have a more extensive internet of skills. Family socio-economic background factors directly affect the teaching of skills teenager’s conditions and also by affecting the young people attending school level to indirectly affect their internet to gain in the difference (Jiang Yu, 2007). College students and young people in the second digital divide are different. And a significant reason is that college students and young people live in different places-----most college students live in college and less affected by family socio-economic status of these factors. But most of young people live at home, but the family is an important place for young people socialized, children and youths habit formation, so young people are interested in different Internet, demand has also been the growth of family factors. Of course, the students time spent online by their place of birth or a significant impact, that is, students use the internet behavior out of the family despite the impact of socio-economic background, but not completely out of place of birth limitation.

The uses and gratifications theoretical framework derived using traditional media to meet the needs of Internet use to meet the needs of motivation and motivation is only one of the latter on the dependent variable and learning, work-related Internet use index have a significant effect. In previous studies, the motivation in the gap between different groups in the use of the Internet is very important. (van Dijk, 2004, 2005, 2006; Sun, Rubin, & Haridakis, 2008) Certainly, different studies carried out to Internet usage gap between the operations of different definitions. Such as Sun, Rubin and Haridakis gap between the use of the Internet operations for the dependence on the Internet use different (Sun, Rubin, & Haridakis, 2008), this study will be conducted between the use of the Internet access division of time and purpose of use, although the Internet time to test out the dependent variable is not significant factors, but the use purpose (and learning, work-related Internet) of significant factors to meet the demand for Internet use motivation, note motive is still an important factor in Internet use. The use of traditional media to meet the demand of time and motivation to the Internet no significant impact on the purpose of use may be college students live on campus, the traditional media, especially radio, television contact and less difficult to have an impact on their Internet use.

In this study, the most notable conclusion is that attitude and self-efficacy of the theoretical framework derived on the Internet, the internet self-efficacy variables were the two dependent variables have a significant impact, but also a
positive correlation, hypothesis 7 "The higher college students’ attitude to Internet, the higher their internet use level" and hypothesis 8 "The higher college students’ self-efficacy feelings, the higher their internet use level" have been hypothesis testing. This is a group of any of the other variables (including demographic characteristics of the variable group) did not show up in data characteristics. On the Internet, and internet are all emotional self-efficacy concept, that is, the Internet use of emotional factors on the students level of Internet usage (including time spent online and with learning, work-related Internet use index) can produce significant positive impact. In other words, at this stage of college students from the second digital divide gap, from training to improving their use of the Internet can start with the emotional factors.

Of course, this study has some limitations. On the one hand, while the dependent variable for the second level of the digital divide ----- gap between Internet use, by using the division number and use of quality, but the quality will be used directly equivalent to the purpose of use, eventually attributed and learning, work-related Internet use index, although analysis of the data reflected a relatively good conclusion, there's one-sided suspicion. So the future research can divide the second digital divide more detailed, from multiple angle measurements, and comprehensive analysis of the users of the level of Internet use between the gaps. On the other hand, the limitations of this study lie in the convenience sampling method used, which limits the conclusions of the study that can be summarized as resistance. Despite the convenience sample for the purpose of hypothesis testing is adequate, but for the conclusion of the study and to promote the wider population, random sampling is necessary.

Despite these limitations, this study made on the second division of the digital divide, especially the level of Internet use not only used to measure time spent online, also used with the learning, work-related Internet use index to measure the latter directly and knowledge and increasing access to relevant, therefore it can reflect differences in the students use the Internet to acquire knowledge of the conditions and gaps, which can help students understand and reduce the second digital divide the analysis of significance. The other hand, data analysis, the attitude to the Internet and internet self-efficacy of these affective factors appear a particularly important influence, not only developed the theory of knowledge of the digital divide, but also in practical ways for communicators to improve students using the Internet to obtain more knowledge, and second among college students reduce the digital divide and so has important practical significance. According to January 15, 2010 China Internet Internet Information Center (CNNIC) released in Beijing "the 25th China Internet Development Statistics Report" shows that 12.1% of Chinese Internet users have a university degree or above, 28.8% were students, two intersection group is college students, although the number of students using Internet users in the country's overall rate has dropped, it still is an important component of Internet users, and the situation of students using the Internet to some extent, good or bad impact on our the future. Therefore, the attention level of students using the Internet, are particularly concerned about how students use the Internet to increase their own knowledge, is worthy of
scholars to explore research topics unremitting.

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The Mass Media and Social transformation: Development journalism in the People’s Republic of China – An example to the World

Manzie Vincent Doh

Abstract: Development Journalism which is synonymous to development communications are organized efforts to use communications processes and mass media to bring forth social and economic improvements, generally in developing countries. This field which emerged in the late 1950’s came as a result of the recognition that the radio and television were effective tools which could be put to use in developing nations to bring about dramatic progress. Among the early proponents of development journalism who went further to theorize the ability of the mass media to transform an underdeveloped society or country to one with more opportunities in terms of social, economic and even political stability were 1Lerner and 2Schramm. Theorizing the relationship between the mass media and social transformation, Wilbur Schramm noted that “the task of the mass media of information and the ‘new media’ of education is to speed and ease the long, slow social transformation required for economic development, and, in particular, to speed and smooth the task of mobilizing human resources behind the national effort.” Mass media are important in spreading awareness of new possibilities and practices3. After World War II, developing countries were hit by widespread poverty and left with little infrastructure, education and political stability. In order to reach the highly needed transformation of the social, economic and political life of these countries, the only way out was to turn to the mass media. Thus, the role of the mass media in contributing towards the attainment of education, essential skills, social unity, and general transformation was widely recognized4. Today, development journalism is highly supported by the United Nations – which through one of its main bodies, namely, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), advocates for a true partnership between the mass media and the government. The United Nations provides multi-lateral aid to developing countries

to help them move towards development communications. Through this partnership, the mass media and the government are seen as two agents geared up for the development of the country concerned.

The People’s Republic of China (hereafter referred to as P.R.C.) is a glaring example in the world as to how development journalism has been efficiently put to use in achieving the general transformation of the Chinese society in all spheres of its national life—social, economic and political. As the findings of a media monitoring project conducted by the author in March and April 2010, on the Chinese media represented by the most widely circulated English language newspaper—China Daily, portray, the mass media in collaboration with the government of the P.R.C. have remained part and parcel of the social, economic and political transformation process of the “Middle Kingdom” by tailoring content to meet the specific needs of a country that is at a stage of economic boom.

Key Words: Mass. media, Social Transformation, Development Journalism, People’s Republic of China

“Development communication is the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equality and the larger fulfillment of the human potential”.

Government’s participation in mass media can help disseminate important information all over the country. By using the mass media, government can educate its citizens and enable the citizens to acquire essential skills necessary for the transformation of their regions or general improvement of their country and well-being. But before discussing how development journalism is effectively employed to achieve social transformation, with the P.R.C as an example worth emulating in the world, it is necessary to highlight in clearer terms how this brand of journalism substantially differs in content from non-development journalism or to what I refer to as “confrontational journalism”—whereby the journalist should be an opponent of the government; a view which is largely held in Western countries especially in the United States.

Development journalism sticks to the same standards of fairness, accuracy, balance and journalistic ethics just like the other forms of journalism. The difference is in the choice of subject matter and the action orientation especially as development journalism covers subjects that do not get as much main stream mass media attention.

Science journalism, Health journalism, Biotech journalism, Environmental journalism and Economic journalism are all various forms of development journalism. The content revolves

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4 Labrador Virgilio S. Marginal notes on development journalism and writing development stories. 1995.
around major issues of gross importance to the improvement of the nation. News topics under development journalism as disseminated by the mass media are economic development, agricultural development, political development, education and literacy, employment and labor welfare, family planning, health, hygiene and medicine, housing, industrial, Science and technological development, national integration, rural development, urban development, social change, telecom and transport development, cultural development, environmental protection, check between plan and achievement 1. In terms of news orientation or angles of the stories, development journalism emphasizes solutions to a problem, social stability, harmony, collectivity, consensus, and partnership, while non-development journalism lays emphasis on problem exposure, conflict, chaos, individualism, differences, and adversary respectively. In disseminating information, development journalism is mindful of consequences; that is why it emphasizes the responsible exercise of press freedom; and is informative. On the other hand, non-development journalism is not mindful of consequences, and more often than not entertains the public2.

How development journalism works
In stack contrast to non-development journalism (confrontational journalism), when development journalists focus on economic development, the non-development journalists emphasize government affairs. When development journalists stress the need for agricultural development, non-development journalists report power politics; while development journalists discuss political development, non-development journalists discuss business; when education and literacy are the focus of development journalists, non-development journalists talk military affairs; when employment and labor welfare, and family planning are the concerns of development journalists, non-development journalists write or report on consumerism, and investment. While a development journalist reports on health, hygiene and medicine, the non-development journalist reports on finance. When housing, industrial, science and technological development matter most to the development journalist, a non-development journalist reports on lifestyle and trade. When national integration is of utmost importance to development journalists, non-development journalists choose to talk about religions. When rural development, urban development, social change, telecom and transport development, and cultural development are of importance to development journalists, non-development journalists prefer to write about foreign relations, sports, legal affairs, crimes, war and conflict respectively; and when environmental protection as well as check between plan and achievement are important issues for development journalists, non-development journalists tend to lay emphasis on celebrity, travel and living3. Generally, development journalism lays emphasis on the fact that the mass media should support and contribute to the process of development. It lays emphasis on the participation of the ordinary people4, and emphasizes constructive cooperation between the press in nation building and economic construction; as such it stresses the responsible exercise of press freedom.

Development journalism in the People's Republic of China

The People’s Republic of China has effectively opted for development journalism. The Mass media has been accorded an essential role in national development. Recognizing the power of the mass media, the government has directed honest attention in its relationship with the mass media. China first introduced television in 1958, and in 1979 the government invested 128 million Yuan in the broadcast industry. This led to a boom in radio and television stations in the country. By 1987, a total of 292 television and 278 radio stations were broadcasting in the country. A national survey conducted by China Central Television in 1987 reported that 55 percent of the 1.07 billion (590 million) people were able to watch television. Out of this number 370 million were urban residents - 93 percent of the urban population; while 220 million lived in the villages - 33 percent of the rural population.

As it became more evident that the mass media are “agents” of general improvement in a country’s development process, television became a means of education for the rural population. This led to the establishment of “television universities” in 1979 to provide distant courses for the young people. Viewing television became an effective way of getting educated on agricultural technologies and general science.

Meanwhile, when China made a significant communication breakthrough by launching communication satellites in 1984 and 1986, a satellite television education system was established to increase 1.2 billion people’s access to higher education in 1986. The satellite television education programmes offered courses and lectures on agriculture, science and technology, and subsequently emerged as the principal means of learning for the people in mountainous regions and remote islands. For those mountainous or remote areas where it was difficult to build cables, television stations could be reached by satellite signals. TV receiving Only (TVRO) earth stations were build in small towns and villages to receive programmes broadcast over the then two satellite


5 Gao F. *The Challenge of Distance Education in China.* The American Journal of Distance Education, 54-58. 1991.
television channels. Meanwhile, the wired broadcasting reached its peak in the early 1980s, and a nationwide wired broadcasting system was established.

By 1980, China had put in place a wide loudspeaker network reaching 88.4 percent of all communes, 93 percent of the production brigades, 88 percent of the production teams and 65 percent of the individual peasant households. As such, the wireless and wired broadcasting systems put together enabled sound broadcasting to reach almost everybody in the country. To ensure that communication achieved its principal goal – development, the government of China gave autonomy to the regional and local broadcasting stations in their programming. Local stations were encouraged to produce programmes that met the needs of the local people; this was largely welcome by the population. This autonomy in production created a strong desire within the local stations to depend on their initiatives.

Newsapers and magazines remained an integral part of the mass communication process. By 1987, the number of newspapers and magazines increased to 791 and 5,248 up from 69 newspapers and 1,470 magazines respectively. The 1982 Chinese Journalism Yearbook reported that China had a total of 476 national, provincial, local and specialized newspapers; among them, 164 prefecture level, 52 county level and 38 science and technology newspapers contained agricultural news and information - with a total circulation of 9,260,000 copies. Newspapers and journals targeting peasants grew to 500 and the number of other rural tabloids in the countryside stood at 500 in 1987. Each of these papers had a circulation ranging from 1,000 to 100,000 copies per issue.

During the Mao era the role of the mass media in the country’s development was strongly ascertained. The efficacy with which government policies were spread through the media was visible. By developing new social attitudes and spreading agricultural knowledge, the mass media proved to be an effective means of enlightening, inspiring and educating the population. In the post Mao era, the print and the broadcast media serve as a primary source of information for people to access government policies and play an important role in motivating them to go out and achieve better living standards and seek educational opportunities.

To vividly illustrate the efficacy of the media in the development process of China, consider the “group planning of births” in the rural areas in the 1970s. This programme was extensively used in the national campaign of family planning. Even though the family planning had been established since the 1970s, the decision power was left with the villagers to decide how many babies the village should have each year. After the appealing results of this model were presented on radio and newspapers the idea was quickly adopted.

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Today’s Context: China’s mass media as agents of progress

In a bid to investigate the content of the mass media in China and how the content has contributed to the much envied social transformation in China and the general boom of the country’s economy, the author of this paper carried out a Media Monitoring Study as part of a semester-long course in media ethics in the Master’s programme in Global Business Journalism at the School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University in March and April, 2010. The study focused on China Daily – which is the most widely circulated English language newspaper in the P.R.C. The total population for the media monitoring study was all issues of China Daily published from March 1 to April 30, 2010. The period of March to April was chosen because China had recorded tremendous growth, ending the previous year – 2009 with a GDP of 8.7 percent. So the author deemed it necessary to find out if the media played a role in contributing towards the overall economic growth in the country. Secondly, the period under study saw the P.R.C. facing international pressures to allow the Yuan to appreciate; and thirdly, Barrack Obama, the President of the so-called hegemonic power – the United States had just visited the P.R.C. during which he reiterated the usual rhetoric of human rights, assuming the usual U.S. attitudes of always thinking that they can teach other nations how to run or pilot their destiny. The second and third instances cited above could among other things, distract the Chinese mass media from being agents of development; to reporting trends similar to American and other Western media – such as creating antagonism between leaders and their people, and between nations. A simple random sampling technique was applied in choosing the various issues of the paper. This gave every issue in the sampling frame an equal chance to be selected for analysis. A total of 16 issues of the newspaper were selected. These included issues of the following days, March 1, 3, 9, 18, 22, 25, 26, 27; April 2, 6, 8, 12, 14, 19, 20, and 21. The sample was drawn from a total of 25 issues published in the two months given that the newspaper is a daily (publishes everyday excluding Saturday and Sunday). The study focused only on the front page of the newspaper as the author deemed that the front page is the most important page of every newspaper because that is where the most important stories are fully run, highlighted or carried in brief. In instances whereby the stories were highlighted, and readers directed into a page of the newspaper, the story was fully read for analysis. The categories in the media monitoring study were the following: Economic issues, Social issues, Politics, and Environment; the category “others” was assigned to stories that could not fit in the other four categories. The categories were given concise definitions such that they were mutually exclusive and exhaustive. The study also considered the sources used in the stories. A total of 100 stories were content analyzed.

The findings showed that social issues dominated the coverage with 35 stories, economic issues followed with 25 stories, environmental issues had 15 stories, politics carried 15 stories, and the “others” category had 10 stories. Most significant in the media monitoring study was the content of the stories. The author found that stories pointed to a possible trade deficit in the month of March; the fact that more people (350 million) will move into cities in less than one generation; drought, land reclamation, saving energy, China’s growing green investment, tea harvest facing tough times, good medical reforms, desert storms that blanketed most of North China, ecology, killings in kindergarten and primary schools (with a focus on the solutions which the government and the police were bringing to prevent any further knife-stabbings) were issues addressed. The appreciation of the Yuan was also addressed wherein the stories made known the position of the
government of China in a tone that suggested that the government was working diligently to ensure that the country’s interest in general must be taken into account before making financial decisions. In politics, the stories focused among other things, on President Kazai’s visit to China with Afghanistan seeking lasting bilateral relations with the P.R.C.; and the Sino-US tensions caused by the foolhardiness on the part of the United States in trying to dictate a destiny for the P.R.C. Among issues carried in the “other” category was a story that reported that African gorillas are facing a bleak future. These were just some of the stories that appeared on the front page of China Daily.

China Daily from the findings of this media monitoring study mirrored the commitment of the Chinese mass media to remain part and parcel of the general transformation of the country. From the angles of the stories, it was clear that China Daily, just like other mass media in the country, stood as “agents” of progress. The stories are those that call for attention in issues that are primordial to the social, economic, and political development of the country, and not those that will distract the government from working diligently in meeting the needs of the nation and its people. Non-development or confrontational journalism like that practiced in the United States will look for angles and subjects that would only cause tension and relegate key issues in the life of the nation when it comes to development.

Meanwhile, it should be understood that the media monitoring study was not a full study of the mass media in China, but rather, the study served as a premise which the author, burning with the desire to demonstrate the strength of the Chinese mass media in the development process of the country, decided to briefly illustrate the position that the mass media in China are agents of development and foster development journalism for the progress and prosperity of the country and its people. Being the most widely circulated English national daily newspaper, China Daily was just the ideal choice for the brief media monitoring study. The author intends to pick up this trend and pursue a full PhD research on the role of the Chinese Mass media in the social transformation process of China.

Meanwhile, the growth in radio and television stations, cable television, newspapers and magazines in China continues to point to the importance which the government attaches on the mass media. There are about 3240 TV broadcasting stations in the country – 31 are provincial TV stations and close to 3000 are local TV stations while 209 are operated by China Central Television; and the people can tune to 673 radio stations1. In 2004, over 400 kinds of daily newspapers were published in China, their circulation reaching 80 million, the highest figure of any country in the world. In 2006, China was the largest market for daily newspapers, with 96.6 million copies sold daily while the United States had 53.3 million copies sold daily2.

The internet which arguably is becoming a new form of mass media is recording significant growth level in the Chinese society. With over 380 million internet users in China, the P.R.C. is the second largest internet population in the world. The Chinese netizens offer an important voice in issues concerning the development of the country; and the government holds the netizens in very high esteem. Almost all newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations in the country have an online version, and messages which can not be accessed otherwise, are gotten online, thus the communication circle is made complete.

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China – Reaping the fruits of development journalism

The mass media has helped the development process of the country by forming consensus and reinforcing the national identity among the population, especially as the mass media play an important role in boosting the morale of citizens in pursuit of better qualities and fostering a strong sense of patriotism.

Working hand-in-hand with the mass media has enabled the government of China to transform an economy that previously relied on agriculture, to one that manufactures and exports first class goods to countries like the United States, Canada, Latin America, Europe and Africa. The United States and Canada are among the largest trading partners of China.

As the mass media disseminated information on economic development, agricultural development, political development, education and literacy, employment and labor welfare, family planning, health, hygiene and medicine, housing, industrial, science and technological development, national integration, rural development, urban development, social change, telecom and transport development, cultural development, environmental protection, check between plan and achievement to the people; and as the population received education on all aspects of social and economic spheres through the mass media, lives were changed, the Chinese society transformed, and China successfully positioned itself in the world as a respectable nation – a country that can no longer be ignored by any person anywhere in the World.

In the year 2000, the number of people removed out of poverty in rural areas decreased from 250 million in 1978 to 30 million and the impoverishment rate dropped to 3 percent from 30.7 percent. It is estimated that close to 500 million people have completely been taken out of poverty as of date. Rogers wrote that not only were citizens well fed and clothed, but also an enviable public health and family planning system formed.

According to the United Nations Development Program, China experienced the fastest rate of overall economic growth in the last decades of the 20th Century, and it is among the few countries performing well overall on the indicators for the Millennium Development Goals set by the UNDP. Besides, peace and stability reigns in the P.R.C and the cultures of the Chinese society, together with the educational system are attracting more and more people all over the world. Every year, thousands of foreign nationals enter China to study the Chinese culture, Chinese language and other subjects. Americans, Europeans, Australians, New Zealanders, Africans and other Asians as well as people from the Middle East troop into China for studies, thanks to the transformation of the society brought forth by China’s pursuit for development journalism.


The P.R.C. is currently re-writing the history of the World, having overtaken Japan to become the second largest economy in the world after the United States. Associated Press reported recently that “it’s a resurgence that is changing everything from the global balance of military and financial power to the way in which cars are designed. China’s economic growth has also resulted to an increase in the luxury goods market, which is expected to top 14 million US dollars in the next five years.” The country has accomplished in twenty-five years what many developing nations have taken half a century or more to achieve. For the better part of the last two-and-a-half decades, China has had the fastest growing economy in the world, sustaining double-digit growth figures for much of the 1980s and ‘90s. Throughout the 1980s, China’s real gross domestic product (GDP) grew at an average annual rate of 10.2 percent. From 1990 to 1996, the average annual growth rate for real GDP was 12.3 percent, the highest rate of any country in the world for that period. China has also had the highest industrial rate – an amazing 17.3 percent average annual growth from 1990 and the second-highest growth in services – 9.6 percent per annum from 1990 to 1996 in the world. The P.R.C. is the highest lender to the United States while the United States is highest debtor to China. Almost every one in the world wants to be a friend of China. African countries are now turning their backs from the West, and seeking the hand of the P.R.C as they look forward to learn from the example of China. It is now very clear that if China sneezes the rest of the world will catch a cold. The world largely depends on China, not only for their markets, but also as a partner from whom their unique model of development stands out as an example to the world.

China’s example
The experience of the P.R.C in development journalism has won admiration from the outside world. Many communications scholars prescribe China’s example in development journalism as a model for emulation by other developing countries. India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore in Asia, while Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Peru in Latin America; and Nigeria, Cameroon, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa are emulating the experience of the P.R.C in development journalism.

Conclusion
Working with the mass media has enabled the government of China to completely transform the once under-developed Chinese society to one that is reverenced through out the world. The mass media has successfully contributed to changing lives, bringing social and economic growth as well as national integration in all parts of the country. Today, China has become the center of the world. No big humanitarian, economic, political or military decisions can be reached in the world without the opinion of China sought after. What China thinks in every international issue is becoming a determining factor in re-defining the destiny of the world. This change has been brought by the


commitment of the People’s Republic of China to work hand-in-hand with the mass media, while the media on its part remained focused on the much desired social transformation of the traditional Chinese society. China’s experience in development journalism is indeed a model to the rest of the world.

But unfortunately however, ignorance, and on the other hand, deliberate attempts to demonize the People’s Republic of China by some Western communication scholars and mass media blinded the rest of the world from seeing eye-to-eye with China in relation to the choice made by the country in working closely with the press. The West, especially the United States claims that the mass media in China is the property of the government and that no real influence in the life of the nation can come from the media in the P.R.C.

That the P.R.C. opted for constructive cooperation between the press and the government; and that both the government and the mass media opted for responsible exercise of press freedom are not reasons for any person anywhere in the world to claim that there is no press freedom in China. To claim that there is no press freedom in China is tantamount to denying that development journalism or development communication does not exist; and it will also mean that the mass media is not supposed to educate the public. Mass communication theories revolve around three major functions of the mass media and the effects of these functions on society. These functions are: to inform, to educate and to entertain. Opting for development journalism, the P.R.C decided to make use of all these three functions of the mass media. The mass media in China has been informing, educating and not only entertaining, but also analyzing facts to the citizens. This explains the social transformation which the Chinese mass media has brought to the Chinese society, making China, a giant that must be respected in the world.

For a development journalist, “good news is news”, and it is not only when “a man bites a dog” that is news, but also when “a dog bites a man”.

It is the position of this paper that the government of China is successfully standing as a great example to the rest of the world in achieving social transformation by opting for development journalism wherein the mass media are considered as partners in development and both the mass media and the government work together to ensure a vibrant economy, social growth and national integration.

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Reconsidering Media Displacement Effect:  
A New Typology for Multitasking Research

Ran Wei

Abstract: A global trend in new media developments is convergence, which allows the audience to view news, make phone calls, and access the Internet in a single media platform. This paper offers a critique of the long-standing media displacement effect research in the era of convergent media. The research is faulted for (1) assuming use of a given medium is exclusive and that use of one medium is at the expense of other media and (2) failing to consider rise of simultaneous use of media in audience. To advance the research concerning the relationship between new and existing media, a new typology of multitasking is proposed.

Key words: Convergence  media multitasking  media effects

1. Media Convergence and Problems in Media Displacement Research
A global trend in new media developments is convergence, which allows the audience to view news, make phone calls, and access the Internet in a single platform. As a result, access to media is becoming ubiquitous thanks to expanded coverage of wired and wireless telecommunication networks (airlines began offering satellite-based Internet services in 2008). With mobile devices such as laptops, mobile phones, Blackberries, and PDAs, people can seek news, e-mail, browse web sites, and play games anywhere anytime. The choice of a media outlet is unprecedented in the era of media convergence.

The rise of a new medium always affects existing media (Rosengren & Windahl, 1989). In mass communication literature, research on the relationship between new and traditional media is informed by a theoretical perspective known as media displacement (Kayany & Yelsma, 2000). Simply put, media displacement theory suggests that existing media are displaced by new media.

Empirically, a number of studies documented a displacement effect (Brown et al., 1974; Cramond, 1976; Leung & Wei, 1999; Windahl et al., 1986). That is, moderate or heavy use of a medium infringes upon the use of other media. Subsequent studies on the displacement effect of television use on other media suggest a reduction in the use of functionally similar mass media such as radio and cinema (Frank & Greenberg, 1980).

One aspect of displacement is the reduced time audience members spend with the original medium. “Time displacement effect” research, which frames the relationship between new and
traditional media as competitive, has a long history. It started in the 1940s when radio was the dominant mass medium. Lazarsfeld (1940) did the earliest displacement study and examined radio’s impact on newspapers. When television gained popularity over radio and newspapers, how television affected radio was the focus of displacement research in the 1940s and 1950s (Lasswell, 1948; Bogard, 1956; Belson, 1961).

As the popularity of the Internet and the World Wide Web has increased, a growing number of studies have examined the changing patterns of media use and assessed if, and how, the Internet and the Web displaced television and newspapers as a functional alternative (Stempel, Hargrove, & Bernt, 2000). For example, Kayany and Yelsma (2000) collected data from 185 persons in 84 households and reported that time spent in television viewing, newspaper reading, telephone usage, and family conversations was affected by online use. They concluded that functional displacement may occur when television is being gradually displaced by online media as the primary source of information.

However, mixed results have been found about the relationship between Internet use and use of traditional media. In fact, the displacement effect of the Internet on reading newspapers and watching television was less than conclusive (Bucy, Gantz, & Wang, 2007). Why?

There are two major problems with media displacement effects research in this era of convergence:

First, displacement effect research assumes that use of a given medium is exclusive and that use of one medium is at the expense of the other. This media competitive view may be valid in the era of the one-way, one-to-many paradigm of communication with very limited choice in content of only a few media outlets. However, this view is no longer useful to capture the trajectory of media landscape and audience media use patterns in our era of media convergence. Traditional media are converging with new, interactive media. In conceptualizing the relationship between old and new media, it no longer makes sense to pit the use of one medium against the other. For example, when people watch TV on the Internet (e.g., YouTube), which medium was displaced: TV or the Web? The answer is neither.

Second, displacement effect research takes a “winners take all” or “zero-sum game” approach. In the era of media convergence, this approach is problematic. People increasingly use more than one media at the same time as a way to cope with the explosive growth in media outlets. The term “media multitasking” is a common term in today’s vocabulary. Industry research consistently shows that more than half of media users in the United States reported using several media simultaneously.

2. Simultaneous Use of Media on the Rise

Media use is increasingly used simultaneously with other activities because of media convergence. Past research shows that youth frequently multitask with media. Pilotta and Shultz (2005) reported that simultaneous media use was as high as 40% to 65%. This phenomenon was described as “teen media juggling act” (Foehr, 2006).

The Gresearch’s (2010) 11th Simultaneous Media Survey in 2010 reported that simultaneous media consumption for online, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and direct mail was up anywhere from 1% to 35%, depending on the medium, as compared to the previous survey conducted in July 2007. To be specific,
- Top simultaneous media activities when reading a newspaper are watching television, listening to the radio and going online.
- Channel surfing remains the top regular activity engaged in during TV commercials, with 41.2% doing so
- 33.5% who talk with others in the room or by phone
- 30.2% who mentally tune out
- Eating remained the No. 1 activity people engage in while using media, followed by
  - doing housework
  - doing laundry
  - cooking
  - talking on phone

[Insert Figures 1-4 here.]

Therefore, to examine the impact of convergence on media use, research needs to go beyond the paradigms of the passive, single-function, and mechanical use of the media. As Pilott et al. (2004) argue, increasing simultaneous media exposure has undermined current media measurement systems, which view media use as unrelated activities.

3. Media Multitasking Reconsidered
To capture the rapidly changing patterns of convergent use — which are characteristically interactive, diverse, and multifunctional — the concept of media multitasking holds some promise to advance media displacement research.

Foehr (2006) defined media multitasking as engaging in more than one media activity over any specific half an hour. Other scholars (Jeong & Fishbein, 2006, 2007) defined it as an audience behavior that combines media use with another non-media activity. However, both definitions failed to conceptually differentiate non-media (such as talking and viewing TV) and media-related (such as viewing TV and reading newspapers) activities. To explicate the concept of media multitasking, we need a typology of multitasking.

As Figure 1 illustrates, along the dimensions of single-multitasking and activities that involve and that don’t involve media use, four types of media multitasking can be developed:
1. a single activity without the use of media (e.g., eating);
2. multitasking mixing media use with other non-media activities (e.g., watching TV and eating, or using the mobile phone while driving);
3. multitasking mixing the use of one medium with another (e.g., watching TV and surfing the Internet, or using the mobile phone to text while viewing TV); and
4. a single activity involving media use (e.g., watching TV, reading newspapers, or surfing the Internet).

[Insert Figure 5 about here.]

Whereas past media displacement effect research focused narrowly on Type 4, new research opportunities exist in Types 2 and 3. The new approach of media multitasking promises to advance
communication technology research because it emphasizes media use in terms of exposure, frequency, and attention. That is, the approach of media use needs to be changed from a passive, mechanical view to one that emphasizes active, participatory use.

The new approach will be broader in scope, emphasizing user experiences with convergent media, which include access, contact, perceptions, allocation of sensory resources, and emotions. At the same time, the new approach will also open up new avenues in methodology. For example, Website log files can be useful for multitasking research, and e-diaries can be an instrument of data collection.

References


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**Figure 1**: Media Multitasking_1
Figure 2: Media Multitasking

When you listen to the radio, do you simultaneously...

- Engage in other activities?
- Go online?
- Read the newspaper?
- Read the mail?
- Watch TV?
- Read magazines?

Source: Bigresearch SIMM 11 & SIMM 10

Figure 3. Complementary Use of Media

Frequency - Visiting Website About Television Show Being Watched

% Respondents Who Watch TV While Online

- All the time, 6.2%
- Frequently, 9.7%
- Occasionally, 27.0%
- Rarely, 32.7%
- Never, 24.4%

Chart 2 - Visit to websites about TV show being watched
Source: Burst Media Research, October 2007 n =1,144
Figure 4: Multitasking online by age groups and gender

Figure 5. A Proposed Typology of Media Multitasking

Chart 1 – Using other media or device while online at home
Source: Burst Media Research, October 2007 n = 2,723
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Analysis of Thai PM Abhisit’s Media Interviews: Lessons Learned for International Public Diplomacy while the Nation Is in Crisis

Suwichit (Sean) Chaidaroon

Abstract: Among several public relations tactics, media interview by the country’s leader is one common form of international public diplomacy. In this paper, a media interview episode of the Thai Prime Minister, Mr. Abhisit Vejjajivva, on the BBC HARDtalk program was analyzed. This interview was selected among his appearances on international media interviews while Thailand was in political crisis during 2010, particularly because he appeared to employ different strategies than other interviews he participated. The analysis focuses on two key aspects: 1) communication strategies to handle intense journalistic interviews; and 2) image restoration strategies to justify the government’s decision. Findings suggest that Prime Minister Abhisit used interaction control strategies to impede the anchor from asserting any counter arguments. At the same time provocation and transcendence were image restoration strategies employed to legitimize the Thai government’s action in controlling the situation. Discussion of findings in public diplomacy context is also provided.

Public diplomacy has been gaining research interests among international public relations scholars (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992; Wang, 2006). Due to the increasing importance of international relations, image building of a nation has been practiced by most countries to establish, maintain, and strengthen relationships with international stakeholders in normal situation. While a nation is in crisis, public diplomacy also serves as image restoration activities for the country to regain trust in the international arena (Peijuan, Ting, & Pang, 2009).

An appearance of any national leader in international media is certainly considered among major PR tactics in international public diplomacy. In this paper, a media interview of the Thai Prime Minister, Mr. Abhisit Vejjajiva, is analyzed. His appearance on BBC HARDtalk program is selected as a case for analysis as the interview took place while Thailand was in political crisis during 2009 and 2010 (Chaidaroon, 2009). The analysis focuses on two key aspects. First, the legitimizing strategies to gain international stakeholders’ acceptance of the Thai government’s as well as the image restoration strategies to restore the country’s reputation will be identified. Second, communication strategies to handle intense journalistic interviews by Prime Minister
Abhisit will be discussed.

This paper hopes to illustrate the importance of a country’s public diplomacy activities and to situate this area of research in international public relations based on this Thai case. Instead of focusing solely on national image building by running any PR campaign, literature on international public relations and public diplomacy needs to pay more attention to interviews and news coverage by international media. The paper first reviews and discusses the concept of public diplomacy in public relations literature. Then a description of the case and research method to study media interview of Prime Minister Abhisit is provided, followed by a presentation of its findings and discussion.

Public Diplomacy in Public Relations Literature

Public relations scholars have started discussing the importance of public diplomacy in the literature more than a decade ago when Signitzer and Coombs (1992) argued that both public relations and public diplomacy domains cover similar activities. These authors lamented that while most studies on international public relations focused on multinational companies doing business in various parts of the world, governments of all countries were also actors of international public relations activities. Signitzer and Coombs (1992) explained that both PR and public diplomacy practitioners aimed to achieve the same goals in exchanging information with stakeholders, reducing misconceptions, creating goodwill, and building an image. Zhang and Swartz (2009) also added that besides cultivation of image, promoting mutual understanding, and advocacy of national interests, public diplomacy should also aim to promote “Global Public Goods,” or issues that all nation states are facing such as global warming, AIDS/HIV, etc.

Governments from all countries engage in various public diplomacy activities ranging from setting up an organization for cultural and information exchange in other countries such as British Council (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992), organizing a high-profile, head-of-state visit (Wang & Chang, 2004), running a campaign or offering assistance when certain countries are in need such as when facing natural disaster (Zhang, 2006), organizing cultural exchanges, lobbying, advertising, setting up websites (Coombs & Holladay, 2010) and so forth. These communication activities serve the public diplomacy purposes well when a country is in normalcy. When a country is in crisis, however, international media would seek information from that particular government to inform international publics immediately.

Traditional form of public diplomacy tactics would not suffice in maintaining the national reputation which is the foundation of public diplomacy in the times of crisis (Wang, 2006). In order to employ appropriate public diplomacy tactics, two factors must be taken into consideration: valence and visibility (Manheim, 1994). First, a country needs to identify the valence of international media coverage of the issue, whether it is positive or negative. Second, the magnitude or coverage of the story must be assessed in terms of high or low visibility. With the advanced technology, media interviews by giant news agencies from various parts of the world on the same day when a country faces certain emergency issues that attracts international interests have become possible these days. This media interview can be considered a public diplomacy tactic and should be practiced based on the analysis of valence and visibility factors of the issue. Broadcast interviews have been considerably studied among linguistics and journalism scholars as the interactions during the interview both shape and constrain the content of news message (Hutchby, 2006). Yet not much as been done in academic literature to study how a country’s
representative deal with international media coverage while in crisis from a public diplomacy/public relations perspective.

**Thailand as a Context of the Present Study**

Among several countries facing crisis over the past two years, Thailand is probably one that has gained global interest due to the country’s sharp political divide. Within one year during 2008-2009, the country underwent administration of three governments led by four Prime Ministers. The pro and anti government demonstrators were seen all around Bangkok and upcountry. The major event happened in late November when the People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD), a group of yellow-shirted demonstrators who were against the ex Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and his proxies, occupied the country’s two principal airports to pressure Mr. Somchai Wongsawat, the Prime Minister at that time, to step down from his office. Then in April 2009, the opposing group of demonstrators wearing red shirts, the United front of Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD), protested against the government of Mr. Abhisit Vejjajiva so aggressively that the Asian Summit hosted in the country had to be cancelled (c.f. Chaidaroon, 2009).

In April 2010, the red-shirted demonstrators employed harsh tactics aiming to topple the government of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva. Several areas in Bangkok and upcountry, including central business districts, shopping malls, and some provincial city halls, were occupied and burned down. The country announced its curfew. Some violent measures were applied by the soldiers to bring the country back to normalcy and tense confrontation was unavoidable. As a result there were some fatalities and a lot of injuries. Even media in the country reported stories dividedly and to date the situation was a deep scar for all Thai people as they saw several burned places and buildings as well as ruins during the turmoil. It could be argued that Thailand received negative coverage (or valence) and was in a high visibility position among international media as a result of this political riot during this time. It is not the aim of this paper to justify the situation or take side with anyone. It is more interesting, however, to look at this situation from a public diplomacy/PR perspective and how the country, and specifically the government of Prime Minister Abhisit, coped with contradicting media report about the riot from various parts of the world.

The present Thai Prime Minister is usually known as a calm and patient speaker in front of the media while delivering his strong arguments at the same time. However, on April 28, he was interviewed on the BBC HARDtalk program. During this time, most international media questioned the use of force by the Thai government in containing the protest and seemed to hold unfavorable attitude against the Thai government in handling the situation forcefully resulting in deaths and injuries. Media from many countries attempted to pressure the Thai government to stop using harsh measure and considered the protesters the “underdog” in such a demonstration. Mr. Abhisit appeared to employ a different strategy during the interview in this particular episode leaving several people questioning why he was not as calm and patient as he has always been. This paper therefore analyzes this interview episode in order to answer the following two research questions:

**RQ1** What communication strategies were employed to handle intense journalistic interviews by Prime Minister Abhisit?

**RQ2** What legitimizing strategies to gain international stakeholders’ acceptance of the Thai government’s as well as the image restoration strategies to restore the country’s reputation were
employed by Prime Minister Abhisit During the BBC HARDTalk interview?

Method and Data
The interview of Prime Minister Abhisit on BBC HARDtalk was retrieved from youtube website and transcribed (see Appendix). The available interview clip was 5.25 minutes long. Given the goal of this study was to analyze the interview from a public relations/public diplomacy perspective, textual analysis of the interaction was selected as a research method. Unlike most news interview studies that focus on the linguistic elements on the transcript, this study did not employ the traditional conversational analysis approach. The researcher read through the transcript and conducted a line-by-line coding in order to extract communication strategies employed during the interview interaction (Silverman, 2000). In this sense, the transcript was treated as a source of data that provided an illustration of phenomenon of interest among the targeted interlocutors, rather than a linguistic corpus of an interview episode. Analysis also focused on implications for public relations/public diplomacy aspect of the Thai Prime Minister.

Findings
As expected, the interview consisted of several pressing questions from the anchor as she attempted to challenge Prime Minister Abhisit according to her role as an interrogative journalist. Based on the interview transcript, the interactions started with the anchor referring to the cause of the riot as she stated that Mr. Abhisit came to his position illegitimately without an election. This adversarial beginning served as a *formulation* (Heritage, 1985), a starting point of broadcast interview that aimed to induce contentions from the interviewee “for the benefit of the overhearing audience (Hutchby, 2006, p. 129).” The following paragraphs present findings of the analysis based on the two research questions.

RQ1 What communication strategies were employed to handle intense journalistic interviews by Prime Minister Abhisit?

During the first 1.45 minutes both the anchor and Mr. Abhisit demonstrated the use of interaction control by not allowing each other to assert their stances or counterargument to attack each other. On the one hand, it could be argued that the overlap in their speeches could have happened due to the technical delay of time zone while the interview was airing. Yet, it seemed that PM Abhisit, in particular, deliberately impeded the anchor from asserting counter points using two strategies. First, Mr. Abhisit did not give the anchor space to talk back and asked more questions even though she attempted to assert herself a few times.

Second, Prime Minister Abhisit justified that he came to his office through a legitimate political process as he explained in a long and technical explanation:

I…It’s up to parliamentarians. I have been elected 7 times as an MP, a few more times than Mr. Thaksin himself. And I have never actually missed a single election. I contested in all elections that were fair. We boycotted one election as did all the other parties. It was a hung parliament. They put together majority. But the party that had the biggest number of votes were involved in election fraud and therefore, they were punished by law, laws and rules that they were aware of when they actually decided to take part in the election. [BBC’s anchor attempted to interrupt]

And then they had two chances of forming governments. It was taking the country nowhere. So therefore, there was a new vote in parliament and the majority of the parliamentarians

93
decided to change, decided to elect me into power. And parliament has been functioning for
a month for a year and a half...[BBC’s anchor attempted to interrupt]
The opposition had their chance of submitting the censure motion and the motion was
defeated. [BBC’s anchor attempted to interrupt]
As illustrated above, the PM’s long and complicated answer discussed the political
process of the country. This fast-paced explanation seemed to serve two roles. First, it attacked the
argument that the government was not legitimately elected by the people. Second, it gave no room
for the anchor to probe any further on this same issue as the explanation was already long and
technical. It was not until the second minute when the anchor shifted to take control by asking a
new question. Nonetheless, she commented that that the preceding answer was long and
complicated. After this point, the interview went on with a smoother question-answer sequence
while both parties focused more on the actual arguments they put forth to the audience.
RQ2 What legitimizing strategies to gain international stakeholders’ acceptance of the Thai
government’s as well as the image restoration strategies to restore the country’s reputation were
employed by Prime Minister Abhisit During the BBC HARDtalk interview?
In the latter half of the interview, both parties appeared to challenge each other through
arguments and information rather than using interaction control to regulate the interview. Not
surprisingly, the anchor employed a couple journalistic interview tactics to challenge the Prime
Minister. First, negatively phrased questions were asked to Mr. Abhisit not only to pressure him to
answer in a tough time but probably also to create a dramatic element where viewers of this
broadcast program would feel the tension during the interview. For example, the anchor asked the
PM whether he considered himself an obstacle in solving the problem and whether or not the PM
would consider stepping down as she asked:
Abhisit Vejjajiva if you are truly believe that you yourself personally were an obstacle to
Thailand’s recuperating against some kind of stability, would you step down if you became
an obstacle and you are convinced by that fact. Would you?
Second, the anchor employed a neutralism strategy (Clayman, 1992) as she attempted to
challenge Mr. Abhisit while appearing neutral at the same time. This interviewer presented an
argument from another credible source, a Thai academician from Stanford University, that if Mr.
Abhisit persisted to stay in his position, more harm would be foreseen in the country. In other
words, this argument against the PM was presented to pressure the PM to respond in some
dramatic way while the anchor distance herself as the argument was initiated by another credible
source.
The Thai Prime Minister responded to those difficult questions and appeared to be calmer
in the second half of the interview. He took less control through the speed of his talk but became
more firm in his argument. Specifically, two image restoration strategies (Benoit, 1995) were
employed to legitimize the decision of the Thai government under his leadership in this situation.
First, Mr. Abhisit demonstrated the use of provocation strategy indirectly as he justified that the
government decided not to succumb to the demonstrators because it was not a democratic request.
Provocation is used to explain that the crisis-precipitating act was performed in response to
another wrongful act. This was evident as Mr. Abhisit responded to the anchor:
I don’t think it would be fair to the rest of the country if this government decides to give in
to groups that used threats, violence, intimidation and weapons. We are willing to listen to
legitimate grievances. We are willing to compromise but it has to be one that will serve the
interest of everybody not just a small group of people who resolved to illegal tactics.

The PM’s response was interesting in that it not only justified the use of force by the government to deal with the violent protesters given that the protesters had performed a wrongful and vicious act in the first place, but it also explained to the international audience at the same time that the demonstrators were not the *underdog* as they attempted to be seen. They were all equipped with weapons and used threats and intimidation as their tactics. Later in the interview, the PM described this movement as an element of terrorism.

Second, the use of transcendence strategy was evident as Mr. Abhisit directed the attention of the interviewer and audience to a higher value, which was democracy by law in this case. When the anchor asked what the PM planned to do next, he responded by saying that he hoped to get to the political solution where law was enforced to maintain stability and democracy in Thailand. Interestingly, while the protesters argued that the present government came from an undemocratic process, Mr. Abhisit justified his government’s decision hoping that the country would find a solution and achieve this higher democratic value. This response of the PM hinted that it was actually the act of protesters that was undemocratic and the government was trying to employed a democratic, not violence, to solve the situation.

Discussion and Conclusion
In most broadcast interview situations, the journalists would challenge the interviewee while attempting to appear neutral in their stance. At the same time, the interviewees would pursue their own agendas as they “go along with, evade or challenge the questions put to them by news interviewers (Hutchby, 2006, p. 122).” When an interview was conducted with a leader of any nation to promote the country’s image, one would probably expect a collaborative and smooth question-answer interactions between the two parties. In this case, it was evident that the anchor and the Thai PM tended to impose their agenda probably not to allow the other side to challenge them.

Prime Minister Abhisit seemed to employ a harsh approach to deal with the tough-minded journalist (Deibel & Roberts, 1976) to contain and control misunderstandings during crisis time. Gaining compliance seemed to be a primary goal rather than showing willingness to collaborate in setting agenda during the interview. Hence providing clear political information and a firm stance was more important than seeking international understanding and sympathy in this episode. Through interactional control as well as argumentative and technical claim, PM Abhisit tried to gain compliance from the news anchor in this situation.

What does this mean in public diplomacy? It is the international viewers of the program who are the primary recipients of their talks, not the anchor and PM Abhisit in this situation. This interview occurred in a crisis context where the PM represented only his government but also the whole country. Mr. Abhisit did not allow any evaluative or acknowledgement of his claim and appeared to be firm so that the international publics did not “go along” with the protesters as the protesters appear to use the underdog argument to win the international publics’ sympathy. The use of provocative and transcendence strategies was probably selected to control the misunderstandings and pressure from other countries that attempted to force the Thai government to succumb to the protestors. Up to this moment, the investigation is still going on to find out who initiated the violence but the government of Prime Minister Abhisit survived the censure debate after the riot. Pressure and the attempt to intervene by other international stakeholders seem to
subside. This was probably due to the public diplomacy effort of the government and the appearance of the country’s representative on international media after the crisis.

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Indian Media Framing of the Image of Muslims:
A Content Analysis of Indian English Language Newspapers

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Introduction
The media play an important role in the portrayal of image of any community, political leaders or people. Media are crucial in understanding any country, its people and communities. Navasky said that, “it is based largely on journalism that we make up our national mind” (Navasky cited in Zelizer & Allen, 2002, p.1). The images of race, caste, community and religion as perceived by the media have long been of interest to researchers as it signifies the attitude of majority communities towards smaller groups. No religious community has generated so much of heat and debate than the Muslims in the world. The basic purpose of this study is to understand how media has treated Muslims, the largest minority group in India. India, the largest democracy in the world has a free press. Media play a significant role in constructing the image of Muslims in India.

India is a secular republic where the citizens enjoy equal right to practice religion of their choice. The Indian society predominantly consists of Hindus and Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Buddhists are in a minority. Muslims all over the world has been viewed with suspicion owing to the rise in fundamentalism and terrorism. The negative image portrayed by the media in the past reinforced public’s stereotypical and prejudiced perception of the Muslims. India has 138 million Muslim population (2001 census) constituting 13.4 % of the total population which intriguingly is the combined population of Muslims in Pakistan and Bangladesh. The secular credentials of the Indian press were questioned after the ‘Babri Masjid’ incident on December 6, 1992 where attempts were made to demolish the 12th century mosque by right wing communal forces with the tacit consent of the government. The communal forces gained an upper hand alienating the Muslim community from the mainstream consequently damaging the secular fabric of the Indian society. During ‘Babri Masjid’ incident, the language press in the Hindi language speaking belt of India was divided on the basis of religion. Mob opinion was touted as public opinion in the press paving way for ‘mobocracy’ instead of democracy. Press lost an opportunity to massage the hurt and humiliation suffered by Muslims in India in the post ‘Babri Masjid’ era. The press instead coined labels like, ‘Muslim terrorist’, ‘Muslim Fundamentalist’ on the lines of ‘Sikh Terrorist’. After a decade, India’s secularism received a jolt in 2002 with the onslaught of Gujarat riots internationalizing the plight of Indian Muslim community. The Indian media having failed to deliver after Babri Masjid made endeavors to support the cause of Muslims after it witnessed
The study uses the concept of analytical technique of ‘framing’ in mass communication research. Framing has been defined as a process of ‘selecting some aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described’ (Entman, 1993, p.52). According to Gitlin (1980) media frame is “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual”. So many theses have been written about framing since 1970s deliberating on the process, factors and the structure of news framing. There are different connotations of framing. An exercise of power is framing says Reese (2001, p.10). It is even interpreted as a sort of media control over content giving scope for elite opinion. Frames are the ‘indicators of power’ or “the imprint of power” (Entman, 1993, p.55). Delving on the features of framing, Berenger (2004) says that “frames make messages memorable and understandable” (cited in King & Lester, 2005, p.626).

The question is why do journalists frame news stories even when they enjoy freedom of speech and expression? Bourdieu (1998) explained that “even in countries where there is freedom of expression, there is a form of invisible self-censorship. Journalists, writers, and producers realize what is permissible in media, and they pre-edit their own work to be consistent with those perceived norms—all in the interest of remaining employed in the media companies” (cited in Straubhaar & Larose, 2002, p.54). Media frame plays a vital role in presenting, shaping or destroying picture of an even or story says Herman and Chomsky (2000).

Literature review

Muslims and media have generated lot of interest among researchers across different countries. Post 9/11 has seen a spate of studies on media treatment of Muslim community contributing to the literature. Peter Manning says that the words “Arab” or “Muslim” were associated with terrorism in 89% of articles that appeared in Sydney’s two major newspapers in the post 9/11. He further states that by and large the Australian media’s coverage of Muslims and Arabs is tainted with a racism that portrays the community negatively.(www.theage.com.au Portrayal of Muslims ‘tainted by racism’ – Ian Munro- March 18,2006). In a study on national identity in Indian cinema, the researchers found that the diversity, multiplicity and secular constructions of Indian identity being systematically narrowed into monolithic portrayals of rich, Hindu, and patriarchal cultural identity. This cultural conflation further marginalizes and often erases the experiences of religious minorities and the poor who do not fit this constructed norm. (Dreaming the nation- Sheena Malhotra and Tavishi Alagh-South Asian Popular Culture Vol.2, No.1, April 2004, pp. 19-37). The Hindu image continues to be more visible in Indian cinema than that of minorities. Western media writers fail to see the perspective of ordinary Muslims as their vision is blurred by the rhetoric of
the fundamentalists is the common thesis of all those who have reflected on this issue.

Akeel Bilgrami laments that “Some writers – Christopher Hitchens, Salman Rushdie, Michael Ignatieff, Niall Ferguson, Thomas Friedman to name just a few – clearly have when they write articles in leading magazines and newspapers with titles such as ‘Of Course It’s About Islam’ or ‘Who Said It is Not About Religion’! These sleek writers with their fine phrases are buying into the very confusion of those whom they are opposing, and in doing so they are letting down the millions of ordinary Muslims all over the world who, in the end, are the only weapons the US and Europe has against its terrorist enemies” (Akeel Bilgrami – India’s Muslims Post – 9/11, Index on censorship, Vol. 35, Issue. 4, November 2006, pp 15-21).

Minorities in every culture are a disadvantaged lot and media treats them differently and not favourably as the language, culture and social system of majority gets reflected in the media. In non-Islamic countries, Muslims as a minority community have attracted national attention owing to global concerns with the subjects of Muslims and Islam in the post 9/11 era. “It would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that the whole debate on terrorism, Islam and Muslims are now being defined by American perceptions, articulations, and expectations” says Arun Mahizhnan.

The American media is blamed for biased and prejudiced coverage of Muslims and Islam in many books, studies and articles in both pre and post 9/11 period. The media analysis blames American media like CNN for lacking accuracy, objectivity, balance and facts in their coverage of Muslims. One such works is ‘Islamic peril: media and global violence’ by Karim M.Karim in which the author builds his thesis on media mistreatments of Islamic issues says "there is no centrally-organized journalistic conspiracy against Islam—the mechanics of the mass media in liberal political systems do not favour such overt orchestrations of information. [However,] dominant media discourses simultaneously highlight and downplay specific types of violence.” (Karim, 2000: 4).

Majority of theses on this subject criticize media inadequacies and unpreparedness in dealing with Muslims leading to bias and prejudice in their reporting. ‘The very lack of cultural depth among both conveyers and consumers of information through the mainstream media has meant the spread of the sense of having understood Islam without any inkling that their information may not have any objective basis (Arun Mahizhnan, Media Proliferation: Bane or boon, Media Asia, Vol. 29, No.3, 2002).

Mass media play a crucial role in building the image of any society. Noshima Saleem cites Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge call the media as the “first rate competitors for the number one position as international image former” (Cited by Noshima Saleem)(Galtung & Ruge, 1965). Traditionally, the people of India and Pakistan have grown in an environment where an ‘enemy image’ lurks in the minds of citizenry in both the countries. Partition of India in 1947, wars and constant border clashes between the two countries have led to distrust of Hindus and Muslims of each other. Saleem cites Boulding (1969) describe various factors that play an important role in the formulation of national image in international system…The national image is essentially a historical image—that is an image which extends through time, backward into a supposedly recorded or perhaps mythological past and forward into an imagined future. The more conscious a people is of its history, the stronger the national image is likely to be. Wars and hostilities among nations also formulate national images as do geographical space, past friendliness and alliances, and strengths and weaknesses of the nations in terms of military, economic and politic capacity
Traditionally, the people of India and Pakistan have grown in an environment where an ‘enemy image’ lurks in the minds of citizenry in both the countries. Partition of India in 1947, wars and constant border clashes between the two countries have led to distrust of Hindus and Muslims of each other. Some studies have blamed the text books and the education system in India and Pakistan for projecting ‘highly slanted and prejudiced view’ of minorities, particularly Muslims in India and Hindus in Pakistani. ‘These textbooks feed the minds and imagination of millions of children in both countries. They play a major role in generating hatred and animosity between the two countries’ (Zahid and Michelle 2007). In India, any anti-Pakistan cause finds ready adherents from those who were uprooted from Sindh and East Bengal and in Pakistan, any anti-India cause finds ready adherents from those uprooted from our Punjab, Haryana and Delhi (B.Raman 2006).

A study of public perception of Muslims reveals that Indian TV viewers perceived Pakistan negatively and held Pakistan and not Muslims responsible for terror attack on India in 26/11 terror attack. The Indian public made a clear distinction between Pakistan and Muslims though latter are perceived as sympathizers of Pakistan (Narayana Usharani ,2009)

**Methodology**

The method of content analysis was found appropriate for this study which aims to analyse the media framing of Muslim community in English language Indian press. Three well known English dailies of India were selected for this study. The newspapers are The Statesman, the Indian Express, The Hindu and The Times of India. The period of study is 2001-05, the post 9/11 period. The news reports and other editorial content pertaining to Muslims that were published from 2001 to 2005 in the post 9/11 period were selected. The 9/11 occurred in the year 2000. All the four chosen newspapers are national newspapers and leading dailies of India. They represent the cream of Indian press and are powerful enough to influence the policies of the government. The newspapers represent northern, southern and eastern Indian regions that command large circulation and are multi edition papers.

A list of stories was generated from Lexis-Nexis full database. The Lexis-Nexis strings that were used for search purposes were “Muslims” and “minorities”. The unit of analysis was the news report and other editorial content including editorials, articles and opinion stories. Two doctoral research scholars were trained in coding and were responsible for coding. Using Holsti’s formula (Holsti, 1969), an average inter-coder reliability score of 97% was obtained for the variables. The research scholars independently coded the three newspapers after the inter-coder reliability was established. The variables included a) spokespersons for the issue; b) number of muslim articles; c) overall tone of the coverage- pro-muslims, anti-muslims and neutral or informational; d) whether the issue was important for the welfare of the Muslim community – important, important to some extent, important to great extent and not important at all; e) what type of story got more coverage. The slant of the news reports was measured by coding the news reports under three categories of favourable, unfavourable and neutral.

**Research Questions:**

1. Is Indian English language press secular?
2. Does the English language press is content to toe the government line or works independently in issues concerning Muslims?
3. What is slant of news reports on Muslims in Indian English language newspapers?
4. What kind of sources the newspapers depended upon in reporting about Muslims?
5. Did the frames used for Muslims differ among different newspapers?
6. Did more stories frame Muslims unfavourably?
7. In what generic categories is news published and is there any variations in terms of generic categories?

Findings and Discussion
The content analysis revealed that the majority of news content consisted of news reports and most of them are speech reports and reports based on press releases. The large percentage of news reports reflected the pro-Muslim stance of the politicians of particular political party who have regarded the community as the vote bank. Though the reports show a pro-Muslim approach, the content are trivial in nature and rarely addressed the real problems, issues and policies in the context of its positive effect or negative effect on the Muslim community.

The news reports were coded according to three categories – favourable, unfavourable and neutral. A chi-square test was run to determine the significance in the coverage of news among different newspapers. The analysis shows that there is significant difference in the framing of news about Muslims among English newspapers. The results of this study indicate that the Indian mainstream media are rarely covering issues that are significant and relevant to the Muslim community. Quantitatively, the amount of space given to Muslim issues is hardly satisfactory. Mere reporting of speeches by politicians does not serve any concrete purpose. Instead more serious and meaningful articles, editorials and stories will ensure policy changes and help change the public attitudes and beliefs towards Muslims. The Indian media doesn’t seem to have a media policy on news treatment of Muslims as reports are trivial in nature.

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Web Journalism: The Changing Horizons of Journalism

Waheeda Sultana

Communication technology is being developed at a speed that defies comparison. The telegraph came first, then the telephone, the newspapers, radio, television, and most recently, the World Wide Web through the Internet. It took radio 38 years to reach 50 million people. It took television 13 years and personal computers 16 years. It took the internet only 4 years to reach 50 million people. Internet has opened the floodgates to Mass Communication from around the world.

Journalism is the gathering, preparing and communicating of news and current affairs. Traditionally this news was published in newspapers or magazines or broadcast via radio or television. However, from 1990s due to the development of the internet, a new medium the World Wide Web has emerged which has been changing the news industry scenario. Newspapers have begun to post their content online. Paper has virtually disappeared from the newsroom. Individual computer screens are replacing newsprint. Websites are replacing newspapers.

Web journalism is journalism as it is practiced online. The stories that are written specifically for the Web instead of newspaper, radio, television or magazine. It can include the use of text, photos, graphics, hypertext, audio and video to tell stories. Web /Online journalism encompasses a wide spectrum –from news to information, from investigative journalism to re-purposing content, from multimedia interactions to bullet lists, from intricate sites to the simple e-zine.

Web journalism helps one to read, hear and view the news, all at the same time! Those who cannot access television, radio and newspapers, keep themselves updated, courtesy the electronic edition of newspapers. It must always be kept in mind that news is read from a newspaper, heard over radio and viewed on electronic media. But with web journalism we can read, hear and view news, all at the same time.

Publishers worldwide are realizing the importance of Internet as a new medium of disseminating news instantly to the audience across the globe. In the last few years or so, the online media scene has virtually exploded and are reaching new heights with every major news event happening. Practically every major newspaper has some form of online product.

Chicago Online was the first newspaper launched by the Chicago Tribune in the United States in May 1992. In 1994, the electronic Telegraph launched the UK's first newspaper website, with the aim of exploring this new medium. In 1997, BBC Online started a full service internet site and in less than a year 140,000 page of content and 61,000 pages of news were available to the public.

The Hindu was the first Indian newspaper to launch an Internet edition, in 1995. By 1998 there
were at least 48 newspapers in India that had their Internet editions. By 2006 almost all major
dailies and most of the established news magazines, radio and television channels of India have
their net edition.

Today millions of people are turning to the internet for news. At the touch of a button online
news is available everywhere from the New York Times on the web to online versions of
Jerusalem Post and The Times of India. One does not have to wait for the next television
bulletin or for the newspaper next morning. All one has to do is to log onto the net and get the
latest news, views and much more including an opportunity to comment on it and make his or her
views known to others.

Content
The internet and World Wide Web have been a significant part of journalism by making its content
available online. The online newspaper has all the ingredients of the print version like news
stories, features, articles, cartoons, photographs, crosswords and other visual material. Despite this
an online publication looks totally different from its print counterpart. What is normally done is
when printed edition is ready, all important news stories and other editorial content is ‘ported’ on
to the internet edition. This is known as Shovel ware (Publishing stories from one media, usually
a print newspaper, in another, usually a website, without substantially altering the content).
Anyone going to the site is able to access all the information that is in the print edition. For those
who are unable to get the printed copy the same day or get the dak editions, the internet can
provide all the news that is contained in the late city editions. Nowadays media companies are
creating news sites rather than shoveling newspaper content online

Most news websites are free to their users — one notable exception being the Wall Street
Journal website, for which a subscription is required to view its contents — but some outlets, such
as the New York Times website, offer current news for free but archived reports and access to
opinion columnists and other non-news sections for a periodic fee.

Traditional VS Online
Web news has some advantages over paper. Contents can be searchable, they can be updated
frequently, and they can link to sites outside their own. Web news is interactive, with instant
e-mail feedback, online chat rooms, or online interviews. For e.g. Washington Post.com offers
several hours of live chat and other programs featuring Post reporter. The release of special
prosecutor Kenneth Starr’s report on Clinton-Lewinsky issue marked a ‘defining movement’ for
the web. Many newspapers elected to print short excerpts with a notation that their web sites
carried the full text.

Traditional media organizations are quick to criticize Internet journalism and to blame the ills of
the profession- valuing speed over accuracy, sensationalism, and arrogance-on web journalists
operating without traditional editing and control. And in truth web journalists say that the constant
deadlines spur them to quick decision making that may lead to inaccuracy.

Online journalist
For generations reporters have done their job carrying nothing more complicated than a pad of
paper and a pencil, they could go to the scene of the crime, the mayor’s press conference and the
football game. They’d talk to witnesses and participants scribble some notes and then head back to
the office to pound out the story in time for deadline. Today, reporters in the field are using laptop computers, satellite telephones, wireless internet connections, geographic positioning systems and digital cameras. They will have to become more proficient not just with words, but with different mediums. They will report a story, write it, edit it for pace, style and accuracy. When all is done they will produce the story for video, serving as broadcaster or anchor. They may even do a podcast for those who prefer listening to reading and watching.

The online journalist has to be an efficient reporter, an excellent browser, but above all, capable of identifying where the news is and able to verify information working under the pressure of immediacy, knowing how to arrange information in the order of importance, while using the multimedia tools. It is not necessary being an expert in computing, but must be a good planner, and understand the features of new media. He has to think about a screen and not about paper, recognizing his audience and their aim.

**COMPUTER ASSISTED REPORTING**

The 1990s also saw the computer’s expanded use in news gathering and reporting events and issues comprehensively to viewers and readers. Computer assisted reporting can be defined as the use of computer technology to gather and analyze information for news articles include the use of the internet, spread sheets, and databases. News organizations have used computer assisted reporting to obtain stories about agriculture, business, child welfare, crime, education, the environment, health care, safety and the justice system to name a few general areas the opportunities are endless. And the stories often attract readers and viewers. The internet saves the journalist time and news organizations money. With the internet, reporters can find diverse voices and up-to-date information quickly and at their fingertips. It enables the reporters to write more stories and better stories. Initially, only investigative reporter’s at large newspaper organizations practiced CAR because it involved more computer and database skills than most journalists possessed. As journalists gained better computer skills and governments put database online, CAR use increased.

**Length restrictions**

Sometimes a reporter or editor cuts a colorful quote or two to make room for background material, because a journalist must always assume that some readers come to the story without any knowledge of it. But all the readers who have been following the story every day miss out on whatever had to be cut. They skip the rehash. They may wish there were more new material. Think about maps and graphics that a newspaper runs only once. Many of them have clear connections to subsequent stories, but only occasionally can a repeat appearance be justified, especially now when newsprint costs are making publishers call for smaller papers -- lower page counts. In an electronic world the newshole is nearly infinite. There is no newsprint expenses, no dead trees. And nothing need ever disappear. The whole system is a giant morgue (journalists' jargon for archives).

**ONLINE AS PUBLISHING MEDIUM**

The publication processes of the ‘old’ media are quite complex. Publishing a high-volume daily newspaper is an intricate business requiring the synchronization of many different activities by a
large range of people. However, as information dissemination tool, it is still quite crude. Even if the paper runs to several editions, when it is done, it is done and will not be done again for another twenty-four hours.

The daily newspaper may have dramatic headlines and dynamic content, but is not dynamic as an entity. It has a relatively static relationship with its reader. Publishing online can both open new avenues in information dissemination and build a more dynamic relationship with the reader.

**Web Journalism - Characteristics**

Web journalism has some similarities to the mediums of print, radio and television. It still involves the communicating of news and current affairs and it still retains the journalistic values of other forms of journalism. But the medium also has some unique differences. The distinguishing features of web journalism are:

**IMMEDICACY**

Immediacy is a big factor in online journalism, but it is not simple. On the web, there is the potential to update your news, minute by minute, to give the latest news. A single news site can post dozens of different updates on stories every few minutes. It makes online newspaper an ideal medium for disseminating breaking news and events as they happen in real time. With practically no human intervention, Web sites can use automated cameras to provide constant updates on traffic conditions and the same function with weather, a content area that broadcasters around the country list among their sites’ most popular features. Sites with "Net Cams," robot cameras that automatically project current images including city skylines, weather conditions or highway traffic onto the Web, are also popular.

**MULTIMEDIA**

Multimedia refers to the integration of multiple media forms, including text, music, spoken words, video, illustrated graphics, and still photographs, to communicate unified messages that, ideally at least are also interactive. When presented using hypertext links, digital multimedia becomes ‘hypermedia’. Multimedia elements are present on many newspaper Web sites, especially those that use Macromedia Flash software to generate low-band-width animation, video, and sound along with explanatory text. CD-ROMs like Guinness Encyclopedia are also crowded with multimedia elements.

**Audio files**

Internet technology allows you to include audio clips as adjuncts to written articles so that the viewer who's interested, and whose computer is equipped with the right software and hardware (a soundboard and loudspeakers), can click on a button or icon to download and play the clip but audio files can take time to download.

**Video files**

Many think that the future of the Web revolves around moving pictures. Video takes up too much space in the "digital pipeline" to move quickly and efficiently to the end-user. In limited circumstances, video-transmission software like Real Video and NetShow are making moving
pictures usable on the Net, but usually only in short, well-selected segments.

**Hypertextuality**
The most exciting feature of online journalism is hypertextuality. In hypertext, words, phrases and graphic objects on the computer screen are highlighted in some way to let the reader know that he or she can get more information related to the given word or phrase. But the extra material does not appear unless the reader asks for it. The usual method is to click with a mouse on the highlighted word. Then a window filled with new text pops up on the screen. Hypertext is found all over the World Wide Web. In addition to background information or further explanation about the word or phrase, a window can contain the previous day's story or a completely separate article. A newspaper could run a story about, for example, lack of funding for school repairs in its area. It might contain a news piece and several related features or fact files. The online version of the paper could offer all of that, but also link the reader to the web sites for the local education authority, the relevant government department, the school’s inspectorate, local pressure groups, teacher’s union’s, the head teacher’s association, political parties etc.

In a science story, for example, the link could lead to the article in the journal Nature that was the basis for the news story. A report on harsh weather that's expected in your area, for example, could contain a reference to "tornadoes." The interested reader could click on that term and jump almost instantly to another Web page giving tips on what to do when a tornado strikes.

**INTERACTIVITY**
"Interactivity" is the buzzword most commonly associated with the Internet. It is what makes the Internet different from standard broadcast journalism as well as from print and any other form of mass communication that has come before the Net. With Web technology, viewers, listeners and readers can communicate with each other in real time. Many but interactive forums are popping up in more and more Internet sites.

The interactivity made possible by the Net allows you to come closest to the communicator's ideal of addressing everyone individually. All of a sudden, your visitors can ask you questions register their opinions and take part in the much-discussed but rarely implemented concept of an electronic town meeting. In addition, when you make the Web equivalent of a typographical or factual error, they can and will let you know about it, quickly.

**Newsgroups**
Newsgroups also known as Usenet is another popular way to take part in discussions on the internet. Newsgroup messages are posted publicly, available for anyone to read and respond to. The people who read newsgroup messages often are knowledgeable in their topic, and they are likely to know each others who are experts or otherwise experienced. The topics range from sports, cars, investing, teen problems and other issues.

The groups can be either "moderated," where a person or group decides which postings will become part of the discussion, or "unmoderated," where everything posted is included in the discussion.

To participate in a newsgroup, you must subscribe to it. It typically doesn't cost anything, but some groups can be hard to get into unless you know people in the group. Nearly all newsgroups are found on Usenet, which is a collection of servers around the world. Because of the global
spectrum of newsgroups, they make up largest bulletin board system (BBS) in the world.

**Newspaper Archives**

The cliché “old news is no news” is totally not true in this information age as publishers are putting up their database of past articles- as an added bonus for the readers. In the past, the newspaper library was called the ‘morgue’, a paper’s reporters had to dig through the files of old newspaper clippings that were catalogued only under general terms such as ‘crimes-murder’ or ‘education’. Much time was spent culling through off-target clips in order to find a single fact. The new computerized story archives, on the other hand, helped journalists go quickly to the most relevant stories, thus speeding research and improving its quality. Most of the online newspapers provide access to archives on their websites. The archives enable the audience to access information from the earlier issues. The archives go back to a number of months and even years. The New York Times became the first newspaper to digitize its entire archive dating back to 1851. The Indian Express archives are available from May 1, 1997. This includes archives for new Sunday supplement Express Eye beginning March 24; 2002. The Hindu archive is available from 1st January, 2000 onwards.

A significant difference between the potential of the newspaper archive and web –based resource is- first the web-based archive can be much richer with audio, video, pictures, charts and data to compliment the text. Second the scale of web archived material can be impressive. The third difference, namely the amount of information being accessed, which is the real eye-opener. Web –based archive is a living entity, an essential element of a site’s content provision. It can complement current content and enhance interactivity and personalization of information. It also shows that a site can satisfy a broader range of user demands if it organizes its archive effectively.

Archives are particularly effective for news web sites. As they mature, they build into a useful resource of material which is both archived and, equally important searchable. This can provide an important context to current reportage on the site as well as research resource in its own right.

**Commercial databases**

One of the first benefits reporters got from the computer age was the creation of searchable databases of news stories from their own and other papers, large text databases, are compiled by companies such as Lexis/Nexis and Dialog. These commercial services let fee paying journalists search for stories and other information across hundreds of publications and specialty databases.

**Non-linear construction**

Most media such as books, newspapers, magazines and even television are in linear format. Linear means that the information is given or presented in a set order and the person reading a newspaper or watching a particular TV station has no control over what is being presented. However, he or she can choose to read a different story or use the remote to flip to a different station. For example Radio is a linear medium. The audience is fed the content in a line. Interview is followed by presenter, then weather report, traffic news, music news etc. When a listener hears a news bulletin, he or she cannot say ‘I will have item two, five and six, but I don’t want the rest. In reality, listeners will tune in and out mentally, but they have little control, other than changing to a different station or switching off completely.
The web is based on non-linear consumption. It gives the user a chance to, with the click of a mouse, jump to different sections of stories without having to read the whole thing. Users are able to go wherever they want and whenever they want without having to wait for something to be presented to them.

Another way the web is nonlinear is through hyperlinks or just plain links. Many sites have set up links that are often blue-colored underlined words. And when you click on them they take you to another page that gives more information on the subject, word, topic or picture you just clicked on.

**FLEXIBLE DELIVERY FORMATS**
A single online news provider can take one piece of information and put it on a web news page, include it in a searchable database of information or send it to a mobile phone display screen. How to ‘repurpose’ content to harness this flexibility of online delivery is pre-occupying many news organizations at present. The economics of re-purposing are very attractive. Gathering the information, particularly in news, is often the expensive part. Once you have the information, it makes sense to get it to as many people and in many ways as possible.

**ACCESS**
Today, with easy access to the World Wide Web eliminating the financial burdens of printing and distribution, more and more new publishers are able to enter the industry without ever putting out a printed issue.

Almost everyone has access to the Net through a telephone line or USB port. Other connections exist, such as satellites, fibre optics and cable television, but for now basic telephone company infrastructure dominates. When you dial into the Net through a telephone-based service, you're actually sending and receiving information through a maze of cables and relays, much as when you call home on your telephone. The only practical difference between a phone call and an Internet connection is the tool you're using to communicate--a computer.

**ONLINE RESEARCH**
The development of the internet and particularly the invention of the World Wide Web, has led to an incredible profusion of resources now widely used by journalists. In the decades past, it might have been enough for a reporter to research a story just by reading through yellowed news clippings from the newspaper archives. But the journalists of the 21st century will be expected to use the internet and commercial database archives for research and reporting. There are literally hundreds of millions of pages of information on the internet World Wide Web alone, not to mention the vast collection of documents gathered by commercial database vendors. Effectively searching this huge and rapidly growing information skill that go beyond the old days, when all a reporter had to do was to send a note to the newspaper library saying, “Give me the clip files on the mayor”.

**GLOBAL REACH**
All major news organizations deal in world news. They attempt however superficially, to have a global perspective, either in their world news section or integrated within their main news agenda and programmes. Yet no popular medium can match the Internet for global reach, a fact that has
implications for both the news agenda and newsgathering capabilities of online news providers. Mindful of their global audience, some news sites make sure world news is on the front page of their site each day. This simple act has forced many news organizations and the journalists within them to re-evaluate their news agendas. Global reach is the most automatic of the distinctive strengths online.

**Push and Pull technology**

While most information is still "pulled" from the Internet, more kinds of data can now be pushed to users' systems. Push refers to a system in which data is "pushed" to a user's device rather than "pulled" by the user. In other words, the data transfer is initiated by the server rather than the client. Push technology can be used to send news data, stock updates, and other information from the Internet to a user's computer. It is also used to send text messages via SMS to people's cell phones. Push e-mail allows users to receive e-mail messages without having to check their e-mail manually. This means new messages appear on the client's device as soon as they are received by the server. However, in order to receive pushed messages, both the mail server and the user's e-mail client must support push technology.

**Writing for the Web**

Writing effective text for the Web is more than just stringing words together hoping for the best. It goes beyond just conveying information. Whether you're writing an editorial, news item or feature article, the text has to capture the interest of the users and members by pulling them into the content and making them want to register or return.

Skimming instead of reading is a fact of the Web and has been confirmed by countless usability studies. Web writers have to acknowledge this fact and write for scannability.

- Be brief and to the point by Cutting every word that doesn't contribute
- Use present or present perfect tense, if possible. The web is known for its immediacy so keep your text fresh.
- The information must be organized well to ensure ease of navigation and usability. Highlight the information which your visitors would find interesting and not that which you consider important.
- Start with a punchy, attention-grabbing title. Don't use capitals in the title of your article. keep the use of capitals to a minimum and titles as short and as snappy as possible
- Try and keep paragraphs of the story quite short. A large block of text on a page can be hard to read so don't be afraid to break it up into smaller pieces to make it more readable.
- Text alone is a relatively boring medium for presenting your information. There are many means by which you can attract readers by using colour schemes for a Web site. By adding a photograph, perhaps of a speaker, building, or book relevant to your story. Make sure there is strong contrast between the background and foreground text or graphics

**Conclusion**

With increased use of computers and broadband, web journalism has grown by leaps and bounds. Those who cannot access television, radio and newspapers, keep themselves updated through the web-editions of newspapers. With increase in mobile services, which provides connectivity to the
Internet through GPRS, the role of web journalism has become significant. Although the country has to overcome the barriers posed by inadequate and poor quality power, high rentals associated with broadband services, the low-cost computers have supported the dissemination of Internet-based news. A laptop is now cheaper than a desktop!

Fortunately the print media has kept pace with the changing technology by starting web editions despite the slow internet take off in the country. Today most of the newspapers have their web editions. The web versions not only complement the print version with in-depth information but also make them lively with its multimedia features. It has transformed the online newspapers to smart and lively creatures. These developments have led some media experts to predict that the printed newspaper will give way to fully electronic information services in the early decades of the 21st century. But whatever it’s medium—electronic or print—the newspaper will likely remain an important feature in modern society.

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Media Evaluation and Interpersonal Communication Pattern: Testing Cognitive Mediation Model of Beijing audience

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Abstract Testing the cognitive mediation model in China, this paper extended the effort of constructing complex models of media effects by focusing on the role of personal characteristics, information processing and response of media in Chinese context. Face-to-face interviews of a probability sample of 1,000 Beijing residents in 2007 provided first-hand data for analyses. Results supported the cognitive mediation model mostly, while distinctive founding that beyond comprehension is also found in Chinese context. We found that interpersonal communication pattern, political interest and Chinese audience’s news processing skills are multi-dimensional concepts and their theoretical connections are non-trivial.

Key words: cognitive mediation model, interpersonal communication pattern, information processing, mediation function, Chinese audience

Based on “uses and gratification theory” and ‘social cognition theory’, the cognitive mediation model that developed by Eveland and other scholars in recent years came into the picture. It is an integrated model of learning from media that includes both motivational variables and information processing (Eveland, Shah& Kwak, 2003). This “cognitive mediation model” incorporates various predictors of learning identified over the past several decades and arranges them in a causal sequence derived from experimental research on learning (Eveland, 1997).

Although studies to date have supported the cognitive mediation model (e.g., Eveland, 2001, 2002), the data have suffered from limitations of monotonic variables and single study context. This study is designed to advance the research on the cognitive mediation model by diminishing the limitations of past research and replicating findings in the context of Beijing, China before 2008 Olympics.

We conducted a series of face-to-face interview in Beijing to examine the cognitive mediation model. Specifically, we concern about three research questions: (a) how motivations (personal characteristics in this paper) such as political interest and interpersonal communication pattern influence information processing (news attention and news processing), (b) how information processing influences response from audience such as political learning and media evaluation, and (c) how motivations influence response only indirectly through information processing in China. Our research results support the cognitive mediation model, and based on the
results our study can provide a compelling psychological explanation for political learning. What’s more, the status-quo of Chinese audience’s political literacy and the interesting complex mediator function are also explored.

**Study Context: Media system and audience in China**

Mass media operate in social systems (Guo & Li, forthcoming). As the development of society, Chinese audience is also experiencing a transition for the transformation of communication and media system along with the social transition since 1980s. Previous research on China’s media reform has produced an amalgam of insights and perspectives, in terms of trends of development (e.g., Zhao, 2000; Guo, 1998) and professional operations (e.g., Lu & Pan, 2002; Chen, Zhu & Wu, 1998; Pan, 1997; Zhu & He, 2002; Chan, Lee, & Pan, 2006). which in turn has a significant bearing on media function perceptions.

As the society economy increasingly close to market economy, audience can choose their fond medium and content by themselves. Large circulation and audience rating brings more attention from audience and commercial interests depend on which most media can survive. For this reason “public interest” are increasingly valued than ever before. In this period audience have more rights to request and say “no” to a medium that doesn’t fulfill their needs and gratifications. Media which can represent public interest and fulfill audience’s request will be welcomed and may have a better circulation.

As an outcome of media use, media evaluation as well as media image according to audience is also an indicator of media effect. But the normative or perceived media functions are rarely paid serious attention in political communication research (Guo & Li, forthcoming). Except the knowledge gain from media, the evaluation or image of media from Chinese audience is another kind of response to media that need to be particularly valued by professionals. What do they evaluate today’s Chinese media and how about the Chinese media image in Chinese audience is what we care about. This article is trying to put media evaluation together with political knowledge into the dynamic cognitive mediation model and examine its interplay with other variables of this model.

Another noticeable point is Chinese audience’s particular information processing. The movement away from economic totalitarianism toward financial autonomy has invariably led to a facelift of media content. Attention to public needs, selected expose of corruption, and the increase of the sheer amount of coverage on ordinary people and everyday life have forged a new brand of equilibrium in media content (e.g., Pan, 1997; He, 1998; He, 2000; Zhao, 2001; Zhao, 2008; Guo & Li, forthcoming). Although the degree of freedom is in advance, the content on media especially for news is still under control. In China, where mass media are canonized as apparatus, official definitions of media public service naturally tilt toward domination rather than the dominated. This kind of manipulation is known well by most Chinese audience, especially for those who has a better education. Thus they have developed a particular kind of news processing strategies in this context which manifested as skepticism, distrust and critique. As the restriction is more or less looser nowadays, we suppose there is a difference between elder audience and younger ones, and it will be examined in this study.

**Cognitive Mediation Model**

*Personal characteristics as motivations (O1) and information processing (O2)*

Since the emerging of uses and gratification theory (Katz, 1959; Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973; Severin and Tankard, 1997), more and more scholars insist that people are not “helpless victims” of the powerful media, but using media to fulfill their various
needs. These needs serve as motivations for using media. Motivations are related to needs, preferences, and gratifications. Needs and preferences are conceptualization of underlying structures from which the motivations emerge; gratifications are what satisfy the motivations (Schneider, 2006). This is intelligible, for politicians or governors should be knowledgeable in public affairs for their job demand, they must pay lots of attention to political news and information. Also, people who prefer politics to others such as entertainment and sports ought to keep an eye on political news and public affairs. These kinds of people notice political information for their needs and preference, which forms the basis of their motivations. Thus we can assume that needs (no matter for what reason), interests are definitely motivations for audience to access media. The motivations used in previous studies contains surveillance (Eveland, 2001; Eveland, 2002; Eveland, Shah & Kwak, 2003), anticipated communication (Eveland, 2004) and vote guidance (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2004).

Since people use media for various purposes, the motivations should be multitudinous. In Patterson’s (1994) view, political interest not only influences audience’s media use habit, but also influences audience’s news attention. In a survey conducted in Foshan (a city of Guangzhou Province in China), 2006 that concerned about the relationship between political cognition, perceived media functions, media use habits and media literacy, Guo, Zhou and Lu (2006) found that political interest is positively related to media use, strongest for TV news attention. And according to Hyman and Sheatsley (1958), audience who “know-nothing” about politics are normally lack of political interest. To sum up, political interest can facilitate audience activity about media use, and it may be conductive to knowledge gain at the same time.

Robinson and Levy (1986) demonstrated discussion about the news was a significant predictor of news comprehension. And lots of studies confirm the presence of such a relationship between discussion of news or politics and political knowledge (Bennett, Flickinger, & Rhine, 2000; Lenart, 1994; Scheufele, 2000, 2002) According to Eveland (2004), anticipated communication motivation (showed as political discussion) even exhibit main effects independent from the media content. He explained that social interaction about a topic might transfer information to the individual without direct media exposure (Eveland, 2004). And a political learning process from interpersonal political discussion to political knowledge through elaboration on news content was explored and supported in his study. Therefore we can also infer interpersonal communication serves people to gain information no matter by directly transfer information to a target or by activate one to access media for further anticipated communication.

Based on published studies, we can assume that political interest and interpersonal communication also serves audience as kinds of motivations. And they not only activate audience activity about media, but also have influence on the media effect such as knowledge of news content. As we proposed previously, that political interest is an important predictor of information processing for the political preference as a kind of motivation facilitates one to pay attention to news. Accordingly audience of more political interest may also process news cognitively than those not.

As previous proposition, the interpersonal communication about politics may activate news attention, processing and even the knowledge. According to an empirical research conducted in 2007, Zhou and Lu found that the information processing strategies of “open” type audience exceed the “closed” type audience. And it was proved that the level of audience’s active information processing strategies is influenced by his/her habit of interacting with others.
Audiences with an open attitude in the interpersonal communication are more likely to make friends with different backgrounds, to argue with different opinions, and to reflect during discussion and reading. And as the “open” audience has a high acceptance of different information, he/she may also be keen to get information from different sources - such as news in different medium. Thus an “open” audience may also show a high level in news attention than the “closed” one.

As “different motivations can play different roles in models of media effects” (Schneider, 2006), that the “open” type audience of interpersonal communication pattern probably would have more “communicatory utility” motivation for they are keen to engage in interpersonal discussion, as a result they are more likely to utilize information processing during accessing media. On the contrast the “closed” type audience of interpersonal communication pattern may have less “communicatory utility” motivation and be passive to process information. Therefore, it would be reasonable to predict that interpersonal communication pattern has influence on news attention and news processing skills.

Besides, we also assume a causal relationship between interpersonal communication and political interest. As people’s interpersonal communication pattern may forms in early stage, it may influence on one’s political interest. For example, a child may be influenced by his/her parent or friend who is interested in politics during their daily conversation, so that his/her political interest increased. But if a child is very “closed” in the interpersonal communication and lack of political interest at the same time, he/she dislikes talking with people of different backgrounds/interests, so that he/she has fewer chances to be influenced by others to fall in love with politics.

Information processing (O2) and response (R)

Previous studies have stated that information process directly impact on response such as political knowledge as a kind of media effect (Eveland, 2001; Eveland, 2002; Eveland, 2004; Eveland, Shah & Kwak, 2003). In this study we also suppose and expect a positive relation between information processing and response from audience. As mentioned in previous section, that in this study we contains both political knowledge and media evaluation as the response in cognitive mediation model.

Schneider (2006) stated that news attention goes beyond news exposure (e.g., Chaffee & Schleuder, 1986; McLeod & McDonald, 1985) to indicate the amount of mental focus given to the news or even to particular types of stories (such as campaign stories) in the news. It has been proved by Eveland (2002) that when media exposure is included in the model as a control variable, it does not reduce the main effect of the motivation (mediated by cognitive processing). Elaboration similar with “reflective integration” (e.g., Perse, 1990a) moves one step beyond attention to represent the use of news information to make cognitive connections to past experience and prior knowledge and to derive new implications from news content.

Scholars have used news attention and news elaboration as indicators of information processing and supported the direct influence of information processing on response (knowledge) (Eveland, 2001; Eveland, Shah & Kwak, 2003; Eveland, 2004; Schneider, 2006). For most of them conducted the research in election context, the attention and memory of information is crucial to the vote. Since this study is conducted in Chinese context, where a distinct political system is executed, we need to adjust measures to local conditions. For this reason, we plan to examine Chinese audience’s news attention and news processing skills that are closely linked to their daily
In terms of the relationship between news attention and news processing skills, we can find some clues from previous studies. News attention is considered antecedent to elaboration in the cognitive mediation model and elaboration is the additional process of connecting the information from news with these activated mental structures to draw new insights. In essence, those who engage in elaborative processing must first pay attention to the content for it to activate related thoughts for conscious consideration. (Eveland, Shah, & Kwak, 2003). Attention is a necessary but not sufficient condition for elaborative processing (Rigney, 1978). Only by consciously noticed can news or information be connected to ones prior knowledge or experience or opinion. In other words, without being noticed (no matter by what means), one cannot consciously process information for he/she even doesn’t know it. Similar with news elaboration, the news processing skills are actions in conscious level that audience taken when they get information from the outside. They may try to check the fact by their prior knowledge and experience, explore the standpoint of author by reading between the lines, and criticize the news that is contrary to their own opinions and so on. But all these conscious efforts they paid to the information must have an antecedent, that they noticed the news. The audience must pay attention to news/information firstly, and then they can activate obtained information for information processing. Hence, we can also assume news processing strategy/skill follows news attention.

**Personal characteristics as motivations (O1) and response (R)**

Eveland, Shah and Kwak (2003) stated that the effects of motivations for media use that have been described in past research are wholly mediated by media information processing behaviors (thus the term mediation in the cognitive mediation model). Eveland (2004) also found that motivations impact on knowledge, but anticipated communication exhibited these effects without mediation by cognitive processing. Anyhow, research result support motivations affect knowledge gain at least without the control of information processing. Thus we predict the same effect of motivations on another response in this study – media evaluation.

Psychologists have long recognized the importance of mediating variables. Mediators explain how external physical events take on internal psychological significance. It is often an internal, psychological variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In cognitive mediation model, information processing is regarded as mediation for it is audience’s cognitive activity in psychology rather than behavior.

As the mediate function of information processing has been proved by previous studies (e.g., Eveland, 2001; Eveland, 2002; Eveland, Shah & Kwak, 2003; Eveland, 2004; Schneider, 2006), we can propose that news attention and news processing skill mediate impact on the process from motivations to response.

Based on the literature on theory and model related concepts reviewed, we draw a theoretic research model based on the cognitive mediation model.

---Figure 1 is about here---

**Method**

**Sampling**

The research model is tested with part of a survey data from a media and audience study project. Living in the capital of China and the political, cultural, and communication center of China,
Beijing residents are always well known for high degree of political interest, political literacy and media knowledge. For this reason the data from Beijing would be representative evidence to predict the trend of Chinese society. Furthermore, facing the Beijing 2008 Olympics, the interest in politics, society and media of Beijing residents must be greater than ever before under the influence of mass media. Thus this is a perfect moment to study the media and audience of Chinese society through the Beijing sample.

A professional survey organization in Beijing completed a face-to-face interview in November 2007. The population is Chinese-speaking Beijing residents of 18 and above and the sample size is 1,000. The response rate was (RR3) 31.8% and the cooperation rate (COOP3) was 53.6% (AAPOR, 2002).

Measurement

Variables measured in this study are categorized into four groups: demographic variables, antecedent exogenous variables (independent variables), mediate variable and dependent variables. Except demographic variables, the last three can be called theoretical variables. The antecedent exogenous variables, also independent variables, are motivations for media use, including “political interest” and “personal characteristics” in this study. Next group is mediate variables, which are actually cognition process in the Cognitive Mediation Model, including news attention and news processing skills. The last group-dependent variables actually consists of two variables, “political knowledge” and “media evaluation”, which are thought as the “response” in the Cognitive Mediation Model in this study and affected possibly by all of the previous variables.

Demographic variables. The sample was 61% females, and 16.1% aged below 30, 30-49 year-old 35.0%. Monthly household income was a 5-point scale, from less than RMB ¥1,000, RMB ¥1,000–3,000, RMB ¥3,000-6,000, RMB ¥6,000-10,000 to more than RMB ¥10,000 to more than RMB ¥10,000 (mean = 2.55; s.d. = 0.97). Education was indexed with a 7-point scale, ranging from “below primary school” to “postgraduate school” (mean = 4.19; s.d. = 1.33). According to the Beijing Statistical Yearbook 2008, 51% residents is male, 20-29 year-old 21.5%, 30-49 year-old 34.8%. In order to attain more precise result, we weighted the sample with age and gender to correspond with the estimates of the population to reduce the sample-population discrepancies.

Theoretical variables. To associate the theoretical variables to be tested in this study with elements in the Cognitive Mediation Model, each variable was authorized a code for easier identification. “Political interest” and “interpersonal communication pattern”, the “personal characteristics” of respondents, which also belong to the “Motivation” (O1) stage in Cognitive Mediation Model, were respectively coded as O1a and O1b. The mediate variables, two factors of “Cognition Process” (O2) - “news attention” and “news processing skills” are coded as O2a and O2b. As two factors of “Response” (R), “political knowledge” and “media evaluation” are respectively coded as R1 and R2.

O1a. Political Interest

Political interest was measured by two questions, they are “how much do you interested in politics” and “how often do you talk political issues with others”. Each question was measured by 5-point scale. The reliability test generated an alpha value of .74.

O1b. Interpersonal Communication Pattern

This variable concerns respondents’ behave in the interpersonal communication. Seven questions were designed to test the respondents’ interpersonal communication behave. And factor analysis separates all the items into two categories. We named them respectively as “open” interpersonal
communication pattern ($\alpha = .62$) and “closed” interpersonal communication pattern ($r = .10, p < .01$).
The “open” interpersonal communication pattern is distinguished by items such as “frequently discuss
hot issues with others”, “make friends with different backgrounds”, “like to persuade others” and so
on. And the “open” interpersonal communication pattern is characterized by “friendship
homogeneous” and “unwillingness in talking with people of different backgrounds”.

---Table 1 is about here---

\textit{O2a. News Attention}

\textit{News attention} measures in what degree that respondents pay attention to the news. The
questions covered the news source from newspaper, TV to internet. Each question was measured by
5-point scale also. Since this study focuses on audience’s literacy on politics, the concentration of
respondents’ news attention counts in domestic and overseas political news rather than entertainment
news.

\textit{O2b. News Processing Skills}

\textit{News processing skills} measures respondents how to deal with news information they received
from mass media. Four items were designed to measure the news processing strategies by Chinese
audiences which focused on the dimension of “active processing” among all three dimensions by the
prior empirical studies (Kosicki & McLeod, 1990; Kosicki, McLeod, & Amor, 1987). They
respectively measured respondents’ ability of “In-depth reading”, “Criticism”, “Facts checking” and
“Independent thinking” (Zhou & Lu, 2008) in five-category scale (1=totally disagree with, 5=totally
agree with) (see Appendix). A reliability test generated an alpha value of .51.

\textit{R1. Political Knowledge}

Political knowledge, the first dependent variable, was measured by questions on current events
including local news; national news and international news (see Appendix). There were 5 items totally
(Mean = 2.66, range =0 to 5, $SD = 1.43$).

\textit{R2. Media Evaluation}

Media evaluation is measured by eleven questions covered different dimensions of evaluation
towards media. It asked respondents to score media from 1 to 5 point on news reliability, surveillance
function, and education function etc. Factor analysis divided 11 items into four dimensions. The four
dimensions which are also the respondents’ perceived media function, respectively concern about
media content, media power, media responsibility and media standpoint. Specifically, we named the
four dimensions as “free & reliable content” ($\alpha= .74$); “responsible for society”, ($\alpha= .45$); and two
items factors, “the fourth power” ($r = .69, p <.001$); and “neutral & normative location”, ($r = .27, p
<.001$).

----Table 2 is about here----

Results

\textit{Interpersonal communication and political interest}

We began our analyses with personal characteristics, i.e., the type of interpersonal
communication in terms of their impact on political interest. A brief overview of the predictive
structures across the four demographic variables showed old ($\beta = .305, p < .001$) and better educated
($\beta = .188, p < .001$) people tend to have more political interest, Male audience shows more political
interests than female ($\beta = .210, p < .001$).

In terms of the interplay between political interest and interpersonal communication pattern,
it is obviously that only “open” type of interpersonal communication significantly relates to political interest. A person with more political interest tends to be more “open” in his/her interpersonal communication ($\beta = .292$, $p < .001$). And the more “open” a person shows in the interpersonal communication, the more political interest he/she has ($\beta = .260$, $p < .001$). In other words, if a respondent is highly interested in politics, he/she may also be ready to talk politics with others. 

Personal characteristic and cognition process

Table 4 shows the results of regression for exploring the correlations of O1 (personal characteristic) and O2 (cognition process) and the interplay between O2a (news attention) and O2b (news processing skills).

For the demographic variables, four items all have predictive power to cognition process respectively. The older ($\beta = .167$, $p < .001$), higher education ($\beta = .350$, $p < .001$) and higher income ($\beta = .124$, $p < .001$) audience tend to pay more attention to news. Besides, male ($\beta = .265$, $p < .001$) audience with higher education ($\beta = .089$, $p < .01$) are more likely to utilize news processing skills while reading news.

The second block shows whether and how O1 (personal characteristic) impacts on O2 (cognition process). More political interest predicts more news attention ($\beta = .242$, $p < .001$) and news processing skills ($\beta = .251$, $p < .001$) of an audience. Yet only “open” type of interpersonal communication pattern positively relates to news attention ($\beta = .263$, $p < .001$) and news processing skills ($\beta = .281$, $p < .001$), while the “closed” type has no contribution to the two dependent variables. It seems that an “open” attitude of interpersonal communication leads one to pay attention to news and attain news processing skills in media contact.

Last block tells the commutative relations between two variables of cognition process - news attention and news processing skills. They both have significant predictive power to the other variable. That is to say, more news attention will positively improve news processing skills of an audience ($\beta = .223$, $p < .001$), and more news processing skills will also induce an audience to pay more attention while facing news ($\beta = .212$, $p < .001$).

Cognition process and response

Table 5 summarizes the results of regressions designed to explore the correlations of O2 (cognition process) and R (response).

Demographic variables contribute to political knowledge and media evaluation respectively. Age is positively related to both variables. The older an audience is, the more political knowledge ($\beta = .100$, $p < .01$) and higher media evaluation he/she shows ($\beta = .204$, $p < .001$). While education ($\beta = .329$, $p < .001$), income ($\beta = .067$, $p < .05$) and gender ($\beta = .102$, $p < .01$) only contribute to political knowledge, which means high education, high income and male audience tend to have more political knowledge.

As shown in table 5, O2 (cognition process) significantly correlates to R (response). The more attention an audience pays to the news, the more political knowledge he/she gains ($\beta = .213$, $p < .001$), and the more highly of media he/she thinks ($\beta = .179$, $p < .001$). For news processing skills, audience with high level of news processing skills tends to have more political knowledge ($\beta = .161$,
p<.001), but they think lower of the media (β=-.118, p<.001).

---Table 5 is about here---

**Political knowledge and media evaluation**
Table 6 is about the commutative relationship between R1 (political knowledge) and R2 (media evaluation). Unfortunately there isn’t any correlation except for the demographic variables. As the previous analysis in table 5, age is positively related to both variables. The older an audience is, the more political knowledge (β=.100, p<.01) and news processing skills (β=.204, p<.001) he owns. Higher education (β=.329, p<.001), higher income (β=.067, p<.05) and male (β=.102, p<.01) audience tends to own more political knowledge than the opposite. However, political knowledge and media evaluation doesn’t relate to each other directly.

---Table 6 is about here---

**Personal characteristic, response and mediate variables**
Since the contributions of demographic variables has been explained in table 4 and 6, table 7 is about the mediate effect of O2 (cognition process) on R1 (political knowledge) and R2 (media evaluation). To examine the mediate function of O2, the direct influence of O1 (O1a-political interest and O1b-interpersonal communication pattern) on R (R1-political knowledge and R2-media evaluation) is respectively tested before and after controlling O2 (cognition process).

In Baron & Kenny’s paper about the distinction of moderator and mediator variable, they explained how to test a mediator variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In this study we follow this norm to test the mediate function of variables in cognition process. As shown by β2, news attention has a weak mediate effect on the process from O1a (political interest) to R1 (political knowledge) and R2 (media evaluation). Without controlling news attention, O1a (political interest) is positively related to both R1 (political knowledge) and R2 (media evaluation) significantly (β=.254, p<.001; β=.118, p<.001). In other words, more political interest leads to more political knowledge and high score of media evaluation. When O2a (news attention) is controlled, not only the effects of O1a (political interest) on R1 (political knowledge) decrease (β=.216, p<.001), but its effects on R2 (media evaluation) even decrease in both value and strength as well (β=.079, p<.05). As for O1b (interpersonal communication pattern), the “open” type has significant predictive power on both R1 (political knowledge) and R2 (media evaluation) before O2a (news attention) is controlled (β=.152, p<.001; β=.175, p<.001). That is to say, audience who is “open” to communicate with others tends to have more political knowledge and think highly of the media. Yet when O2a (news attention) is controlled, the effects of independent variable on R1 (political knowledge) and R2 (media evaluation) decrease to varying degrees (β=.105, p<.01; β=.139, p<.001).

As shown by β3, O2b (news processing skills) shows different mediate effect in different conditions. Without controlling both mediate variables, O1a (political interest) and “open” interpersonal communication pattern of O1b significantly work on R1 (political knowledge) (β=.254, p<.001; β=.152, p<.001). When O2b (news processing skills) is controlled, their predictive power on R1 (political knowledge) is weaken (β=.228, p<.001; β=.117, p<.001). On the contrary, O2b (news processing skills) shows different mediate effect when facing the other
dependent variable - R2 (media evaluation). As shown in the table, O1a (political interest) and “open” interpersonal communication pattern of O1b both relate to R2 (media evaluation) significantly without controlling the mediate variables ($\beta = .118$, p < .001; $\beta = .175$, p < .001). However, their effects on R2 (media evaluation) increased when O2b (news processing skills) is controlled ($\beta = .157$, p < .001; $\beta = .227$, p < .001), which hints that O2b (news processing skills) interferes the initiative variables’ predictive effect. More political interest leads to high level of media evaluation, but when an audience has more news processing skills, his evaluation of media may decrease because of the interference of O2b (news processing skills). Similarly, an audience who is “open” in the interpersonal communication tends to give the media a high mark, but when he owns more news processing skills at the same time, the score he give a media may be lower than when he is not.

---Table 7 is about here---

## Conclusions and discussion

This study aims to test the mediate function of cognition process and the commutative influence among variables in the cognitive mediation model. Different with previous studies, this study introduces several new variables such as interpersonal communication pattern and media evaluation in testing Chinese audience. The figure (Figure 2) below demonstrates the direct correlations among various variables of cognitive mediation model. Since no significant relations between the “closed” type of interpersonal communication pattern and other theoretical variables was found in the test, only the “open” type of O1b (interpersonal communication pattern) was listed in the figure.

One of the aims of this study is to explore whether O1 (personal characteristic) exerts influence on O2 (cognition process). As shown in figure 2, two variables of O1 (personal characteristic) - political interest and “open” interpersonal communication pattern is positively related to O2a (news attention) ($\beta = .242$, p < .001; $\beta = .263$, p < .001), and both two variables are positively related to O2b (news processing skills) at the same time ($\beta = .251$, p < .001; $\beta = .281$, p < .001). However, the “closed” interpersonal communication pattern has no contribution to each variable of cognition process. That is to say, audience with more political interest and “open” attitude of interpersonal communication tends to have more news attention and news processing skills, yet the audience of “closed” interpersonal communication pattern doesn’t show any relation to news attention and news processing skills in this research. In other words, the more positive and active an audience shows, the more news attention and news processing skills he/she owns during media contact.

Another aim is to examine whether O2 (cognition process) exerts influence on R (response). The test supported that O2a (news attention) and O2b (news processing skills) are both positively related to R1 (political knowledge) ($\beta = .213$, p < .001; $\beta = .161$, p < .001). The more news attention and news processing skills one shows, the more political knowledge one attains. But two independent variables show different function on R2 (mediate evaluation). As shown in the figure, O2a (news attention) is positively related to R2 (mediate evaluation), which is to say more news attention of an audience leads to a higher evaluation of the media from him/her ($\beta = .179$, p < .001). Yet, O2b (news processing skills) shows a negative relation with R2 (mediate evaluation) ($\beta = -.118$, p < .001), which hints that audience with high level of news processing skills tend to give media a lower score. Probably because audiences with more news processing skills tend to have a spirit of
criticism and skepticism, they are used to read extensively and think critically while reading news. As a result, this kind of audience are more likely to be “strict” with media, that’s why they tend to access lower score of media.

Also, the correlations of internal factors of three multiple variables can be figured out in this figure. Firstly, it is shown in the figure that two variables of O1 correlate to each other significantly. O1a (political interest) and “open” type of O1b (interpersonal communication pattern) are both positively related to R1 (political knowledge) ($\beta$=.122, $p<.001$; $\beta$=.152, $p<.001$) and R2 (media evaluation) ($\beta$=.253, $p<.001$; $\beta$=.175, $p<.001$). However, something noticeable happens when the cognition process (O2) is controlled in the procedure.

Similarly with previous studies, O2a (news attention) was proved to own a reinforced mediate function in this model consistently. (Eveland, 2001; 2003) The impacts of O1a (political interest) and “open” interpersonal communication pattern of O1b on R1 (political knowledge) decreased (from $\beta$=.253, $p<.001$ to $\beta$=.215, $p<.001$; from $\beta$=.152, $p<.001$ to $\beta$=.105, $p<.01$) when news attention is controlled, and their impacts on R2 (media evaluation) also decreased (from $\beta$=.122, $p<.001$ to $\beta$=.083, $p<.05$; from $\beta$=.175 $p<.001$ to $\beta$=.139, $p<.001$) in the same condition. Without the help of news attention, the impacts of political interest and “open” interpersonal communication pattern on political knowledge and media evaluation are weakened more or less.

Unlike O2a (news attention), O2b (news processing skills) shows a more complex mediate function in the test. It shows a positive mediate function on R1 (political knowledge) and a negative mediate function on R2 (media evaluation). The impacts of political interest and “open” interpersonal communication pattern on R1 (political knowledge) decreased (from $\beta$=.253, $p<.001$ to $\beta$=.227, $p<.001$; from $\beta$=.152, $p<.001$ to $\beta$=.117, $p<.001$) when O2b (news processing skills) is controlled, which proves that O2b (news processing skills) helps people with more political interest and “open” attitude of interpersonal communication to own more political knowledge. If audience with lots of political interest and an “open” attitude of interpersonal communication, the one who utilize more news processing skills tend to have more political knowledge than others. Political interest, “open” attitude of interpersonal communication and news processing skills are all favorable factors for more political knowledge. However, the impacts of political interest and “open” interpersonal communication pattern on R2 (media evaluation) increased (from $\beta$=.122, $p<.001$ to $\beta$=.161, $p<.001$; from $\beta$=.175 $p<.001$ to $\beta$=.228, $p<.001$) while controlling O2b (news processing skills). It seems that news processing skills obstructs O1 - political interest and “open” interpersonal communication pattern to work on R2 (media evaluation), which implies it has a negative mediate function on the process from O1 (personal characteristic) to R2 (media evaluation). As we have explored that news processing skills negatively relates to media evaluation previously, more news processing skills of an audience predict a lower score from the audience. And this effect is also proved in the mediate effect test. Even if audience with same political interest and “open” attitude of interpersonal communication, the different levels of their news processing skills will still lead to a difference in their media evaluation.

To put it simply, news attention could enhance the positive predictive power of O1 - political interest and “open” interpersonal communication pattern on R - political knowledge and media evaluation and news processing skills has the same effect for the two independent variables only on political knowledge. When facing media evaluation, news processing skills shows different mediate effect. News processing skills could weaken the impact of political interest and “open” interpersonal communication pattern on media evaluation, which is consistent with its negative
predictive power on media evaluation. No matter positive or negative, news attention and news processing skills are both proved to act mediate function during the communicating process shown in this model.

---Figure 2 is about here---

With the development of society and media, the media literacy and political literacy of Chinese audience are also improving fast (e.g., Guo & Lu, 2007; Guo, Zhou & Lu, 2006). While this research introduced two new indicators of O1, that “political interest” and “interpersonal communication pattern” which are never examined before. Political interest and interpersonal communication significantly related to information processing and response. And the two variables even predict political knowledge and media evaluation with the control of information processing, which shows they directly related to the response. The possible reason may be that people with political interest would not rely on the only source – media to obtain information and cognition of media. And audience of the “open” type interpersonal communication can obtain knowledge of media and politics through social interact rather than merely through the media.

According to current research, people tend to have more political interest, news attention, political knowledge and higher media evaluation along with the increase of their age and education. Moreover, audience with an “open” attitude of interpersonal communication shows more political interest, owns more news processing skills, pays more attention to the news, and his/her political knowledge and media evaluation also ranks a higher level than the “closed” one. Since “political knowledge”, “news attention” and “news processing skills” are important indicators of media literacy and political literacy, and which are also very important for the “citizen’s empowerment” and “democracy society”, society need to take the improvement of citizen’s education and “interpersonal communication pattern” into account.

In short, the improvement of citizen’s media literacy needs the joint effort of government, school and family. With the increase of above indicators, citizens will become more interested in politics, and more critical and rational when processing media information. And they will be more likely to raise meaningful insightful suggestions to the government for important social issues, which is stimulation to citizens’ empowerment and the very beginning of a democratic society.

Besides the theoretical and social implications, there are also some limitations in this study. First and foremost, the variable “news attention” only counts in the degree of attention that audience paid to news, but leaves out the source of news. As it has been proved, in the communication field of Chinese context, that audience who read news of different regions have different understanding and perception of news and media (e.g., Chen & Chan, 2008, and etc.). Thus the source of news may be another influential variable in this model. In addition, in terms of the variable “interpersonal communication pattern”, only “open” type is verified to be related to other variables. This study failed to examine any significant correlation between “closed” type and other variables. At last, “Response” should not only include conscious level, but also count in the behavior level. In detail, besides “political knowledge” and “media evaluation”, factors such as “media efficacy”, “media participation” and so on could also be included in the research of Cognitive Mediation Model.
Figure 1  Specialized cognitive mediation model

O1  Interpersonal communication pattern
    |   Political interest
    |   News attention
    |   News processing skills

O2  Political knowledge
    |   Media evaluation

R
Table 1 Factor analysis of interpersonal communication pattern (Principal Component extraction, Direct Oblimin Rotation with Kaiser Normalization, N = 1,000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire items</th>
<th>“open”</th>
<th>“closed”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Like to persuade others</td>
<td>.668</td>
<td>.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently discuss hot issues</td>
<td>.668</td>
<td>.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss political issue with everyone</td>
<td>.651</td>
<td>-.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views of others make me think</td>
<td>.573</td>
<td>-.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship heterogeneous</td>
<td>.514</td>
<td>-.436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlike talking with people of different background</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>.736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship homogeneous</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance accounted for (%)</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Factor analysis of media evaluation (Principal Component extraction, Direct Oblimin Rotation with Kaiser Normalization, N = 1,000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire items</th>
<th>Free &amp; reliable content</th>
<th>&quot;The fourth power&quot;</th>
<th>Responsible for society</th>
<th>Neutral &amp; normative location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>.786</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak for the mass</td>
<td>.740</td>
<td>.275</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>.740</td>
<td>.233</td>
<td>.198</td>
<td>-.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News freedom</td>
<td>.623</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>-.233</td>
<td>-.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy surveillance</td>
<td>.238</td>
<td>.871</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>-.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor_the_power</td>
<td>.236</td>
<td>.871</td>
<td>-.020</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little negative news</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>-.188</td>
<td>.763</td>
<td>-.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enough education content</td>
<td>-.134</td>
<td>.178</td>
<td>.627</td>
<td>.187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak for majority</td>
<td>.334</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.595</td>
<td>.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>-.040</td>
<td>-.022</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>.107</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>.155</td>
<td>.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance accounted for (%)</td>
<td>21.44</td>
<td>15.75</td>
<td>13.42</td>
<td>11.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Regression: Political interest and Interpersonal communication pattern
### Political interest

#### Predictors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.305***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.188***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.210***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.124***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**O1b. Interpersonal communication pattern**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“open”</td>
<td>.260***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“closed”</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased $R^2$</td>
<td>.065***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. a. Table 3 shows beta values ($\beta$) of regression in SPSS.
   b. All of the independent variables above in Table 3 are controlled by demographic variables.
   c. *$p<.05$; **$p<.01$; ***$p<.001$.

### Table 4. Regression: Personal characteristic and Cognition process (N=1000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>News attention</th>
<th>News processing skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.167***</td>
<td>-.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.350***</td>
<td>.265***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.124***</td>
<td>-.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.089**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.139***</td>
<td>.093***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political interest</strong></td>
<td>.242***</td>
<td>.251***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Increased $R^2$ | .050*** | .054***
--- | --- | ---

Interpersonal communication pattern

“open” | .263*** | .281***
“closed” | -.022 | -.014
Increased $R^2$ | .065*** | .075***

Note. a. Table 4 shows beta values ($\beta$) of regression in SPSS.

b. All of the independent variables above in Table 4 are controlled by demographic variables.

c. *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Table 5. Regression: Cognition process and Response (N=1000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R1.</th>
<th>Political knowledge</th>
<th>R2.</th>
<th>Media evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.100**</td>
<td>.204***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.329***</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.067*</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.102**</td>
<td>-.005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.121***</td>
<td>.026***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News attention</td>
<td>.213***</td>
<td>.179***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased $R^2$</td>
<td>.038***</td>
<td>.026***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News processing skills</td>
<td>.161***</td>
<td>-.118***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased $R^2$</td>
<td>.023***</td>
<td>.011***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. a. Table 5 shows beta values ($\beta$) of regression in SPSS.

b. All of the independent variables above in Table 1 are controlled by demographic variables.

c. *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Table 6. Regression: Political knowledge and Media evaluation (N=1000)
### Table 7. Regression: Personal characteristic, Response and mediate variables

(N=1000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variables</th>
<th>R1. Political knowledge</th>
<th>R2. Media evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.100**</td>
<td>.204***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.329***</td>
<td>.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.067*</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.102**</td>
<td>-.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.121***</td>
<td>.032***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Political knowledge

- .045

Increased R²

- .000

Media evaluation

- .041

Increased R²

- .001

---

Note. a. Table 6 shows beta values (β) of regression in SPSS.

b. All of the independent variables above in Table 1 are controlled by demographic variables.

c. *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.
| “closed” | .047 | -.043 | -.045 | -.016 | -.013 | -.019 |
| Increased R² | .022*** | .048** | .035*** | .028*** | .042*** | .056*** |

**Note.**

a. Table 7 shows beta values (β) of regression in SPSS.

b. All of the independent variables above in Table 7 are controlled demographic variables.

c. *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

d. β1 is regression coefficients only controlled demographic variables.

β2 is regression coefficients that are controlled O2a.news attention besides demographic variables.

β3 is regression coefficients that are controlled O2b.news processing skills besides demographic variables.
Figure 2. Positive direction correlations among various variables in a Cognitive Mediation Model with Interpersonal Communication Pattern and Media Evaluation (N = 1,000)

***p<.001
References


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The Invisible Disaster: A Cross-Culture Comparative Analysis of Newspaper Photographic Coverage of Hurricane Katrina and Whenchuan Earthquake

Yan Yan

In today’s society, people are immersed in a visually constructed media reality in which they are consuming and being shaped by the media-moderated virtual world. People inevitably fall into a “seeing is believing” modality, and therefore, open themselves to the influences of visual rhetoric. Finnegan (2006) refers to the rhetorical power of “seeing is believing” as “naturalistic enthymeme.” That is, we make assumptions about the argumentative potential of photos because we perceive photographs as fundamentally realistic. For the modern mass media industry, visual imagery has become one of the dominant paths to attract audiences, inject editorial intentions and shift the public evaluations. “A classic debate in every newsroom was whether they should run the photo and where.” (Strupp, 2005) Correspondingly, media coverage strategies for natural disasters develop unique characters in the visual age. Photographic coverage significantly influences the public’s perception of disasters as individuals seek information to determine whether the crisis will affect them, how they should think, and what they should do (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003, p.71).

It is generally agreed by social scientists that photographs are not unbiased eyes of reality, but rather contain their own inherent ideological biases. Perlmutter and Wanger (2004) noted that picture publication was “partly an aesthetic one but also, to a large extent, a politically motivated process of manufacture and spin, not a natural selection”. Previous studies have demonstrated the role of political forces (Fahmu, Kelly & Kim, 2007, pp.546-561; Faux & Kim, 2006, pp.55-59; Finnegan, 2006, pp. 133-149; Haspel & Lacy, 2009, pp.1-23), commercial powers (Hochschild, 2003) and cultural discriminations (Borah, 2009, pp.50-57; Borah & Bulla, 2009, pp.1-14; Jenkins, 2007, pp.92-107) in shaping the coverage of natural disasters. For example, in a cross culture analysis of photographic coverage of hurricane Katrina and Indian Tsunami, Borah and Bulla (2009) found that Indian media (The Hindu) tended to report more political frames, which focused on how politicians visiting the disaster sites and working toward remedies than those of U.S. media (New York Times, the Washington Post) and U.K. media (London Time). Similar research using content analysis and framing theories have repeatedly confirmed the cultural impacts of natural disaster coverage.

This study qualitatively analyzed how two disasters—Hurricane Katrina and the Wenchuan Earthquake—were visually portrayed by the U.S. and Chinese media respectively. Through comparative analysis, this research aimed to illustrate the visual rhetoric strategies of natural disasters coverage across American and Chinese cultures.

Literature Review and the Theoretical Framework Visual Framing
Goffman (1974) defined framing as the “principles of organization which govern events—at least social ones—and our subjective involvement in them.” Framing facilitates people’s perception of the world by categorizing issues in limited ways, and constructs a “schemata of interpretation” or a framework that helps in making an otherwise meaningless succession of events into something meaningful. A frame does not necessarily constitute a one-way flow from the media to the audience, but a “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion” that influence both journalists as well as their audiences (Gitlin, 1980, p.7). Although initiated in text analysis, framing theory has been extensively applied to visual analysis. Messaris and Abraham (2001) proposed three distinguishing characteristics of visual images that lent themselves to framing and discussed how these properties may influence the framing of news: the analogical quality of images, the indexicality of images, and the lack of an explicit propositional syntax.

The analogical quality of an image refers to the fact that associations between images and their meanings are based on similarity or analogy. The signifier represents the signified by having an apparent likeness to it (Rose, 2007, p.87). Recognition of the signifiers does not require “prior familiarity with the particular representational conventions.” (Messaris & Abraham, 2001, p.216) Because images are more natural and closely related to reality than words, the audience might fall into the illusion of seeing things firsthand through the transparent photography (Kenney, 2005, p.101) while overlooking the fact that images are essentially artificial constructions.

The term indexicality is borrowed from Peirce who used it to differentiate photographs from other images. The true-to-life quality of photographs is what Peirce called “indices”, which bear an inherent relationship between the signified and signer (Rose, 2007, pp. 87-88). As a result of their indexicality, photographs come with an “implicit guarantee of being closer to the truth than other forms of communication” (Messaris & Abraham, 2001, p.217) and thereby, make the viewers unaware of the potential filtering, misleading or distortion of reality.

The lack of an explicit prepositional syntax refers to the fact that visual images do not have a set of conventions for making cause-and-effect relationships. The power of photography comes from “the easy sharing of conventions among creators and viewers” (Kenney, 2005, p.108). Although photographs can be deliberately manipulated, viewers may make sense of images through the help of contextual or other less conscious cues (Messaris & Abraham, 2001, p.218).

The analogical quality, the indexicality and the lack of an explicit propositional syntax of images grant visual interpretation some unique characteristics. Viewers are less suspicious of pictures since they are less likely to realize that picture could be manipulated in the same way as texts. As a result, viewers are more open to visual framings than they are to text framings on an unconscious level (Harper, 2005, p.752).

**Visual Framing of Natural Disasters**

Some research has confirmed the role of visual framing on natural disaster coverage. In a comparative analysis of visual framing of Hurricane Katrina and Indian Tsunami, Borah and Bulla (2009) identified five of the most frequently used natural disasters frames: lives-lost (images of dead bodies), lives-saved (images of survivors and relief work), physical (images of destruction), emotional (images showing grieving citizens, suffering and pain) and political (images of politicians visiting the disaster sites and working toward remedies and mitigation).

The most salient frames of all the media coverage for both disasters were the lives-saved and
physical frames. However, the U.S. media (New York Times and the Washington Post) framed Katrina relatively differently from the tsunami. In the lives-lost frames, both newspapers showed the dead from the tsunami by large, close-up shots and used long shots and smaller images of the Katrina victims. Likewise, in the emotional frame, the tsunami coverage displayed large, close-up pictures of victims in deplorable conditions which were avoided in the Katrina coverage (Borah & Bulla, 2009, pp. 29-33; Borah, 2009, p.49).

Fahmu, Kelly and Kim (2007) compared the front-page photographs versus Associated Press and Reuters photograph pools of Katrina, and found that, compared with the picture pools of the wire service, the newspaper front pages preferred to display images of strong emotions, victimportray and non-white sufferers. Newspapers framed “the story of a huge, impersonal event in large part through the accounts of individuals personally experiencing pain and loss”, which shifted the responsibility of the government to individuals. Further, based on the contrast between Caucasian and African-Americans, the depiction of black people as marginalized, helpless, and in need of assistance alleviated the blame that the government should bear.

Methods
The present study examined front page photographic coverage of two disasters: the 2005 Hurricane Katrina in the U.S. and the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake in China. Hurricane Katrina claimed at least 1,836 lives and levied a total damage of $81 billion (Rappapor, 2008). Wenchuan Earthquake killed at least 68,000 people and the economic damage exceeded $135 billion (Andrew, Wong & Huang, 2009). These two disasters were chosen because both were the most destructive and costliest natural disaster in the recent decades of each country.

Sample. Two sampled dates were accessed: September 4th, 2005, the fourth day after Hurricane Katrina and May 19th, 2008, the seventh day after Wenchuan Earthquake. The dominant photographs were chosen for the unit of analysis since dominate images of front page routinely exemplified the intention of newsroom most saliently (Fahmu, Kelly, & Kim, 2007)

The study sampled the front page of 40 Chinese and 40 U.S. newspapers. The Chinese newspapers were chosen from the National Memorial Day front page gallery. All 40 newspapers in the online gallery were selected. The U.S newspapers were sampled from the Hurricane Katrina profiles in www. newseum.org with a total population of 242 newspapers. A 6 unit random sampling method was used in the data collection from U.S. newspapers.

Coding categories. Six frames were codes. (1) Lives-lost, if depicting images of dead bodies. (2) Lives-saved, if depicting images of survivors and relief work. (3) Physical loss, if displaying images of destruction. (4) Emotional frame, if portraying images of grieving citizens, suffering and pain. (5) Political frame, if portraying images of politicians visiting the disaster sites and working toward remedies and mitigation. (6) Others, if displaying images out of the above categories.

Results. The results indicated that the lives-saved frame (26 times out of 40) was the most salient frame of U.S. newspapers. The most salient frame of Chinese newspapers was not photographic coverage. A total of 25 Chinese newspapers used text only as front page coverage, making the text-only images the most salient frames. Several of the most frequent images are rhetorically analyzed below.

The author was interested in questions such as what was the framing pattern of visual coverage of each country? What were the similarities and differences between U.S and Chinese
photographic reporting strategies? What was the ideological causes underlying the similarities and/or differences?

**Images of Men and Women in Disaster Coverage**

**Crying Women and Non-crying Men**

There were no images of crying men in the 80 sampled American and Chinese newspapers. However, crying women were one of the most salient themes.

For example, Figure 1 illustrated a typical scene of a girl tearing “in the arm of a young man.” Depicting males and females in the same shot, the young man was portrayed with profile only. He loomed over the crying female but he was depicted as lack of self emotion expression. Similar images appeared in Chinese newspapers. In a series of grieving people in Figure 2, women were mostly depicted as crying whereas men were displayed as sorrowful but with no tears.

The contrast between crying women and non-crying men fulfilled what Patti (2005) stated as display of public grief. The term refers to the social rules of “emotional woman and unemotional man” observed in public grieving. Since emotionality is often associated with a “weakness of will, insufficient capacity for reasoned thought and loss of control” (Lupton, 1998, p.107), it is culturally assumed that the right to display weakness in public is sex-biased. Women are not necessarily more emotional than men but rather are more allowed to express their
emotions. By categorizing certain kinds of emotion as masculine (e.g. pride, anger) and others as feminine (e.g. fear, grief), the emotional display is normalized as gender-bias production.

Another aspect of the “display of public grief” is the appropriate sadness. As Arlie Hochschild (2002) pointed out, “we can offend against a feeling rule when we grieve too much or too little, when we over manage or undermanage grief”. Among all of the crying women images, none were depicted as emotionally out of control. Figure 3 pictured “Sylvia Hathorn, who was missing two of her sons, cries as she sits on her cot on Saturday in the shelter at the old Levis Strauss plant in San Antonio.” Even though she has lost her two sons, she cried in an appropriate way—sitting at a corner of the shelter and sobbing alone. She did not display masculine calm nor express her sadness hysterically. Although the woman might have displayed much stronger emotions, the editor did not select the unaesthetic emotional climax. Emotions, therefore, were confined to the social normative rules. Those images contradicted the cultural norms were rendered invisible. In other words, despite the public permission for women crying, photographic coverage was still highly culture constructed.

The Hierarchy of Innocence
Based on his research on war and disaster images, Moller (2002) raised the concept hierarchy of innocence, which referred to “operative ordering of who in the world was considered to be most deserving of protection”. The hierarchy begins with infants and then includes, in descending order, children up to the age of 12, pregnant women, teenage girls, elderly women, all other women, teenage boys, and all other men. Children and women are ranked at the top, representing the images of hopelessness, weakness and vulnerability. On the contrary, men are found in the lowest rank partly due to the cultural tradition that men should be those who save others rather than being saved. Depicted as disaster victims, children and women are innocents who cannot control their fate whereas men are usually portrayed as suffering from their own faulty actions. This hierarchy of innocence frame exemplified in both U.S and
Chinese newspaper coverage.

Among the 40 U.S newspapers, adult men were only portrayed 6 times, as opposed to adult women who were portrayed 7 times, children 19 times, and old men and women 16 times. In the Chinese newspapers, none of the 40 samples used male sufferers. Adult women were portrayed 2 times, old men 1 time and children 5 times.

In summary, although U.S and Chinese are different in cultural norms, the results showed that both media tend to overtly frame women as more vulnerable than men, and therefore, reproduced a patriarchal order, in which men and masculinity symbolized power, strength, independence, and bravado, whereas women and femininity symbolized fragility, weakness, dependence, and kindness (Weinstein & D’Amico, 1999, p.6). In analyzing visual displays of both disasters, the crying women versus non-crying man, and the overt display of vulnerable women and suppression of vulnerable men indicated the underlying patriarchic norms under the supposed objective photographic coverage.

Images of Death in Disaster Coverage

Although the lives-lost frame and lives-saved frame were the most prominent themes for both U.S and Chinese newspaper coverage, classic, human conceptions of death were mostly lost. As stated before, Wenchuan Earthquake killed at least 68,000 people but there were no pictures depicting the dead at all in the 40 Chinese newspapers. Among 1836 victims of Katrina, only two deaths were pictured in the 40 U.S. newspapers (see Figure 4 and Figure 5). And even these two depictions did not portray the death as it should be.

Running head: THE INVISIBLE DISASTER

Figure 4
The Biological Death

Aries (1974) described the invisible death as a new feature of the twentieth century when death was no longer regarded as the end of a human’s mental existence, or the eternal mourning of the lost love. Rather, as a result of medicalization, death became “a shameful final act to be dealt with by medical specialist in hospitals and to be discussed by funeral director.” Death was no longer a lost human but a biological status named as “bodies” or “corpses”.

Likely, in photographs of both disasters, death was repetitively narrated as “inconvenient bodies.” Figure 4 and Figure 5 both displayed the victims in black body bags, which were visually familiar as trash bags. The images of workers and security forces wearing gloves, masks and protective suits furthered “the misperception that dead bodies were inherently contaminated and need to be disposed of as hazardous waste” (Nicosia, 2009, p.12). Since death was rendered both a biological and metaphoric waste (Giroux 2006), it was distanced from the live human. Therefore, the real human tragedy in the disaster was transformed into a technical issue of corpse disposal.

The Naturalized Death

Deaths were not only narrated as “inconvenient bodies”, but also often named as “expected loss”, which were naturalized as a spectacle of disasters.

Running head: THE INVISIBLE DISASTER

Figure 4 showed “a family of Hurricane Katrina victims passing a covered body in front of the convention center in the New Orleans on Saturday as they walked to buses for evacuation.” People in the picture appeared to be too familiar with the scene to notice the body bags. Deaths became a common spectacle of the natural disaster, as ordinary as a ruined building or a fallen tree. The corpse was even harmoniously integrated into the disaster aftermath context which is familiar to both the photographed and the viewer. Deaths were naturalized as inevitable costs, “expected loss” and indispensable parts of a catastrophe. The dead person at the street was most visible as invisible.
The Symbolic Death
Compared with American newspapers which displayed two deaths, none of the Chinese newspapers depicted a body or a corpse. Only three newspapers used the same symbolic death: a child’s hand grasping a pencil (See Figure 6). The cruelty of death was aesthetically symbolized as an icon of the disaster (See figure 7).

In this context, a child’s fist represented not the death itself but a call for solidity of the nation. Since the nation was united not for rescuing the death but for saving the survivors, a clear distinction was drawn between the dead and the lived. The real meaning of death was replaced by its symbolic meaning as motivation for national union. The death loses its humanity, such as sorrow of a lost life. Instead, it became a terrible, symbolic threat, which served as the means to unite the living, not to mourn the lost life but to fight against the potential threat represented by death.

Running head: THE INVISIBLE DISASTER

When death lost its humanity meanings, it was open to be manipulated by the media’s agenda and political power. By depicting death as a biological state and potential contamination, the government, whose irresponsibility, at least to some extent, resulted in the unnecessary loss gained praises because of its efficiency in corpse disposal. By portraying death as a natural part of the disaster, the deaths, which were partly due to the government’s failure, were reasonably explained as an inevitable cost of disaster. By picturing the death as a call for national union, the government successfully transformed from one that failed to protect its citizens to one that unites the living and protects the survivors.

Images of Individuals in Disaster Coverage
The political framing was the second most prominent framing in Chinese newspapers but the least significant framing in U.S photographic coverage. The difference was partly due to different cultural traditions, in which western traditions preferred individual interests and eastern traditions focused on collective efforts (Hofstede, 1980, pp. 3-5). Culture not only influenced the difference in reporting volume, but also visual rhetoric especially in the individual versus national dimensions.

Running head: THE INVISIBLE DISASTER

143
Maximized Individual

Typically, when dealing with a national disaster, western tradition views it as the individual’s responsibility to save himself whereas the Chinese tradition regards it both a government’s duty and the responsibility of united citizens.

The individual fighting against the internal fate or external disasters is a common theme of western tradition. Campbell (2008) summarized the fundamental structure of western myths which usually contained three sections: departure (the hero venturing forth on the quest), initiation (the hero's adventures along the way) and return (the hero's returning home with knowledge and powers). All the adventures were mostly complete by the hero individually. This research found consistent results with this tradition. Only two of the 40 U.S newspapers portrayed the official/government relief work: one highlighted the military service (See Figure 8) and the other depicted activities of the social-service personnel. Also, only one of 40 U.S newspapers pictured the “survivors” as a whole (see Figure 9), whereas all of the rest focused on individual stories. Therefore, the media minimized the responsibility of the official works and maximized the role of individual. By segmenting the national disaster into many independent mini-tragedies, the press helped to shift the government’s responsibility to individual sufferers. Those who successfully saved themselves were highly focused as a typical representative of the individual heroism traditions whereas those failed to fight against the disaster were deemed as suffer from their own error. Thereby, the public was distracted by a series of mini-stories while the reflection of the disaster was diminished.

Running head: THE INVISIBLE DISASTER

Figure 8
Minimized Individual

The Chinese tradition, on the other hand, diminishes individual heroes whereas emphasizes the roles of collective efforts. Although similarly depicted as an individual hero, individual heroes in eastern traditions represent not only himself as a person but rather an embodiment of the authority. Typically, the Chinese hero fights to save others. Once the hero wins the fight, he is naturally authorized the power to govern. In turn, the governmental authority assumes a responsibility in rescuing victims.

This cultural tradition was fully illustrated in Chinese newspaper coverage in which 8 out of the 40 Chinese newspapers depicted government efforts of military personnel, ordinary citizens, survivors, and volunteers who work together to save the victims (See Figure 10-12). Instead of focusing on the individual victims of the earthquake, many Chinese newspapers concentrated on official relief work. Military, volunteers, social workers were not featured as individuals, but were represented by their social positions or social identities. There were no victims, only a union of the survivors, rescuers and government prevailed against the disaster.

Running head: THE INVISIBLE DISASTER

Within this union, the government was the only candidate for heroism in which the united fight against the disaster, superseding individual acts of heroism. The overt display of the natural disaster led to two rhetoric effects: the diminishing of individual tragedy and forgetting.
individual reflection.

The individual tragedies were diminished by comparing with tens of thousands of victims and loss. The media highlighted the big picture of the disaster so that each individual story became one of the common tragedies. The loss of life then became just a statistic result which only demonstrated how terrible the disaster, and in turn, how reasonable the thousands of tragedies were as an inevitable cost of this catastrophe. As a tiny component of the national disaster, each individual deserved sympathy and help, but could not require more than any other.

Even worse was the forgetting of the individual reflection. In coverage of Wenchuan Earthquake, only 10 newspapers featured humans as front page images and 5 of them were the Tiananmen mourning (See Figure 12). In Chinese traditions, Tiananmen is a place represented the central government, a forbidden city that used to symbolize the strict distinction between the authority and the citizens. However, the Tiananmen mourning united the ordinary citizens and the government by providing the “forbidden city” as platforms for public mourning. Therefore, the boundary between the authority and the citizens was blurred. The mourning carrying on in a symbolically powerful space where citizens were temporarily constructed within the ally of the government the moment they stood on the square. As members of the same ally, individual reflections, such as queries of the disaster caused and critics of the government responsibility were diminished.

Running head: THE INVISIBLE DISASTER

The U.S. media depicted a series of mini-tragedies whereas the Chinese media amplified a regional disaster into a national catastrophe. Although different in rhetorical strategies, both reflected the dereliction of the government. The public was either lost in segments or distracted by big picture conceptions, while reflections of the reality were diminished.

Analysis of the Most Frequent Images

The final part of the paper analyzed the most frequently used picture from each country in the sample date to examine how the visual rhetoric strategies above were applied to specific photos.

12 out of 40 U.S. newspapers selected the same picture (see Figure 13) for the front page. In this picture, an African-American child was walking by the side of an old white lady in a wheel-chair. The oddly matched couple were holds hands, which implied a united community
faced with the disaster. The child represented a hope of future whereas the elderly lady represented the old tradition, whose elegant appearance symbolized a grace of civilization that was not disrupted by the natural disaster. Although retreated from the deserted land, the power of the civilization retained its dignity.

Running head: THE INVISIBLE DISASTER

This picture displays a typical “hierarchy of innocence” frame. No adult men or adult women were portrayed as victims. Instead, only the young and the old were featured, which catered to the public expectation. They deserved the pity and help, since they were innocent and incapable of saving themselves.

A white man was holding the wheelchair, whose strong arms conveyed a sense of strength, comfort and confidence. Two more African-American children were portrayed in the background, being helped by two white policemen. All rescuers were white men, strong, sturdy yet anonymous. Although there were a large number of female rescuers and African-American personnel, they were concealed. The image confirmed what Kahle, Yu and Whiteside (2007) stated “race stereotypes in disaster reports when the Caucasian were mostly portrayed as who save themselves and African-Americans were depicted as who did nothing rather than waiting for help.”

The prominent “POLICE” logo located in the upper-left emphasized the role of government in the relief work. The policeman was anonymous since his head was hidden so that he was not himself but was replaced by his social identity as a policeman and a representative of the government. Through emphasizing the social identities over individual rescuers, the picture
maximized the importance of official work. Moreover, there was no self-saved story, no displays of the consolations from neighbors or help from ordinary citizens. The government, represented by the “POLICE” logo, was the only hero in the photo.

The gun held in the policeman’s hand metaphorically represented a sense of safety and the ability to protect people through force. By depicting the gun, the disaster was transformed into an enemy, which composited a familiar patriotic discourse. Although patriotic discourse is useful in motivating people, it is usually evoked when countries are threatened by external forces. This picture transformed the disaster into an imagined enemy so as to highlight the priority of “country before self, the nation before the individual” (Haslanger, 2003, p.459). Faced with the challenge of the nation, the public reflections on the disaster or critics of the government were forced to silence.

The Chinese newspapers were surprisingly consistent in their Memorial Day coverage. In most cases, newspapers prefer to present editorial opinion by pictures rather than headlines, which seems more objective and less arbitrary, however, 25 out of the 40 samples used text only
(see Figure 14-17) or text with general grief symbols, such as chrysanthemum and candles (see Figure 18-19). Although the use of text could have some success in attracting readers’ attention, the overwhelming usage of only text as front-page coverage was abnormal. As Saussure (1983) stated, words are more arbitrary than images between the signified and signifier, which means the audiences have less freedom in interpreting words rather than images. Since no human beings were featured on the front page, the viewers cannot project themselves into the images but were forced to interpret the meaning of text. As texts provided less freedom for interpretation, the Chinese newspapers obviously indicated a desire to control the decoding alternatives.

With no pictorial displays of the disaster featured in the front page, there was no hierarchy of innocence, no stereotypical display, no differences between the depictions of men and women, old and young. Since no actual people appeared on the front page, the disaster that claimed thousands of people’s lives was minimized and focused not as pictures of victims but a stage for national mourning. It was the “national memorial” rather than the earthquake that was the protagonist on the front page. By rendering the victims invisible, the media attempted to distract the public attention from the disaster to a national mourning ritual. When performing the ritual, the public completed an imagined participation: as a witness of the disaster, a part of the sufferers and a member of the “heroic Chinese people.” Through an imagined participation, the public were unconsciously assimilated into an alliance with the government, and therefore, any potential public query, critical or defiant standpoint against the government were avoided.

In addition, this national mourning ritual not only blurred the boundary between the public and government, but also diminished the distinctions among the survivors, the public and the government. Mourning necessarily required the living to celebrate the dead. Since mourning separated the living from the dead, it forced a symbolic identification as either those who were being mourned or those who were mourning, that is, either the dead or the live. People who suffered in the earthquake but still survived, were transformed into lucky survivors who still have the opportunity to mourn rather than being mourned. Therefore, the multiple roles, including the victims, survivors, the non-victims and the government were categorized as a single body who mourned the dead together. Potential reflections or critics against of the government, again, were diminished.

Conclusions and Limitations
During a crisis, people have high expectations of the media and usually neglect the potential bias accompanied by reports. By monopolizing resources, the mass media can mask their motives. The media presents reality, but only a truth which has been manipulated and filtered.

Running head: THE INVISIBLE DISASTER
This study revealed some similarities and differences between U.S. and Chinese media. Firstly, the patriarchy discourse dominated the visual rhetoric. In both media, male victims of disaster were suppressed because their images contradicted social norms. Conversely, women and children were allowed to cry, since their weakness symbolized the unchallenged social order. It seems that the natural disaster distorted the physical words but cannot shake the social norms at all. When men cannot play the role of hero, they were concealed and replaced by male
rescuers, policemen, politicians, etc. who could exhibit the socially accepted role of authority within the patriarchal order.

Secondly, the depiction of death naturalized the disaster. Although death was inevitable in disasters, the humanity concepts of death did not appear in either U.S or Chinese media coverage. The death was naturalized as expected loss which shifted the responsibilities of the government to the disaster. The death became evidences of the horrible disaster and excuses of the less efficient official work before and after the catastrophe. The death became a symbolic tool to unite the nation against an imagined enemy. The real meaning of the death as a lost human life was concealed.

Besides the above similarities, the research found different rhetoric strategies of the individual roles between U.S and China. Individual heroes were highlighted in the U.S media. By breaking down the disaster into personal dramas and emphasizing individual heroism, each individual was portrayed as totally responsible for his fate. Individual victims were featured as unable to fight against the disaster and were blamed instead of the government. On the other hand, the Chinese media focused on the nation as a collective hero in accordance with the eastern traditions. It exaggerated the tragedy as a national disaster and diminished the role of individual efforts. In addition, collective mourning united the victims, non-victims and the government within the same ritual which blurred the boundaries between the victims, the citizens and the government.

News reports of natural disasters were assumed to be less impacted by cultural influences, however, this study revealed the role of culture in shaping the photographic coverage of natural disaster. Both the U.S and Chinese newspaper displayed the influences of culture traditions on framing the images of men and women, life and death, and individual and collective efforts.

Admittedly, the paper has several limitations. Only 40 samples from one specific day were not representative enough to postulate the overall conditions of U.S. and Chinese newspaper coverage of each disaster. Further research should draw a bigger sample throughout the whole disaster process for a more systematic analysis. In addition, on relations between the media reporting strategy and the government’s responsibilities, the different dynamics of the media-government relationship between two countries were not fully addressed. For example, the U.S. media did a lot to blame Katrina on the government but did little to aid government response efforts whereas the Chinese press praised the government a lot but did not scrutinize the government as they were assumed to do. This pair of differences were not caused merely by cultural discriminations but also rooted in a complicated political and ideological ground. Therefore, further research should pay more attention to both the cultural traditions and political influences.

Reference


Running head: THE INVISIBLE DISASTER


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Media Literacy in China: Research, Practice and Challenge
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Media literacy has been on the agenda of media, culture and pedagogy research for decades in many countries like Australia, Canada and the UK which have officially made media education compulsory in their formal education, and it has become an international movement by the end of 1980s. Compared with these countries, research and practice with exact title of ‘media literacy’ in mainland China is still young and it was actually at the end of the 20th century that ‘media literacy ’, a borrowed term from the English-speaking world, was introduced to China. However, within a decade, thanks to the interest and effort of Chinese media researchers and educators, media literacy is no longer a new concept in Chinese academia, and in the past five years media literacy has even found a niche within Chinese high education. Chinese media literacy research and practice share many similarities with other countries, however, due to the political, cultural, social and educational contexts of the modern China, still it will take time for Chinese researchers and educators to establish their own discourse on and approach to media literacy. Faced with many challenges, as discussed later in this article, the implementation of media education in mainland China is also full of uncertainty and opportunity.

This article tries to provide an historical account of media literacy development in China by examining the two waves of media education from the 1980s till now. While taking a critical view of the significance, contexts and challenges of media literacy research and practice in China, the article also considers the implications of the recent developments in the Chinese media for approaches to the theory and practice of media education.

Early concerns in the 1920s and 30s: Taking journalism education to the public

Though much of the research on ‘media literacy’ in China has a relatively short history, it is possible to trace the earliest initiatives in the field back to the 1920s, when some journalists and journalism educators first began to take media education into consideration. Generally, these concerns were about educating the public about the media, and of course, newspapers, at that time.

In 1924, Shao Piaoping, a well-known journalist, proposed to establish a journalism course at secondary level education to promote journalistic knowledge as part of common literacy among citizens so they could understand of the close connection between journalistic practice and people’s everyday life (Shao, 1924). Another well-known journalism educator, Ge Gongzhen, also pointed out that journalism should be part of the literacy of citizens, and only if every one of them understood the purpose and power of newspapers could they have a proper attitude towards it and involve themselves in public affairs (Ge, 1929). Xie Liu Yi, the first dean of the Journalism Department at Fudan University in Shanghai, stressed that journalism education should bear both vocational and non-vocational aims (Xie, 1930).
Clearly, all these early concerns were about the importance of media literacy to average citizens. However, compared with similar proposals or concerns for teaching mass media at the same time in the UK, led by literary critic F.R. Leavis, the Chinese approach in the 1920’s and 30’s emphasised the general journalistic knowledge as common knowledge, while Leavis’ approach stressed teaching about the popular culture to encourage students to ‘discriminate and resist’ the commercial manipulation of the media (Buckingham, 2003). Therefore, the Chinese approach was less defensive compared with the UK’s, which emphasized protecting traditionally so-called high culture. Like Edgar E. Dale of Ohio State University, with attention on how to read newspapers in the 1940s, Chinese colleagues also had any followers (Dale, 1940; Li, 2005). Considering the unstable domestic social situation at that time when China was involved in years of civil conflicts and anti-Japanese war from the 1920s to the late 1940s, regular concepts of education themselves were already under great threat, let alone putting such a new concept of media education into operation.

Media landscape from the 1950s to 70s: Massive control and limited ‘participation’
Since the founding of communist China in 1949, media institutions have become state-owned and centrally-controlled. From the 1950s till early 1980s, the major media, both local and national newspapers and radio served as socialist propaganda machines, and foreign media were forbidden except for the limited imported films which survived the strict censorship for their political and aesthetical correctness. The Central People's Television Broadcasting Station opened in 1958 in Beijing, but television was not a mass media until the 1980s. Through the late 1960s, the development of television in China was slow, and in 1967, with the advent of the Red Guard, it all but disappeared. Television broadcasts were on the air again three or four nights a week in the 1970s, but there was a little outside of newscasts and television remained no more than an electronic newspaper in China.

In fact, from the beginning of Communist rule in 1949, ‘wall paper’ functioned as an efficient but unique medium of mass persuasion. By 1957, Mao Zedong had even endorsed the use of dazibao (literally, big character poster) along with da ming (speaking out loudly), da fang (voicing one’s views freely), and da bianlun (holding great debates). At that time, intellectuals in particular were urged to speak out and voice their opinions regarding the party’s weaknesses. However, when many intellectuals and non-Communists used this public medium to criticize party policies and express their dissenting views, most of them were accused of being rightists and tortured in one way or another (Xing, 2004). Obviously, one’s participation in the media was risky. It also became obvious that media is not neutral tool but one controlled for political and ideological purposes in China.

During the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, the wall paper, as a political poster and a form of propaganda, was continuously and widely used and usually posted in specially designated areas such as schools, institutions, factories or farms around China. It was the most popular means of written communication, mainly for accusations and denunciations. Participation in reading and writing da zibao became a national showcase and an integral part of the rhetorical experience to millions (Xing, 2004). Students and people were generally good at creating political posters. Historically, they were media literate to some degree, for they knew how to create content, produce posters and participate in poster communication. However, being publishers and viewers at the same time, the participants had to be carefully critical and politically correct in order to
survive the massive ideological riots. That predicament taught them to be more sensitive and more media literate when it came to evaluating and analyzing media messages.

Unfortunately, so far there have been few domestic studies on the ‘wall paper’ medium which truly became the people’s medium in China during Mao’s era, though some foreign researchers did focus their attention on the unique wall paper medium and its impact on the people (Chen 1999, Denton 1999, Xing 2004). Undoubtedly, the case of media literacy of Chinese people in Mao’s era is worth studying. On the one hand, even though it was under a special social and political situation, it still shares some similarity with today’s online poster publication in China, especially in terms of media participation and creation; on the other hand, by examining such a cultural memory, it might bring some historical understandings of how Chinese people participate in social movements to exercise their democratic rights by engaging with the medium to at hand, wall posters then and internet posters today.

Teaching film and television in the 1980s and 90s: First wave of media education
Since Mao Zedong's death in 1976 and the subsequent reforms from 1978, the overall climate of economic and social changes in mainland China has been reflected in media content. Television has been a primary location for the playing out of those forces. Reform began for television in July 1983. China Central Television (CCTV), as the national broadcaster, was a centrally administered system. The government created four levels of administration: national, provincial, city and county. Except for national television, each of the other three levels was allowed relative autonomy to establish new broadcasting networks, and significantly, freedom to raise the necessary capital independent of the central government. Therefore, while in theory the state still controlled all television in China, like many segments of the Chinese economy, broadcasters have become a hybrid of state organizations and profit-driven businesses. The number of radio receivers started to slow down too in the late 1980s, and the growth of print media seemed to be leveling off too, although the number of titles rose in the late 1980s (Lee, 1994).

With more and more households having TV sets in their sitting room, watching TV became the main daily entertainment. Advertising was introduced into media operations to meet the market demand. However, despite early signs of transformation, television remains a state-controlled propaganda service and commercialization has its limits. At the same time, the film and wired broadcasting (loudspeakers) have lost their popularity. Interestingly, in the 1980s, domestic film making became less propaganda-oriented but more a representation of real life at that time, though film studios were state-owned, and foreign films were still censored. However, what could not be missed here is the growth of film education at the university level throughout the mid1980s and 1990s.

Teaching film has always been a very important form of media education. There has been a long and strong tradition of film education in Europe, like the UK, France and many Nordic countries, where, in the 1960s and 70s, moving images entered schools in the shape of ‘screen education’, which taught children to choose ‘good’ films instead of ‘bad’ entertainment on television (Tufte, 1999). In the UK, during the 1970s and 80s, film studies, as a new secondary-level course, developed rapidly. As to teaching film and television, what happened in China at the same time is also interesting.

In China, in the early 1980s, film education as an optional course, titled ‘Introduction to Film Art’ or ‘Film Literature’, was unevenly carried out at about 10 universities scattered in Beijing,
Shanghai and Guangzhou, aimed mainly at literature students (Nie & Hu, 2005). In 1983, the first ‘National High Education Film Teacher Training Course’ was held by the Beijing Film Academy, the China Film Association and the China Film Archive. During the training event, China High Education Film Association (renamed as China High Education Film and Television Association in 1995) was established, and it subsequently played an important role in promoting film education at high education institutes in mainland China (Chen, 2006).

Apparently, film education in China has gained political support since the 1980s. In April 1985, the Ministry of Education in China issued an official request for optional film courses to be included in high education institutes (High Education, 1985), which meant that film education was officially added to the curriculum at universities (Deng, 2001). The political recognition pushed film education ahead in colleges and universities, and as a result, the number of universities offering film courses increased from 16 to 52 in 1983, and up to 250 in the early 1990s. Film course, titled variously as ‘Film Theory’, ‘Film Appreciation’, ‘Film History’, ‘Film Aesthetics’ and so on, have remained one of the most popular optional courses among university students since then (Huang, 2004). Tens of thousands of university students have access to the basic knowledge and theories of film, which were official believed to enhance their knowledge structure, artistic and esthetic literacy and enrich their spiritual life.

Between the mid-1980s and early 1990s, television became the most popular medium in China, but due to poor access to TV sets at university classrooms and campus dormitories where almost all the university students were accommodated as a rule, film going was the more popular leisure activity among university students. So film education was built into the students’ everyday culture experience, though such educational practice was another form of ‘inoculation’. Since students had limited choice of what they could gain from the controlled domestic film resources, and teachers usually lectured on what they believed to be ‘properly’ educational. What is more, film going was a popular cultural activity, but distinct from the notion of ‘popular culture’ in the dictionary of western media researchers.

Media education was not teaching ‘through the media’ but ‘about the media’ (Buckingham, 2003). In China, film history, language, genre and ideology were substantial part of the film teaching, and in this case, film was not used as teaching aid. Films selected for teaching were ‘superior’ ones, and the teaching was top-down and teacher-centered. It was a separate academic subject, similar to the specialist Media Studies course in the UK. Film education was aimed at the goals of spiritual and moral development, therefore, such an approach to film/media education had little interest in developing students’ critical ability, which was regarded as an important aim of media education by western media educators (Shen, 1990). For instance, in the UK, the popular arts approach of British culture studies was promoted in 1960s and demystification approach in the 1970s and 1980s (Masterman, 1996). The Chinese approach was also different from the American one, such as the famous Payne Fund studies with focused attention on the effects of cinema on adolescents and young people, especially on delinquency among youth. Thus, film education in China in the 1980s was not motivated by the protection of the youth but cultivation and empowerment of them. The reason for this is simple: accessible films were selected and censored.

Media education in Canada and as well as in other countries, is mostly regarded as a grassroots movement (Anderson, Duncan & Pungente, 1999). This is also true in mainland China. The idea of teaching film and television could also be found at primary and secondary education in different
areas, mainly in the form of after-school activities or experimental courses organized by schools themselves from the 1980s through the 1990s (Yu, 2002). Part of the efforts was grassroots, like what Wei Gengxiang, a Chinese language teacher at secondary schools at the city of Zibo (Shandong province, China), has tried in his after-school teaching.

From the middle of 1980s, Wei, like most teachers and parents in China, worried about the negative influence of television on young students (unlike university students who live on campus, most secondary students live at home and would have easy access to TV programs). He taught his students about mass media to arm them with ‘main/high’ culture value and taste to resist the pop culture’s lowbrow attraction. His practice won the support from the local government, and his teaching about film and television has never stopped since. In 1993, funded by the provincial government, Wei and his team carried out a pedagogical research project on teaching film and television in elementary and secondary schools. In 1997, his research was even funded as a key research project under the National Ministry of Education in 1997 (Yu, 2002).

Wei's research project established the ‘Guide & Discover’ model as an approach to film and television curriculum consisting of four steps: guiding before film viewing, viewing, classroom teaching and feedback. Film production in the model was valued as well as the cooperation with media organizations and parents. As a comprehensive local curriculum, the focus of the course was aesthetics education, moral education and personal growth. About 80 schools in Shandong, Canton and Henan provinces carried out the experimental teaching by following this project. Teaching materials and References were published, and both national and international conferences on children and media were held to exchange teaching experiences.

Meanwhile, schools in big cities like Shanghai, Tianjin and provinces like Zhejiang and others, have also been carrying out film and television education for years. For instance, schools in the Nankai district of Tianjin, with more than 15 years of teaching film and television, have established their own teaching model: ‘performing, teaching, viewing, analyzing and evaluating’. A shared teaching syllabus was followed among schools in Nankai district.

In the 1980s and 90s, with official support and teachers’ effort, media education developed at different educational levels, but all with moral and aesthetic concerns, and it was more political-education-orientated. Though film and television education also stresses student’s reflections and evaluations, critical thinking was not the focus. Films selected for teaching were those regarded as ‘high culture’ products, which represented the mainstream or official culture, while texts of popular culture were neglected in most of the teaching. Therefore, student’s everyday media and cultural experiences were left untouched to some degree. In other words, only the educational function of the media was explored, but other functions were not considered.

At the same time, computer literacy was extensively taught in formal education in China whilst ‘media literacy’ lagged behind. As to the general situation of media education in mainland China, Professor Zhou Xing (2003) points out that film and television education is still scattered unevenly in elementary and middle schools, and the case of tertiary levels, it is far from meeting the basic demands. Zhou believes that some of the obstacles are the lack of qualified and committed teachers, and he recommends that a multi-level teaching system should be on the film and television teaching agenda.

As a matter of fact, the significance of film and television education to the average student has not been discussed among academics even though such grassroots ‘media literacy’ movement grows and develops at pre-university level. Wei’s and the local government’s efforts represented
the worry of most Chinese parents and teachers about the popularity and influence of television in 1980s and onwards. Interestingly, we can see the similarity between Wei’s approach and that of F.R. Leavis (1933), for both share the worries on massive but negative influence of popular media on main social values and traditional cultural taste, though there is a 50-year time gap between them and the fact is China entered 50 years later into mass media era and these changes have naturally led to an unprecedented media concerns in China. The second wave of media education would be surely approaching.

Media literacy research & practice from the late 1990s: Second wave of media education
Teaching the media in the form of film education has existed in China for about 30 years, but not until the last 10 years has it been defined as media education. This article would like to identify the past 10 years’ media literacy movement as a second wave of media education. One reason is because of the changes in Chinese media over the past decade, and the other is that current research and practice under the official rubric ‘media literacy’, which has brought a new look and new life to media education.

Before summing up the achievements and characteristics of the second wave of media education, this article likes to draw an outline of the changing social and media context for a better understanding of the second wave.

The mass media scenario in China has undergone huge changes over the past three decades, particularly in the last decade. The change could be the consequence of the unprecedented liberalization and fast development of the Chinese economy with rapid social changes following. On the one hand, with a population of 1.3 billion, China went through and is still undergoing unexpected social changes. On the other hand, these shifts are also obvious in the area of media environment. Let us look at the changes in the media environment and these falls into three parts.

One is the changing domestic media environment. With concepts like 'competition' and 'market economy' introduced into media professional and administrative operation in the 1990s, market-driven/market-oriented journalism is gradually taking the place of Party journalism. However, while market mechanisms have led to innovation and created some relative autonomy in some areas, the introduction of market logic into Party journalism may lead to the emergence of hybrid model, the propaganda/commercial model of journalism, which performs more subtle and less didactic ideological work for the Party (Zhao, 1996). It is still true that China’s media is under a propaganda/commercial model with two functions: making profits and serving the public/Party. Concurrently, various ideologies and values behind the media messages come to the surface and are followed by confusion or even conflicts. It is argued that in Chinese media markets, more products focus on the high income group, less on those low-income classes, which might cause a psychological imbalance (Li, 2003).

Another is the changing international media environment. With the tide of globalization, Chinese media are closely connected with and have to adjust to the international communication environment, which has given rise to cultural conflicts and issues. China is getting to a multicultural country, but which is different from western multicultural countries, such America, Canada, and Australia, where multi-culture partially result from the diverse immigrant cultures. However, Chinese traditional culture value is being challenged by western cultures. For instance, foreign cartoons play an important role in Chinese children’s life. A survey shows that 19 out of 20 of the most popular children’s cartoons are foreign, mainly Disney’s (Yan, 2006). People are
getting more concerned about the decline of traditional Chinese culture and some even fear cultural disorder (Guo, 2003). From this perspective, traditional Chinese values and lifestyles are also under siege, which naturally lead to worries.

The third is the changing media technology. In the 1980s, Chinese media stepped into the TV era, which made a major impact on the print medium. In the 1990s, the Internet, mobile phone and other new media have developed rapidly in the market. China now has the world's largest net-using population, 253 million internet users by June 2008, and 68.6 percent of them are under the age of 30. Challenges, along with opportunities, are overwhelming, such as identity issues, cultural conflicts, online safety, internet democracy, copyright, freedom of speech, and so on. Television and the Internet made the ‘screen reading age’ different from that of the ‘print reading age’, which may cause great influence on the social structure (Chen, 2003). In such a social transitional period, conflicts around communication systems, by their nature, are culture conflicts (Chen, 2004). At the same time, China’s tight media censorship and the control of the Internet has been criticized by western media.

Obviously, China’s media not only shares common features with the international media but has also been challenged with many related domestic issues. Media changes take place in their communication forms, content, techniques, operations, policies, and regulations and the market and the market. From the mid-1980s, particularly from the late 1990s until now, paralleling what occurred in other countries, concerns relating to all these aspects were similar to the early stages of development of media education in China. Though there has been no exact concept of media literacy or media education in China by the end of last century, researchers never failed to take social issues related with media into their views, such as the necessity of equipping children with skills and awareness to protect them from being influenced by the negative impact of the media. And other discussions also focused on how to empower people, especially children and young people to live well in a complex, mediated world.

It was in the late 1990s and early 2000 that some researchers introduced the notion of ‘media literacy’ into Chinese academia (Bu, 1997; Song 2000a, 2000b), mainly about the meaning, content and approach of media education. Surely, those papers seized the researchers’ attention for its novelty and the value of a new research field. (I personally came across the concept in the year 2002 when I started my PhD program at Remin University of China, and I still remember people always felt confused first about my media literacy research but excited right after I explained briefly about it.) In spite of the fact that media literacy studies in China is just over a decade old, a growing number of academic papers and books have been published in the past 10 years.

Survey of journal papers on media literacy (1997-2006) (Rong, 2007)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>1997</th>
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<tr>
<td>Paper number</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>46</td>
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<td>Percentage</td>
<td>0.35</td>
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<td>0.35</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>15.92</td>
<td>30.80</td>
<td>43.25</td>
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The survey shows the growth of research interest in the past decade. 1997 to 2002 is the embryonic stage, when media literacy was only touched by a very small number of researchers. But in the following four years (from 2003 to 2006), 276 papers were published. And broader topics were explored, from an introduction of foreign practice to the implementation in Chinese context. Researchers are mainly from universities, in the discipline of media and communication, pedagogy, and sociology, however, media professionals and government officials also contributed to these publications. Most of the research employed the elucidatory methods of argumentation, and only a few papers were based on empirical methods. Interestingly, from the table below, we
could see high/scattered interests but low loyalty and consistence as to the research, which means only a quarter of the authors maintain their interests, most just touched and left. However, for sure, media literacy has become one of the new research topics in China.

**Authors and numbers of their journal papers on media literacy and media education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of journal papers</th>
<th>Number of authors (87)</th>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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By reading 88 papers on media literacy published in the past 10 years in four Chinese core journals (namely, *International Journalism, Modern Communication, Contemporary Communication, and Broadcasting Journalism*), the author found media literacy research topics are widely spread but generally with three perspectives: 1) media literacy and media education, like pedagogical strategy, curriculum studies, learning assessment, teacher training, foreign practice, life-long education, and education reforms; 2) media literacy and media culture, related to youth culture, mainstream culture, pop culture, cross-culture communication, consumerism, visual literacy, television literacy, and film literacy; 3) media literacy and new media, such as new media technology, information literacy, online safety, health communication, etc. Meanwhile, media literacy of adults, farmers, government officials, minor ethnic groups or even media professionals was also discussed and debated.

During the past 10 years, quite a number of books have been published in the field, which is important as the serve the need for teaching materials and student books. All these publications show the sharp academic response to media literacy studies in China and changes in their academic concerns about the audience, which kept the research away from the traditionally Chinese media studies, which was more for the benefit of media institutions and the government. But media literacy research is concerned with the interest of people both as social individuals and media users for literacy has represented people’s opportunities for learning, expression, creativity, public connection, civic participation and critical judgment (Livingstone, 2007). All these efforts have greatly encouraged the development of media literacy research in China, which could be witnessed in the annual regional, national and international conferences on media literacy, media education and young people, such as the first International Conference of Media Education in China, held in October 2004 in Beijing, sponsored by the Communication University of China (CUC), and the Fudan Forum: Communication and China: Media literacy and Citizen Literacy in December 2007 by the Fudan University, in Shanghai. What is more, media literacy websites were set up subsequently.

There has been debate about the definition of media literacy and its approaches, but less in recent years. Actually, it is hard to find a proper translation for ‘literacy’ in Chinese, and *Suyang* (素养), the accepted Chinese translation means ‘cultivated competency’, which literally shows little about the ability to read and write, as the basic meaning of ‘literacy’ in English. Generally speaking, as to the approaches to media literacy and media education, Chinese researchers have been very realistic. Based on Chinese social context, they argued that media education in elementary and secondary schools is essential but not practical where the current exam-oriented

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1 http://www.medialiteracy.org.cn, by the Media Literacy Group of Fudan University; http://www.fromeyes.cn, by Nanjing Normal University.
education system is concerned, while most agreed that media education at university level is feasible and that universities should also play a key role in the training of future media educators. However, although the researchers understand that protectionist approach is out-dated or just part of the practice, it is still promoted consciously or unconsciously in practice.

As film education continuously developed well at schools in the past decade, media literacy education stepped into high education in different forms. Courses titled ‘media literacy’ have also found their post at a number of universities as an optional course for undergraduates, such as at Communication University of China, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shandong University, and so on. Several universities have established media education/literacy research centers, like the Communication University of China and the Fudan University. Moreover, MA degree programs on Media literacy/education were launched at the Communication University of China and the South China Normal University.

Media literacy research has received support from the government in the past few years. In 2004 the Ministry of Education funded a project on media literacy as one of its annual key funding projects. Government institutes also co-sponsored a forum in 2004 are the Ministry of Education, State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT), and other related government organizations. Media literacy and media education were heated topics in this forum.

However, in the past decade, teachers in primary and secondary schools have not been familiar with media literacy and media education. Some have misunderstood it as teaching through the media. Others understood the distinction, but they lacked the motivation to make changes, mainly because of pressure from the exam-oriented educational practice, which they could not escape.

In brief, compared with the first wave of media education in the 1980s and 90s, the second wave is characterized with increasing academic interest in media literacy. Indeed, it also shows the social concerns and reflects on the whole Chinese media environment in the past ten years, which has been getting more commercialized while, at the same time, facing the power and pressure of the new media technology. Media education at university levels went beyond the moral/aesthetics model, and the empowerment of young people was put on the agenda, which closely involved the defensive approach. Thanks to the academic efforts, media literacy and media education have started to catch the attention of the public and the government, but media education so far has not been officially added to formal education at primary and secondary level, and the achievement of media literacy research and practice at universities owe much to the individual activists and the relatively flexible high education system.

Reflection and Conclusion
While introducing concepts, approaches and pedagogy of media literacy from abroad, and debating on the implementation in China, researchers need to reflect on the practical application of the western discourse of media literacy to meet the contemporary Chinese situation. There is always advantage in framing local contexts with different foreign discourses to discover the missing perspectives or issues neglected, and the introduction of media literacy itself is a good example of a new research field in China.

Media literacy has developed from two theoretical assumptions: inoculation theory and cultural studies theory, and they see the agenda of media literacy differently. The inoculation approach is to empower individuals to explore and to control the effects of media on themselves, while cultural studies approaches focused on transforming society through the work of activists to motivate students to change institutions and make them more democratic (Christ & Potter, 1998).
So far, Chinese media literacy research has followed the inoculation approach more rather than that of cultural studies. However, the British media education framework influenced by culture studies, and its key concepts model, was largely introduced in China. Therefore, it is important for Chinese researchers and educators to be clear as to the aims and methods of media literacy education in China.

Further, the focus of culture studies is not on aesthetic aspect of text but rather what these texts reveal in terms of social systems, such as inequitable distribution of power in culture (Silverblatt, Ferry & Finan, 1999). Concepts of cultural studies, like citizenship and participation, power and empowerment, ownership and democracy, are not only essential but also sensitive in the Chinese context. Chinese media researchers should give a serious consideration to these concepts. Here, I am not saying these concepts could not be touched or dealt with in China. Instead, I would like to suggest reconsiderations as to the different social contexts with which these concepts were concerned, for some western concepts really mean different things in China, like the different understandings of mainstream culture and multi-culture in China and in the West. Influenced by culture studies, media literacy is also concerned with race, gender, class, identity, sex, violence, representation, ideology, values, etc. All these concerns are valuable, but some of the topics really deserve extra attention in China, like sex, identity, or even class (for years, class is not a popular term in political discourse), and more related research is needed. To be brief, the discourse of media literacy in the West benefits but also challenges Chinese media researchers.

Chinese researchers should also challenge themselves by examining media literacy and media education in a broader social, cultural and political context. So far, most of the concerns of Chinese media literacy research are still wandering around the ‘media’ but away from the ‘mediated world’, which is greatly shaped by Chinese political and social systems, and under which both the media and education systems are the last to change in a fundamental way. Surely, to be media literate means to be critical viewers and users of all forms of media, and media education should certainly teach students to engage in media texts, and it should also teach them to challenge media institutions, such as analyzing the value or the ideology behind the news and popular culture. But in the case of China, the centralized political system would be sensitive toward those different and critical voices and the effort of encouraging such voices. Therefore, the dilemma is challenging: for whose interests are Chinese media literacy activists really concerned about --- the individual’s or the government’s? Can they manage to keep the balance while promoting media literacy? This will influence the aim and approach to the future media education in China, even if media literacy is not merely about political ideology. Thus, Chinese media literacy researchers and educators should challenge themselves by taking the current but changing media, education, and political policy to their research agenda to see what media literacy could be and could do in China, as well as what makes media literacy work.

The challenge from the new media communication is another important issue. Considering the increasing online democratic movement, powerful but radical nationalism, and controversial social issues circulating online, media literacy research and practice has never been so important in the history of China. Communication is crucial to China’s future development, especially under the new media environment. China faces two areas of challenges in Communication. One is communication effectiveness at the official level. Formalized, politically correct and slogan-like official languages have lost their persuasive appeal. Political leaders in particular need to learn public communication skills, especially skills for engaging in dialogue with their constituents. The
other is the public themselves who also need to improve their skills and method of expressing their views. In the new media era, opportunity goes hand in hand with challenge. The new media environment means a lot to media literacy research and practice in China.

Indeed, the developments and achievements in media literacy research and practice so far are inspiring. And the Chinese media literacy movement in the past 30 years shares similarity with foreign practice and also bears its own character, which is influenced significantly by Chinese social context. However, its future is still full of uncertainty and challenges due to the current research trends and future media and social changes.

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User-Created Content in China

-What the user has created?

Zhihui Tian

Abstract: This essay explores various aspects of User-Created Content (UCC) as they relate to the possibilities of the participation of China’s social movement. It addresses two major questions: the general perception of UCC or how to understand UCC in China? And, why users in China are so enthusiastic about the content creation online and what the users have created in China? By the means of questionnaire, email interviews, official data, cases studies, the study describes the rapid growth of UCC in China, UCC’s characteristics, its political, technological, social and economic drivers. It also demonstrates the UCC forms and distribution platforms and some symptom changes and challenges for china's society. With the web 2.0, the empowered users’ mobilization and participation in the social, cultural, political life are strengthened. Chapter I addresses background for the UCC in the participation age with power for the audience to become users and research motivations, critical questions and research goals. Chapter II looks into the UCC related studies and theoretical support. Chapter III explores the methodology for the UCC studies. Chapter IV describes the demographics and analyzes the interview data and gets the main research findings. Conclusions in Chapter V make explicit the relevance of developments to the ongoing growth of the User-Created Content.

Key words: User-Created Content participation empower society

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

The Age of Participation

If we have a look at the history of audience, we can conclude that the concept of receiver is nearly over, no more ideas for passive listeners, consumer, or target. Instead, it will encompass any of the following: seeker; consultant; browser; respondent; interlocutor; or conversationalist (Denis McQuail, 1997). And with the development of internet, online audience can work as witness, producer, co-operator, all in all, as the internet user or participant. With the development of technology, the tools of creation are increasingly in everyone’s hands, and digital media tools, increasingly cheap and ubiquitous, have spawned a massive amount of creation at all levels, most notably from the ranks of the grassroots in contrast to traditional, one-to-many publications and broadcasts. The networks that made this possible have provided vast access to what people have created—potentially a global audience for anyone’s creation.

The biggest impact that the internet has produced on society and culture is to provide the
platform and tools for action, in which everyone can join and play. These devices will help people coordinate actions with others around the world—and, perhaps more importantly, with people nearby. Online audience might become “Wisdom of Crowds” (James Surowiecki, 2004), ‘Smart Mobs’ (Howard Rheingold, 2002), Outsourcer, Always-On user, Cooperation Amplifier and News Aggregator.

In the new media age, or internet epoch, the active audiences become real users, creators, producers or network audience, not just readers, listeners or watchers. As Francoise Sabbah wrote in 1985 (quoted in Castells, M. 2000) in one of the best and earliest assessments of new trends in the media, in sum, the new media determine a segmented, differentiated audience that, although massive in terms of numbers, is no longer a mass audience in terms of simultaneity and uniformity of the message it receives. The new media are no longer mass media in the traditional sense of sending a limited number of messages to a homogeneous mass audience. Because of the multiplicity of messages and sources, the audience itself becomes more selective. The targeted audience tends to choose its messages, so deepening its segmentation, enhancing the individual relationship between sender and receiver. After 20 years, in 2006, Time Magazine’s person of the year is: you, yes, you! “The consumer is as Creator. You control the information Age. Welcome to your world.” You—or rather the collaborative intelligence of tens of millions of people, the networked you—continually create the new forms of content, anointing the useful, the relevant, and the amusing and rejecting the rest. In every case, you’ve become an integral part of the action as a member of the aggregated, interactive, self-organizing, auto entertaining audience. (Andrew Keen 2008).

Because of the participative web technologies, social tools are not an improvement modern society; they are a challenge to it. New technology makes new things possible: put another way, when new technology appears, previously impossible things start occurring. If enough of those impossible things are important and happen in a bundle, quickly, the change becomes a revolution (Clay Shirky 2008). The increase in the power of both individuals and groups, outside traditional organizational structures, is unprecedented. The linking of symmetrical participation and amateur production makes the change remarkable.

The most important thing is The Rise of the Individual. Individuals will exert unprecedented power. They will contribute to and participate in the creation of portable, immediate and continuously updated news, entertainment and information. To explore the impact of internet on social mobilization and resistance, let’s just focus on two things: the first is the wider sociological changes brought about by new technology which makes the participation possible, and the next is the new generation empowered by the information revolution, new technology and the web.

By mid–2008, 253 million Chinese had gone online, surpassing the United States to become the country with the most Internet users according to the statistics of China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC, June 2008). By the end of 2008, Chinese Internet users were found to be spending more time online than Internet users in any other country. As an important application of User-created contents, blog has maintained the moment of rapid growth since its incipience. By the end of 2008, the number of blog authors in China has reached 162 million (CNNIC, Jan 2009)

1 http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,20061225,00.html, accessed Dec 28, 2006
They were also found to be more likely to contribute to various kinds of online social networking sites — blogs, forums, chatrooms, photo or video–sharing Web sites, etc. These statistics help to explain why the Internet has become the front–line battleground in China’s new “informational politics” (Yang, 2008). It is the internet users who engage themselves with more say and participation in the public agenda. The influence of traditional mass media institutions is being challenged by an unprecedented level of citizen participation in online media production (through blogs, chat rooms, forums, and the citizen journalism, twitter) which blurs line between consumer and producer, audience and public. This new information environment calls for re-examining previous assumptions and measurement of “media use”, and this study will focus on the user-created content in China in the age of participation.

1.2 Empowered user

Murdoch described the web as a "creative, destructive technology still in its infancy", but said "the history of revolution is not one in which the new wipes out the old". And he hinted at the vulnerability of his own media mogul status in a new era of empowered consumers. "Power is moving away from those who own and manage the media to a new and demanding generation of consumers - consumers who are better educated, unwilling to be led, and who know that in a competitive world they can get what they want, when they want it." The internet is becoming increasingly embedded in everyday life. Drawing on an expanding array of intelligent web services and applications, a growing number of people are creating, distributing and exploiting User-Created Content (UCC) and being part of the wider participative web.

In the terms of empowering internet user, the most strident claims that the Net has genuinely changed the underlying structures of news production point to the proliferation of blogs. (Gillmor, 2004). A major factor shaping the popularity of blogging is the very cheap and usable nature of the major software platforms like Userland, Typepad, or blogger. These allow individuals or groups post news items quickly and easily using a simple web-browser interface. The freshness and immediacy of the many blogs is enhanced by the format: the vast majority content in reverse chronological order, and more blogs provide very simple means by which readers can post reactions to each item. Equally important is the ability to provide readers with search functions, elaborate systems of categorization, and cross-referencing. This is because many blog platforms are essentially databases with web interfaces. This reinforces the view that blogs have levelled the news production playing field, because in the major media companies were developing huge, sophisticated news sites with large archives. In the eyes of the optimists, such as Silicon Valley journalist Dan Gillmor(2006), blogging has dented the power of big media and the extent that what we once thought of as the audience are now the “former audience”: ordinary individual s are becoming active producers of the news in a way that was impossible to imagine before the Internet provided the tools and networks. They are empowered users now.

This is a network communication, as the web 2.0 websites and social media proliferation, and it is increasingly clear that with the explosion of new collaborative sites and mechanisms—YouTube, flicker, folksonomy, cloudmark, RSS and much more--we are at the earliest stage of a massive

social development. Passive recipients of information often have relevant knowledge of their own, and they can make that knowledge available to all. To an increasing degree, consumers are producers; audiences are authors; users are developers. (Cass.R. Sunstein, 2006). The key technological values of web 2.0 are collaboration and participation and sharing. Actually, the concept of "Web 2.0" began with a conference brainstorming session between O'Reilly and MediaLive International. (March, 2004). Web 2.0 is the facilitator and amplifier of the platform.

Internet use has been very empowering for public movements in China. For example: because of the Sun Zhigang incident, online movement and resistance coordinate with offline campaign and action, as a result, on 20 June 2003, Premier Wen Jiabao announced that C&R (Custody and repatriation) regulations were abolished (effective August 1, 2003) and the detention centers would be replaced by simply Measures for Assisting Vagrants and Beggars with No Means of Support in Cities, just to care for poor beggars or homeless persons. Significantly, human rights lawyers considered the Sun case as a victory for human rights legal struggle in Chinese history. This is also the first case for online mobilization and action, a victory for online participation.

The crucial points of Web 2.0 are that no more hardware devices or software devices but social practice and all the tools will let people gain new forms of social power, new ways to organize their interactions and exchanges just in time and in place. Equipped with web 2.0 weapons, the Chinese netizens must come head-to-head with the extremely strong power of the government. This in turn challenges existing institutions, by eroding the institutional monopoly on large-scale coordination. (Clay Shirky, 2008)

Why web2.0 is so important in social & political mobilization in China? It is a way to do things that couldn’t be done before. Every device works now, mobile, blog and so on. They enable people to act together in new ways and in situations where collective action was not possible before. When we change the way we communicate, we change the society. The tools that a society uses to create and maintain are as central to human life as a hive is to bee life. In China, nowadays, people might say that the Internet is a god, because when people don’t have any other recourse, you think of putting it up on the Net, like people who have fallen through the cracks of social welfare, taking some action for Anti-fraud activities, or people who want to point out official corruption: People now have a recourse. And they also have a mission to make the world better. In web 2.0 Age, everyone is a media outlet. “Our social tools remove older obstacles to public expression, and thus remove the bottlenecks that characterized mass media. The result is the mass amateurization of efforts previously reserved for media professionals.” (Clay Shirk 2008:55)

"The message of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs," McLuhan (1964) said. McLuhan cites the way the railway created "totally new kinds of cities and new kinds of work."

What McLuhan writes about the railroad applies with equal force to the media of print, television, the computer and the Internet. "The medium is the message" because it is the "medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action," according to McLuhan. The effects of a medium impose a new environment and set of sensibilities upon its users.

Obviously, in three aspects, the user’s powers demonstrate: involvement with each other would increase; social structures and access to information would decentralize; consumer becomes producer as the public becomes participant role player.

1.3 Motives of This Study and research Questions
Media has been a central element of mobilization reaching back to the days when Gutenberg’s printing press facilitated Luther’s Protestant revolution. Radio and film played a key role in World Wars Periods. The lively media debate helped the Revolutions of 1989, a revolutionary wave that swept across Central and Eastern Europe in late 1989, ending in the overthrow of Soviet-style communist states within the space of a few months. There is no doubting that the Internet has become the next wave of mobilization technologies. What is it about Internet that makes it different from previous mobilizing information technologies? What are impacts the internet has produced or will produce on social and political influence and resistance? This is a huge topic and since everyone can be equipped with media or tools, I will take China as an example and focus on how internet users influences China society, especially with the development of internet technology, how people involve in social movement with User- Created Content.

Most importantly, the internet becomes a “participative web” which is based on an internet increasingly influenced by intelligent web services that empower users to contribute to developing, rating, collaborating and distributing internet content and customising internet applications. As the internet is more embedded in people’s lives users draw on new internet applications to express themselves through “user-created content” (UCC).

This study describes the rapid growth of UCC in China, its increasing role in communication and draws out implications for policy changing. Questions addressed include: how to understand user-created content? What are its drivers, its scope and different forms? What platforms could it take? To what extend it will influence Chinese society, culture and government’s policy?

With the attention of both the people and the government, the Internet has become a channel to rationally bring about fairness and justice. At the same time, in China, the importance of “protecting the people's right to know, the right to participate, the right to express and the right to monitor” was emphasized. In the past year, so many things happened in China such as social problem riots, ethnical riots, anti-corruption, environmental protest. Basically, this study should answer two questions: Do the user have the freedom to speak in China with UCC? Does the UCC work a lot in China at the moment? What have the users created?

CHAPTER II   LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Everyone is a media outlet
Marshall McLuhan (1964) has illustrated that the media form and the messages it convey are essentially inseparable, therefore, the coding and decoding process of certain messages is determined to some extent by the media form itself.

The media has a strong social and cultural impact upon society. This is predicated upon its ability to reach a wide audience which often sends a strong and influential message. Marshall McLuhan (1964) uses the term “the medium is the message” and “the extensions of man” as a means of explaining how the distribution of the message can often be more important than the message itself, because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action.

Any new media is an evolutionary process, and it has opened the door to perceptions and new
spheres of activities. In this sense, the meaning of media is not only how to use it, but how to perceive it.

Now, the perception of reality depends upon the structure of information. These perceptual transformations, the new ways of experiencing that each medium creates, occur in the user regardless of the program content. From discussions above, we can see that there is the technological optimism of Marshall McLuhan; for him the electronic media inaugurate a generalized planetary communication. For the first time in history, the media make possible a mass participation in a productive process at once social and socialized, a participation whose practical means are in the hands of the masses themselves (Mark Poster, 1995). If McLuhan had a chance to observe: email, blogs, search engines, PDAs, cell phones, iPods, podcasting, social networks, YouTube, Flickr, virtual reality, tags, delicious, etc, he would think that His idea still works a lot. Everyone is a medium. UCC works as amplifier, adapter, aggregator of the messages. The essence of UCC is that an emerging technology makes it possible for individuals outside the mainstream media to reach audience. UCC is a medium of sharing ideas and disseminating information and a self-publishing tool, a medium of mass.

2.2 From Audience to User

In the past 20 years, especially 10 years, great changes have taken place in media format and technologies, how to understand audience? What studies we need to adapt to the new phenomenon? The new multi-channel environment is served and stimulated by new distribution technologies such as satellite, cable and microwave and new computer software including the internet. The convergence with computers and mobile phones yields new forms of interactivity. It has been increasingly impossible for any media organization or mainstream media outlets to control or spread content to "audience". With the internet and broadband access, the transformation of media content for formats is done. Great changes lie ahead. And the biggest challenge is that we should change our way of understanding “audience” and the behaviors of the “online audience”.

Dated back to the idea about the user, normally about the customer, consuming some commodities, for the media users, some famous scholar has stated specifically, not completely. But for the audience, some scholars dealt users as audience or changing audience, as Denis McQuail (1997) said these are not really audiences, but they are sets of media users. He emphasized that the 'audience' is no longer unilaterally defined by media industries and sources, whether as a market or public. The once clear distinction between sender and receiver, which is crucial to the old definition of audience, is no longer held to be valid. The typical audience role can cease to be that of passive listener, consumer, receiver, or target.

Some researchers paid more attention to the changes that the audience would bring in an era when they took part in the news making process. Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel (2001) wrote that in an era when anyone can be a reporter or commentator on the Web, as well, 'you move to a two-way journalism.' The journalist becomes a forum leader, or mediator rather than simply a teacher or lecturer. The audience becomes not consumers, but 'pro-sumers,' a hybrid of consumer and producer.” Former publisher of Chicago Tribune, Jack Fuller (1997), pointed out internet is an interactive media, and users would offer both challenge and chances for the traditional media.

In china, user is also called netizen (CNNIC), in Chinese, “Wangmin”, which means the citizens online. Actually Netizens are Internet users who utilize the networks from their home, workplace, or school (among other places). Netizens try to be conducive to the Internet's use and growth. Netizens, who use and know about the network of networks, usually have a self-imposed
responsibility to make certain that it is improved in its development while encouraging free speech and open access.

Also in China, according to the network application of netizens and with respect to their network application quantity and the time they spend on the internet, CNNIC classify the netizens into three series and seven groups. And they are heavy user series: Network dependent group, Network business group, Online social-networking group; moderate user series: Basic application group; light user series: Self presentation group; Non-mainstream network gamer group, Network dabblers.

From the classification, we can see that among the heavy users: online social-networking group belongs to UCC. Among the light user series, self presentation group is the most potential UCC.

**UCC: we are all fans now**

As audiences have become ‘users’ and user-created content has started to become a real competitor to traditional media. The practices of web 2.0, such as the growth of the blogsphere, the impact of peer to peer content distribution, the explosion of YouTube in 2006 ‘put readers to work as watchdogs, whistle-blowers and researchers in large, investigative features’(Howe 2006).

Studies of fans and fan cultures have spearheaded the theoretical construction of his shift from ‘audience’ to ‘user’ in media studies. ‘Fans ’ were the first groups to avail themselves of the mass of website material that exists in a symbiotic relationship with other media. What is clear is that a great deal of web use facilitates a feeling of participation in media space. The focus on the ‘fan’ as New Media co-creator has been particularly compelling in the work of Henry Jenkins(2006). Jenkins has traced the relationships between active fan communities and media producers to analyze the radical shifts between producers and consumers that underpin twenty-first-century media market. In an essay(2002) based on Peirre Levy’s avowedly Utopian ideal of ‘collective intelligence’ Jenkins argued that new media offered ‘new tools and technologies that enable consumers to archive, annotate, appropriate, and re-circulate media content’, and that these tools led to ‘a range of subcultures that promote DO-IT-YOURSELF media production’. Jenkins suggested that these trends are altering ‘the way media consumers relate to each other, to media texts, and to media producers ‘(Jenkins 2002). In his book *Convergence Culture* (2006) Jenkins develops these arguments suggesting that ‘convergence’ is not a technological process but a feature of audience behaviour- it is us who are ‘converging’.

Based on the ‘Collective Intelligence’, more and more authors realized that users are more active and more inclined to work together. Users became not only ‘fans’, but also ‘smart mobs’, and they show ‘the wisdom of crowds’. So, here comes everybody.

**UCC Relevant studies**

The rise of user-created content¹ (UCC) or the so-called “rise of the amateur creators” is one of the main features of the participative web but the participative is a wider concept (OECD, c2007). UCC comprises various forms of media and creative works (written, audio, visual and combined) created by Internet and technology users. Despite frequent References to this subject no commonly agreed definition of user-created content exists. Also referred to as “user-generated”

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¹ UCC is referred to as consumer-generated media in publications from Japanese official sources, see www.johotsusintokei.soumu.go.jp?whitepaper/eng/WP2006/chaper-1.pdf.
content, sources such as Wikipedia refer to it as “...various kinds of media content that are produced by end-users (as opposed to traditional media producers such as professional writers, publishers, journalists, licensed broadcasters and production companies)”\(^1\)

The study of UCC originates from internet study or net study. Writing in 1995, leading net scholar Steven Jones (1994) summed up the inflated claims for the impact of what was then termed ‘Computer Mediated Communications’ (CMC). He observed that popular and critical writing claimed the net would:

Create opportunities for education and learning
Create new opportunities for participatory democracy

These themes have continued to interest the studies of the net in its fully ‘post web’ era. Publishing nine years later, David Gaundelett's review of ‘some of the main issues’ (2004) are surprising insofar as they display strong continuities with the fundamental issues identified by a previous generation of CMC research. Gauntlet (2004) summarizes the research areas in the field as:

1. The Web allows people to express themselves—though putting up their own sites, through Social Networks and peer-to-peer media sharing, through blogging and YouTube posting. ‘The web...offers an extraordinary explosion of opportunity for creativity and expression’
2. The web is changing politics and international relations—This continues the arguments made by the first generation of net researchers that the internet had the potential to revive the public sphere through for multiple lateral conversation. These trends clearly continue both in the use of web publication by ‘subaltern’ or outsider groups as well as through the impact of the blog explosion on the fourth estate functions of journalism.

In terms of understanding User-created content, more scholars and researchers or practitioners offered their sparkles in four respects.

The first is about the historical and theoretical studies on internet UCC. The founder of MIT Media Lab, Nicholas Negroponte should be the pioneer in this field. He predicted in his book being digital, that internet will offer more choices for people to pick their own topics and sources. My Daily is a breakthrough for traditional gate-keeping news model.

The second is from the viewpoints of the media professional leaders. User-created content has attracted attentions of the media pioneers and some of them offered their unique insights about the UCC, such as BBC News Chief Richard Sambrook; CEO of Reuters, Tom Glocer; CEO of News Corp, Rubert Murdoch, and strategist of Morris digital, Steve Yelvington. So, we can see the formats of UCC become a part of the news outlets, such as, BBC---iCAN, BBCiPLAYER, iMP, BBCi, iNeighbours; Nytimes---mytimes; washingtonpost.com--- My Post; News Corp---MySpace; CNN---iReport; AP's 'Assignment: You' and 'My World'

The third is the academic results from some scholars and consultants. Advocates of UCC, such as, Jay Rosen, Jeff Jarvis, Vin Crosbie, all of them are enthusiastic trying theorizing User-created content and predicted the positive sides of the UCC. Alfred Hermida and Neil Thruman (2008) worked on "A clash of cultures: The integration of User-created content within professional journalistic frameworks at British newspapers websites". This study examines how newsroom is

framing the adoption of User-Created Content (UCC) at leading UK newspaper websites. A survey quantified the adoption of UCC by mainstream news organizations. Findings reveal that news executives are providing opportunities for user participation but are experiencing problems with incorporating user media into professional journalism structures due to concerns about reputation, trust and legal issues. This research suggests that news organizations have an opportunity to facilitating user media, by filtering and aggregating it in ways useful and valuable to audiences.

The fourth contribution is from well-known online media studies experts, Dan Gillmor (2004), Chris Willis and Shayne Bowman, they focus their research on we the media or we media. "It is possible for the internet user to become the active information creator and publisher." Such a slogan, ‘we report, you report’ never works again". Both predicted the future of we media, analyzing the sharing culture needed in internet age.

In China, though, some famous scholar haven’t defined the concept of user-created content, they have done some researches on similar topics, such as citizen journalism, or public journalism. In his paper, To subvert or to rehabilitate--the rising and handling of citizen Journalism, Professor Shao Peiren (2005) analyzed the sudden, encountered, opening and informal characteristics of the citizens' participation of the journalistic activities. In his studies, Shao concluded that citizen journalism, "A potential power is emerging, and begins to reshape the news landscape" and suggested related codes should be established to promote mass engagement. More direct studies on UCC have been conducted by professor Liang Yongzhi, who is associate professor of Hongkong Chinese University. His research centers on Hongkong User-created content, and the subjects range from the genre and objects of the online content; motivation; individual and psychological characteristics; social participation of the content creation.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Methodological design was determined by the need to examine the User-created Content in China and how much the UCC can work. Basic information is necessary for me to support or negate the propositions: there are lots of UCC and the UCC produce some influence on the society, culture, and politics in China. This involved the questionnaire, from user’s angle, which user-created Content platform the user use, the general evaluation of the UCC, UCC topics, user’s motivation and response.

On the social influence of UCC, I chose methods that helped me collect the views, perceptions, mediated experiences resulting from involvement with the Chinese media professional. The qualitative research stresses the “commitment to naturally occurring data”, explored within everyday social contexts as opposed to artificially created and often constrained environments (Silverman, D 1993). The concerns of qualitative data overlap holistic understandings of subjects, meanings, time, processes and contextual factors, or what Bryman,A (1988) describes as “the commitment to seeing through the eyes of the people being studies”. So, interviews are used for

the effort to study what influence the UCC might produce on society, culture, politics, even
democracy in China. During 2008-2009, many events happened in China, cases studies are needed
to demonstrate in what ways and how the users have participated these events and what effects the
participation produced.

3.1 Questionnaire

3.1.1 The design of questionnaire

This study mainly focuses two questions: one is that the situation of user-created content in China
and the other is what the user created. Survey research usually seeks to provide empirical data
collected from respondents. Plus, surveys could identify not only what channels these respondents
take but also to find out about individual opinions, attitudes and behaviour towards a topic
(Hansen, et al., 1998). And the basic tool for this kind of research is the questionnaire. It
standardises and organises the collection and processing of information and helps me to answer
questions. In this way, identical or very similar questions can be asked of a number of people. For
this survey, most of the questions are closed. So, it is easy for me to get the general impression and
basic data.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part is filtration; only over 18 Chinese
or these who knows a little about User-created Content can join the survey. The second one is 16
main questions, and demographic is the last.

According to my time and location, I chose internet survey. The internet survey provides a fast
and cheap alternative to postal surveys, telephone surveys and face-to-face clipboard
questionnaires when it comes to collecting survey data (Couper, 2000; Dillman, 2007).

The advantages of internet survey lie in two respects. The first is responses can be read
automatically into a spreadsheet or database, which has the twin benefits of speed and accuracy in
terms of data collection. The second is to make full use of the technical skill and access to web
hosting resources and it is easy to analyze the data. Because of using special survey software, it is
easy to get the basic data, especially those for closed questions and I am surprised with my
findings and satisfied and happy with the results.

3.1.2 Research Sample and data collection

How many respondents do I need? For such a big topic, the more it is, the better. For the graduate
research level, I’ve got 100 respondents which are enough for my study. For the convenience and
efficiency, The Internet survey was conducted in a web-based questionnaire which is designed as a
web page and located on a host site http://www.surveymonkey.com, waiting for people who visit
the site to complete it. Actually it is difficult for people to click and answer when they surf the
web. The short-cut is to email my friends, students, colleagues telling them about the survey and
including in the email a hypertext link to the website so that all the respondent needs to do is
double click on the link in order to go to the website and open the questionnaire. So, this is the
target samples, who should be at least college-educated, frequent internet surfers or browsers,
even creators. For in China, I am a teacher in a university, most of my friends, students, colleagues
and their peers are in the same level.

In the survey, there are 20 questions, and I’ve got amazing answers and data.

Firstly, the notion of User-created content is confusing and abstract for the internet users, yet the
user are quite familiar with the UCC platforms and forms. Among the respondents, 99% know or
use the formats of user-created content. Among them 71.1% use and know IM (Msn, Skype, QQ,
Gtalk). 48.5% know and use YouTube, Youku, 56 (or other video sharing websites). Even 17.2%
know and use mobile or microblog (Such as Twitter, Fanfou, Fetion). 88.9% get information from user-created content, but 33% haven’t heard of user-created content. And the forms for user to use are mainly texts 85.9% and pictures 70.7%, video 16.2%, graphic 19.2% and radio 4.0%.

The second is that the general evaluation of User-created Content is quite positive. In judging whether the UCC is objective or subjective, the average rating is 2.5 (the highest objective rating is 4). At the moment, the respondent think UCC is quite objective. In some way, UCC in China is still credible.

The third is the UCC is highly interactive, 90.9% answered “yes, I have” to the question: Have you got any response or comments for the content created by yourself?

The fourth is that UCC in China is mostly private writing. The content for the user to create: diary 54.6%; personal demonstration 48.5%; my study or job 44.3%; only 17.5% about political issues, and 5.2% about Chinese celebrities. Some respondents specified others as: transmit something from main website, music and movies, comments on social issues, and economics. For the question: what is your biggest worry when you write something online, the biggest answer is “read by someone I don’t like” 60.9%. The motivation to create something online is: Just let my relatives and friends keep an eye on me 40.4%; keep notes of my own experiences 69.7% and 43.4% for personal interest. Only 10.1% focus on social problems.

The fifth is that the users in China are quite actives: 9.1% writes everyday, 40.4 % writes weekly, and 27.3% monthly. 45.4% has more than 3-year UCC experiences.

The sixth is that the users might not create something about social issues, but keep eyes on social current affairs. The content they are most interested in are useful information 62.6%, social problems 56.6% and breaking news 54.5%. And the most impressive social problem is Deng Yujiao event 57.8%. 76.5% think that “Fu Wocheng, Da Jiangyou, Duo Maomao” are the user-created content.

The seventh is that the users in China are quite optimistic about the future of UCC. 92.9% believe there are some spaces for development in China for User-Created Content. 57.6% think the government’s response to the UCC is active. The most important finding is that 82.3% agree UCC will impact Chinese government’s transparency, efficiency or increase the interaction. Most interestingly, 48.5% think Chinese government can control the UCC and 51.5% think it can’t.

The last is that the representative samples are female-skewed with high educational level. With long internet ages, Most of them are young students, 91.8 % ranging from 18 to 30 years old. From the demographic, it is easy to conclude that UCC is largely applied by young persons. UCC plays a big role in internet network.

### 3.2 Semi-structured interview

#### 3.2.1 The design of semi-structured interview

For the location reason, I would like to use the internet to conduct interviews, mainly using emails correspondence. Compared with the conventional interview or face-to-face interview, using the internet might lose some visual clues, for there is no video-conferencing link and we can’t see each other. The absence of eye contacts, short of vocal communication, the interviewee might answer the questions in a quite shorter and simpler way. As an interviewer, I have no option to encourage him or her to talk more, for when he answered my questions, what he or she can connect are verbal ones. And the time lapse can also stultify the flow of interaction, depriving the interview of its natural qualities (Denscombe Martyn, 2007). The other side of the coin is that the interviewees have enough time for reflection on and consideration of the question. And the
absence of visual clues can make the interviewee focus on the questions, without considering the age, sex, ethnicity, accent and social class between the interlocutors. Besides email interviews, there is also one exception. While attending a seminar in BBC Bush House, I interviewed the director of BBC Chinese department Li Wen face to face in a question and answer time.

Two topics should be talked about in the research interview. One is the general perception of user-created content in China. Another is what the user has created. Based on these two themes, the semi-structured interviews should be taken with the preconceived ideas about the crucial issues and direction. But, the questions may vary for interviewees with different background. In general, there are 6 or 7 questions for each interviewee. Main questions include: what is your understanding of UCC? What impact do you think the UCC have on culture, politics, media and society in China? For the Urumqi case, what’s your opinion about "rumors stirred up ethnic conflicts". Do you think it has anything to do with UCC? Can the government control the UCC?

3.2.2 Interview Recruitment and Data Collection

Because the UCC is an emerging social and technological new thing, those who pay a lot of attention to it will be my selection of the people. So, people tend to be chosen deliberately because they have some special contribution to make, because I think they should have some unique insight or because of the position they hold. My 7 interviewees mainly include the renowned Internet observer, or IT commentator- Keso; Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Internet Content Operator (ICO)- Wei Wuhui, executive deputy editor-in-chief of the only English official website Chinadaily.com-Liu Baijia, journalists from official Xinhua News Agency, People’s Daily, plus BBC Chinese department director. In China, UCC is quite grassroot behaviour and not lots of academics pay attention to it except Wei Wuhui who is both the internet professional and assistant professor of Shanghai Jiaotong University. Media professionals, web-savvy elites, even government officials begin to realize the significance of the UCC. So, they have unique insights about the UCC.

How much the Mainstream media take advantage of UCC? According to Chinadaily.com interviewee’s response: “In Chinadaily.com, we have blog and translation bar services. When we publish the UCC, we will filter first, then post. Yes, we ask our journalists to pay attention to the UCC, actually some journalists also write blogs. Occasionally, they use the blog, twitter and facebook to get the news sources” (interview Liu Baijia). In Global Times attached to People’s Daily, “the user-generated content is not largely being used as a medium of telling stories or coverage news events. However, our newspaper establishes its own BBS, online forum and blogs, which is to say, user-generated-content is mainly used as a measure to collect news information and sources” (Yinhang). “We have set up our online newspaper by providing readers global news and insights around the clock. Readers can subscribe our electronic newspaper and comment on every story we published.

But readers won’t see all comments unless they pass the words filtering and censorship” (Zhangnan). The answer from Xinhua’s interviewee is “I haven’t paid much attention on UGC contents with Xinhua, but I do know there is a UGC section on the official website of the agency. Users discuss hot topics and submit photos and other contents onto the site http://www.xinhuanet.com/forum/index.htm” (Zhangying). From the interviews, we can conclude that UCC is not so popular in mainstream media in China, but they still exist and begin to grow. According to Liu Baijia’s comments, at the moment, facebook or Kaixin are quite popular. Even in China, comparatively, blog in some way lags behind. “We are planning the English-version blog
on the basis of Chinese blog; and open the platform for the user to offer and share news sources, such as CNN iReport.”

In terms of the question, what pressure the UCC will produce on the current Chinese established media system, there are different answers. Official answer is the UCC will become a long term platform for people to express themselves the social problems, to state their complaints or expose the corruption. If it is necessary, the government can make full use of and control the UCC (Liu Baijia). Or, Wise choice for mainstream media to offer interaction and participation channels for users; good way to keep audience (Zhangying). People from People’s Daily think, “Those triumphs, whether it’s successful or not, should be encouraged. The truth is that, every time when main-stream media was trying to boost more interactive triumphs with user-generated content, people will response with a high enthusiasm. So the Chinese main-stream media should continue doing that in the future, thus in a more open-minded, loosen and time-advanced attitude.” (Yinhang)

Different answers from Keso and Wei. Keso said that the introduction of UCC can be part of the mainstream media’s strategy, but the UCC is still subject to the rules of the game of the traditional media, UCC has to go through gatekeeper release. UCC in the mainstream media is completely different from that on the Internet (such as wemedia). UCC has its own publication, transmission, and there is no clear audit, no screening. The process of its spread mainly depends on groups, with their participation, filter, and gradually spreading.

The key question in the interview is do you think what impacts the UCC produce on the society, culture, politics in China? The answers are quite different and insightful.

The last question about UCC’s impact is Xinjiang Urumqi Massive Incident which was caused by Shaoguan Massive Incident. According to official source, the main reason of the ethnic conflicts is the rumour from the internet by a former employee of the Shaoguan Toy Xuri Factory. The question is what the UCC produced in this event? I’d like to list and describe the reactions from my interviewees to the UCC’s influences.

3.3 Other considerations
To explore the UCC in China is quite new and challenging. Except the quantitative and qualitative approaches applied, they are still lots of official data, such as CNNIC or rating data from the companies. Besides, so many events relating to UCC happened in 2008-2009, case studies are important. Some cases will be used in my findings as well. What is more, since 1997, I am interested in online world which is amazing for me, as for UCC, I always keep an eye on it. If online observation is also qualitative approach, I think I get some useful data as well, such as reading blogs, leaving or reading comments, watching their video scripts, sharing some pictures or articles. All in all, online observation and online participation is possible to keep the same pace as the UCC develops.

CHAPTER IV RESEARCH FINDINGS
4.1 Demographic description towards the survey sample of Chinese UCC

Figure 4.1
Figure 4.2

Figure 4.3
Which User-Created Content platform do you know and use it mostly? (Multiple choice)

- Twitter
- Facebook
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Reddit
- Instagram
- Medium
- Personal website
- Other

Figure 4.4
Figure 4.5

Figure 4.6
Figure 4.7

What is your motivation to create something online?

A. Just let my relatives and friends keep an eye on me: 40.40%
B. Keep notes of my own experiences: 69.70%
C. Practice writing: 9.10%
D. Personal publicity: 11.10%
E. For personal interest: 43.40%
F. Focus on social problem: 10.10%

Figure 4.8

What impressed you most from the recent China social problems events (in the past one year)? (Please tick one or more answers)

A. Wengan event: 20.00%
B. Shishou Event: 42.20%
C. Xiamen Walking: 23.30%
D. Dengyujiao Event: 57.80%
E. Lue Caixia Event: 22.20%
Figure 4.9

How long it is since you begin to create content online?

- F. More than five years: 14.50%
- E. 3-5 years: 31.30%
- D. More than two years: 20.20%
- C. About two years: 15.20%
- B. More than one year: 7.10%
- A. Less than one year: 12.10%

Figure 4.10

How often do you write something online? (Choose one answer)

- F. Cannot remember: 11.10%
- E. 3 months +: 5.10%
- D. Quarterly: 7.10%
- C. Monthly: 27.30%
- B. Weekly: 40.40%
- A. Everyday: 9.10%
Figure 4.11

Table 4.12

184
What's your general evaluation of User-created Content? Please mark it from 1-4, '4' stands for "very objective", '1' stands for "very subjective".

![Bar Chart](image1.png)

Figure 4.13

Do you agree that there are some spaces for development in China for User-Created Content?

![Bar Chart](image2.png)

Figure 4.14
Figure 4.15

Figure 4.16
Figure 4.17

Do you think the Chinese government can control the UCC?

A. Yes, I do  48.50%
B. No, I don't  51.50%

Figure 4.18

Have you got any response or comments for the content created by yourself?

A. Yes, I have  90.90%
B. No, I haven't  9.10%
Figure 4.19

Did you get some information from the User-Created content?

A. Yes, I did. 88.50%
B. No, I didn't. 11.00%

Figure 4.20-1

Do you think that “Fu Wocheng, Da Jiangyou, Duo Maomao” are the User-Created Content?

A. Yes, I do. 76.50%
B. No, I don't. 23.50%

188
Figure 4.20-2

Figure 4.20-3

189
4.2 The main forms and distribution platforms of UCC

UCC development in China keeps the same pace with the world, especially in the forms and the
distribution platforms. Many different types and distribution platforms for user-created content have developed, with a significant amount relying on hosting services providing online space where the content can be accessed. People might not know the concept of User-created Content, but they do know and use the UCC distribution platforms and UCC forms or types. In the survey figure 4.3 and figure 4.2, UCC main forms and distribution platforms are quite a lot. And different types of UCC are often linked to specific UCC distribution platforms, e.g. written comments being diffused on BBS, blogs, videos being diffused on online sharing platforms, and UCC types and their distribution platforms are often closely associated.

**UCC Forms**

**Text**
According to the survey, 85.9% respondents use text (figure 4.2). Text is the main type for the user to create content. In China, there is a famous “Super Girl” Li Yuchuan, whose fans get together in different BBS or online bars to discuss, to create and to share. For example, in the Baidu TieBar: Li Yuchun Bar, there are 2473025 threads, 49275742 posts, and the fans number online are 55490.1

**Photos and images**
User-created photos are normally taken with digital cameras. In China, there are numerous services that have evolved around the hosting of photos, including fotolog, lafeng, fotool, fotoblog, yupoo and flickr. The landscape of digital photos has been changed because of the tagging, user-implemented indicators, and recognition software. More and more people would like to use pictures to make friends and to share with others. Photo is another important UCC type. According to the survey figure 4.2, 70.7% of the respondents use picture for their contents. In the same case mentioned above, the fans upload Li Yuchun’s pictures which number amounted to 13715.2

**Video and audio**
User-produced or edited video content is the most powerful tool in participation of the society. “Seeing is believing” works better. In China, more and more people would like to take video to record the social events. Video or audio content may be hosted on sites dedicated to remixing, on sites that provide podcasting and on personal homepages and website. In China, the video sharing platforms are quite popular, such as youku, toodou, ku6, 56, and 6rooms. In the survey figure (4.3, 4.2)48.50% of the respondents know and use video mostly and 16.20% use video for their content creation.

**UCC platforms in China**

**BBS**
An Internet forum, or message board, is an online discussion site. It originated as the modern equivalent of a traditional bulletin board, and a technological evolution of the dialup bulletin board system. From a technological standpoint, forums or boards are web applications managing

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2. ibid
user-generated content. People participating in an Internet forum may cultivate social bonds and interest groups for a topic may form from the discussions. Although BBS survives only as a niche hobby in most parts of the world, it is still an extremely popular form of communication for most Chinese. And there are quite famous BBS in China, such as Tianyan forum, Qiangguo forum and Sina forum and campus BBS, Beidaweiming, qinghuashuimu. In the survey, 39.40% use forum or BBS as their platforms. Most BBS are now accessible over telnet and typically offer free email accounts, FTP services, IRC chat and all of the protocols commonly used on the Internet.

**Blogs**

A blog is defined as a type of webpage usually displaying date-stamped entries in reverse chronological order (Gill, 2004; OECD, 2006). It is updated at regular intervals and may consist of text, images, audio, video, or a combination of them. Blogs serve several purposes including delivering and /or sharing information. Installing blogging software—e.g. Movable Type, WordPress and Nucleus CMS-on a server is necessary to blog. In China, there are many blog hosting services (e.g. Baiduspace, QQspace, Sinablog, BlogBus) which make blog easier by removing the technical burden of maintaining a hosting account and software application.

Blogging is very popular in China. As an important application of user-created contents, blog has maintained the momentum of rapid growth since its inception. While the size of users grew, the activities of Chinese blogs improved. The proportion of blogs updated within half a year improved by 11.7% from the end of 2007 (CNNIC, Jan, 2008). The growth of the amount of blogs affected the concentration of users. Blog channels became a standard part in various types of websites. The addition of social network service element played a promoting role in the growth of blog users. The influence of blogs was further strengthened. In the survey, 70.70% use blogs.

**Wiki and other text-based collaboration formats**

A wiki is a website that allows users to add, remove and otherwise edit and change content (usually text). Users can change the content of pages and format them with a very simple tagging language. Actually wiki is a hypertext system, supporting the collaborative writing. Users don’t need to know HTML, but still can edit the websites with HTML features. In China, various sites provide wiki hosting, e.g. zh.wikipedia, wililib, allwiki.

**Group-based aggregation and social bookmarking**

Group-based aggregation consists of group-based collection of links to articles and media as new social content aggregators, which build on opinions and knowledge of all web users. Users can join the network bookmarks marked by a number of keywords. Compared to professional users with the cataloguing and metadata of existing practices, social bookmarks are more convenient and practical and considered the next generation of web information infrastructure. In China, sites such as 365key, Wozhai specialize in the use of this model, whereby users post news links to the site and other users rate them by adding their vote to it, Delicious, Dig also popular in China.

**Podcasting**

Podcasting has emerged out of the combination of the ease of audio production with technologies that allow for subscription and syndication. 2005 is the year for podcasting in China, toodou, 56 and 6 rooms are quite popular. According to CNNIC Jan, 2009, there are only slightly increase in network video users. Compared with the end of 2008, there was a net increase of over 40 million users, reaching 202 million. Users of network videos were mainly concentrated in young people under 30.

**Social networking sites**
In China, social networking sites also called friends making sites. Social networking sites (SNS) enable users to connect to friends and colleagues, to send mails and instant messages, to blog, to meet new people and to post personal information profiles. Profiles include photos, video, images, audio, and blogs. Rich application varieties (for example, web page games) and use measures (for example, friend-making via mobile phones) played a larger promotion role in the growth of users of friend-making websites. In the survey, 54.5% use SNS. (figure 4.3)

In China, campus and workplace network friend-making forms developed very rapidly in 2008, e.g. facebook-alike: kaixin, xiaonei, 51, 360quan. Twitter-alike social network service sites like fanfou, fetion. Such friend-making websites, depending on the existing user size basis, attracted more new users, are quite popular and expand quickly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1 Comparison of Users of Network Communication 2007-2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>End of 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having blogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Updating blogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forums/BBS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend-making websites</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CNNIC, Jan, 2009

**Online Mobile Message**

The functions of instant messaging are becoming increasing richer. On the one hand, it is becoming a connection point of socialized network; on the other hand, its platform nature also makes it gradually become important entrance for various network applications such as email, blog, network game and search.

At the end of 2008, the use rate of instant messaging was 75.3%, the size of user group increased by 53 million, but the use rate fell by 6.1% (CNNIC, Jan 2009).

Now, receiving video and audio on both mobile phones and online is expected to develop rapidly in China, e.g. fanfou, fetion, fzone, kongzhong. In the survey, 17.20% use online Mobile message. But the potential users will be huge, for the size of netizens accessing the Internet by mobile phones reached 117.6 million, increasing by 133 from 2007. (CNNIC, Jan, 2009)

**4.3 Characteristics of UCC in China**

The most striking feature of the UCC in China is the users who are young, energetic, web-savvy, well-educated. The fashionable word is called post 80, among the users, most of them were born in 1980s. It is this young generation born after 1980 who were most vocal on the Chinese Internet in 2008, ranging from 20 to 30 in ages.
Comparison of Netizens’ Age Structure 2007-2008
Sources: CNNIC Jan, 2009

College students are the most active group among the groups. Their leisure, curious and restless psychology characterized by young people and the limitless possibilities on the internet are important reasons for their high enthusiasm for the internet. Blogs and forums are fields in which they are very active, with the updating rate of blogs among college students users in half a year reaching 80.3%.(CNNIC report,Jan,2009). In the survey, 91.80% are under 30(figure 4.4).

According to the development of UCC in China, there are other basic characteristics besides the young users. These characteristics are likely to evolve over time, but they still lay the ground for identifying a spectrum of UCC in China.

Publication is required. UCC is published in some context, for example on a publicly accessible website or on a page on a social networking (or friends making) site, or in a box posting. In china, BBS is the most active online avenue for people to discuss or comment or uploading. Although this characteristic excludes e-mail, two-way instant messages and the like. But with the development of application software, more and more microblogs such as Fanfou, Fetion, have the function of two-way or many-to-many instant messages. And the publication platforms are various and available, mainly online.

Creative effort is made by the user: a certain amount of creative effort has to be put into creating the work or adapting existing works to construct a new one; i.e. users must add their own value to the work. When people create a document on their computer, that isn’t really what user-created content refer to. User-created content isn’t just the output of ordinary people with access to created tools like word processors and drawing programs; it requires access to re-creative tools as well, tools like Flickr and Wikipedia and weblogs that provide those same people with the ability to distribute their creations to others. UCC could include user uploads of original photographs, thoughts expressed in a blog or a new music video. The creative effort behind UCC may also be collaborative, for example on websites that users edit collaboratively. Merely copying a portion of a television show and posting it on an online video website (a frequent activity on UCC sites) would not be considered UCC. Nevertheless the minimum amount of creative effort is hard to define and depends on the context.(Graham Vickery 2007, OECD)

In the age of “the cult of the amateur”(Andrew, Keen 2008), user-created content is usually
created outside of professional routines and practices. User-created content is a group phenomenon, and an amateur one. When people talk about user-created content, they are describing the ways that users create and share media with one another, with no professionals where in sight. Seen this way, the idea of user-created content is actually not just a personal theory of creative capabilities but a social theory of media relations. It often does not have an institutional or commercial market context and UCC may be produced by non-professionals without expectation of remuneration or profit. People are blogging, providing free informational articles, or writing free "guest" articles. There are many amateur contributors to the internet Motivating factors include: connecting with peers, achieving fame, notoriety or prestige, and expressing oneself. As Clay Shirky described, “Our social tools remove older obstacles to public expression, and thus remove the bottlenecks that characterized mass media. The result is the mass amateurization of efforts previously reserved for media professionals.” (2008, p55)

The last but not the least important characteristic of the UCC is that the creators do not expect remuneration or profit since they create outside of professional routines. They do share, cooperate and aggregate. UCC may have begun as a grassroots movement not focused on monetary rewards, but monetisation of UCC has been a growing trend, such as the Google ad-sense model. Now, people have access to myriad tools that let them share writing, images, video—any form of expressive content, and use that sharing as an anchor for community and cooperation. People like to consume media, of course, but they also like to produce it and they like to share it, because we now have media that support both making and sharing, as well as consuming.

4.4 Drivers of User-Created Content

In China, there are political, technological, social, and economic drivers of User-created content accounting for rapid growth and pervasiveness.

Political drivers

In China, the government played an important role in fostering the advance of its Internet development. Both Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin had “stressed the crucial role of development of the information infrastructure to China’s goal of achieving the ‘four modernizations’ in agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and technology”.(Yang 2006, p137) The state-led information infrastructure construction in the 1990s paved the way for the skyrocketing development of the IT industry in China. Besides, starting from the late 1990s, the Chinese government opened the telecommunications industry to the free market mechanism. This policy immediately attracted a large amount of investment in China’s IT industry, which served as another driving force for the phenomenal growth of China’s Internet sector. Furthermore, the convenient no-application Internet access offered by China Telecom also contributed to the astonishing expansion the Internet user base. All of these favourable conditions guaranteed a staggering increase of Chinese Internet users in the past years. And in June 20, 2008, President of People’s republic of China came to the Peopledaily.com to talk with the users, in China internet history, this is the first time for senior official to meet “face to face” with the netizens. President Hu expressed “the Internet has become ‘a distribution center for cultural information and a magnifying glass for social opinion’”.¹ This is a clear sign for the country to encourage users to

participate online discussion about the country.

In order to guarantee the healthy development of information technology in China, the state has developed and released a series of policies such as 2006-2020 National Informatization Development Strategy and “Eleventh Five-Year Plan” for Informatization of National Economy and Social Development. Informatization is becoming an important means for promoting scientific development. By 2010, the state will realize “every village has access to telephone and every township has access to the Internet.”¹ The Policy for Government Openness has come into effect in May, 2008 which has demanded that "Openness is the principle, lack of openness is the exception". In such a political background, the government has greatly encouraged to develop information technology which also greatly improves the information distribution.

In the survey, respondents are still optimistic about UCC in China. More than 50% think the UCC is quite objective (figure 4.12). 92.2% think there are some spaces for development in China for UCC (figure 4.13). And 57.60% think the government’s response to the UCC is active (figure 4.14). To my surprise, 82.3% of the respondents agree UCC will impact Chinese government’s transparency, efficiency or increase the interaction (figure 4.15). What more, 51.50% of the respondents think the Chinese government can’t control the UCC (figure 4.16).

**Technological drivers**

Communication and network technology develops toward the direction of broadband, mobility and integration, and data communication is gradually taking the place of voice communication to become the mainstream in the field of communication. In China, with the progress of industrial technology and intensification of competition amount network operators, the software and hardware environment for network access is being optimized. The price of network access and users’ terminal products keeps dropping so that users’ threshold for Internet access keeps failing.

First, the rapid uptake of broadband by users has increasingly enabled users to create, post and download content. In china, by December 31, 2008, the size of broadband netizens reached 270% million, accounting for 90.67% of total netizens who have accessed the Internet via broadband in the past half a year. Broadband includes: XDSL, CABLE MODERM, optical fiber access, power line communication and Ethernet etc. (CNNIC, Jan 2009). At the same time, high-speed wireless broadband becomes available and with the advent of the 3G age, internet usage via mobile phones will se more rapid development.

Second, there have been large increases in processing speeds, hard drive and flash memory capacities and consumer electronics capabilities (high quantity digital cameras, digital video recorders and mobile phones) to create content. In china, the mobile phones without license tags (usually called “Shan Zhai phones”) develop rapidly, whose support for mobile internet access and low prices provide hardware basis for users to send and receive mobile phone clips and pictures at higher speeds.

Third, more accessible software tools, such as html-generating software, and software which enables users to find, edit and create audio and video without professional knowledge are another driving force.

Finally, the rise of sites and services hosting UCC was a necessary driver as not every user has available server space or the technical skills to post and distribute their work, which is also called web 2.0 technology\(^1\). With the development of internet, how people involve in social movement with web 2.0 tools and application. And the differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0\(^2\) is: “move from personal websites to blogs and blog site aggregation, from publishing to participation, from web content as the outcome of large up-front investment to an ongoing and interactive process, and from content management systems to links based on tagging (folksonomy)” (Flew.T ). The key technological values of web 2.0 are collaboration and participation and sharing. Actually, the concept of "Web 2.0" began with a conference brainstorming session between O'Reilly and MediaLive International. (March, 2004).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>Volume of growth</th>
<th>Growth rate</th>
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<tr>
<td>IPv4 (Nrs)</td>
<td>135,274,752</td>
<td>181,273,344</td>
<td>45,998,592</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain Names (Nrs)</td>
<td>11,931,277</td>
<td>16,826,198</td>
<td>4,894,921</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including CN domain names (Nrs)</td>
<td>9,001,993</td>
<td>13,572,326</td>
<td>4,570,333</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites (Nrs)</td>
<td>1,503,800</td>
<td>2,878,000</td>
<td>1,374,200</td>
<td>91.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including websites under CN (Nrs)</td>
<td>1,006,000</td>
<td>2,216,400</td>
<td>1,210,400</td>
<td>120.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International bandwidth (Mbps)</td>
<td>368,927</td>
<td>640,286.67</td>
<td>271,359.67</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Social drivers**

The rapid penetration of broadband, more online interactivity and the willingness to share, contribute and create online communities are changing netizen’s media consumption habits. Social drivers are likely to be one of the most important drivers of change. In China, UCC is attracting more and more attention from both the government and the general people, though the participative group is initially a small number of young, early adopters and web-savvy people.

The internet has high stickiness and high transmissibility. According to CNNIC’’s survey, once


a user comes into contact with the internet, the loss rate is very low, on the other hand, applications on the internet such as online games, instant messaging, blog forum and friend making have very strong interactive functions, which can promote the transmission of the related applications. Such transmission not only includes transmission to netizens, but also includes transmission to non-netizens, while the transmission to non-netizens will promote the expansion of the size of netizens.

UCC in China, in some sense, is still quite self expression (figure 4.10), for most contents are concerned with user themselves. And the motivation for the respondents is to “keep notes of my own experiences”69.7% (figure 4.6). Also from figure 4.10, we can see most of the respondents write content online for themselves. However, respondents are quite active in creating something online. 40.40% write online weekly (figure 4.9). More than 51.5% have created online for more than 2 years (figure 4.8). 90.9% of the respondents have got response and comments for the created content (figure 4.17). And 88.90% get some information from the UCC (figure 4.18).

In recent years, more and more massive incidents were exposed to public, because of the internet’s immediacy and easy access, but the most direct reason is the attention from the public. Respondents are interested in current events and social problems in China, 56.6% respondents are interested in social problems (figure 4.5). And they are impressed by the recent China social mass events (figure 4.7). But they are also inclined to be realistic and pragmatic when deciding what to write, making decisions about what kinds of postings they will write. Only 17.50% write about the political issues (figure 4.10) and 10.10%’s motivation to create online focus on social problems (figure 4.6). There are two reasons. One is most of the respondents are young and they haven’t realized they can write more about social problems. Another reason is that exposing the social problem would bring too much trouble and aren’t worth the risk.

Economic drivers

The rapid growth of the size of users in China is closely related to the following factors: firstly, the rapid economic development in China is the basis for the rapid growth of the size of internet users. After three decades’ reform and opening-up and under the background of an average annual GDP growth rate of 9.8%, China has accumulated considerable strength. With income of all the people, people will have more and more input in information demanding. Meanwhile, good economic environment has created conditions for the innovation and development of the Internet industry, finally making people become users and better serving the user groups.

In china, at the moment, there might be interest in monetising UCC. Big internet service provider (ISP) companies, media companies or other commercial operators identified the potential of UCC and are investing substantially in new and established UCC ventures. Slow-downs in revenues due to decreased interest in traditional media and the desire to cater to the so-called “long tail” (the potential to distribute small quantities of products cheaply) have been important driving factors (Anderson, 2004). There is still much risk for the UCC in China because of the sensitive topics concerned or political reasons. In spite of the risk, there are still lots of venture capital investments in information services companies. The only reason is that there are much potential in China market because of the huge online population.

4.5 Analysis of Interview data

The interview is based on two topics. One is the general perception of user-created content in China. Another is the influences UCC has on China society.

Based on these two themes, the semi-structured interviews should be taken with the
preconceived ideas about the crucial issues and direction. But, the questions may vary for
interviewees with different background. In general, there are 6 or 7 questions for different
interviewee. Main questions include: what is your understanding of UCC? What impact do you
think the UCC have on culture, politics, media and society in China? For the Urumqi case, what’s
your opinion about "rumours stirred up ethnic conflicts" and do you think it has anything to do
with UCC? Can the government control the UCC?

**General perception of the UCC in China**
The premise of the UCC is the development of internet technology which makes the personal
publishing possible. So, the situation is totally different from before. Now, many websites in
China do not produce content, but offer easy tools for user to create, distribute and share the
contents. In terms of user, internet is moving from read only to read and write. An obvious
tendency to decentralize and the long tail of the creation is quite obvious. The lower barrier to
access also aggregate the collective intelligence, in some way, contents like those in WiKi are
valuable. In general, UCC not only change the outlook, but also produce more and more
influences on economics, society, culture and politics. (keso)

User-created content (UCC) is the content of the production off assembly line, producers may
be the professionals, amateurs or just laypersons. UCC will earn people overnight fame, but this
phenomenon is unusual. However, the emerging UCC makes the production of discourse off the
mainstream line, rather than the right to speak. It is possible for the user to become the creator of
content, but not to get the right to speak. (Wei Wuhui)

Whatever is created by users, either in the form of a sentence responding to a question on a
baidu's Baike or SNS, a personal blog or website, or in the form of contribution to wikis or
mainstream media, can be called UCC. Main features of UCC are user contribution, involving
interaction, participation, freedom and initiative. (zhangying)

UCC should be defined as useful or meaningful contents created by netizens.

The most distinguished character of UCC is that the content is completely about personal
thoughts, personal insights, and personal experience. The users are not always mouthpieces of
government.

UCC can definitely help us create a more democratic, free and open speech environment. But it
increases web users’ time cost on searching for information because much of UCC is useless and
little helpful. (Zhangnan)

**The impact UCC have on China Society**
Most of the interviewees believe that the UCC will impact China society. The former audience, or
the creator, witness, reporter, commentator, all in all the capable user will produce huge influence
on the society, politics and culture. Because the change as I observed now is active, which helps
promote openness, transparency and democracy. (Liu Baijia)

From former audience to creators, witness, reporters or commentators, the user has already
produced impacts on the society, politics and culture in China. The influences include not only
anti-corruption, online monitoring, “human flesh search”,online petition, for example, the famous
cases: In 2007, Tiger Zhou, in 2008 unbelievable tobacco prices of Zhou Jiugeng and this year,
Shishou Mass incident. Because of the special management of the Chinese established media, the
internet plays more active roles in political and social life. Everything has two sides, for the strict
regulation of the internet, it is risky for the UCC websites, such as the filter of the foreign websites
and strict censorship and the forced closure of the domestic websites. However, the development of UCC is a trend in China, although the policy might restrain its development, but can't stop it. For example, on June 2, 2009, twitter was blocked in China, but the numbers of the users who tried to access twitter bypass the screen censorship increased. (keso)

Some changes have already occurred, either in social, cultural or even political aspects. For example, right after the Olympic torch incident in Paris in 2008, Chinese netizens rushed into online forums such as Sina.com to express their own ideas about this matter. Netizens voices to some extent offered help to Chinese government voice on the international community.

There is huge potential for UCC in China. It may even help improve interaction between government and the public, which is especially important for such a large country like China with so large a population. (Zhangying)

UCC can bring more freedom and more openness to China. Youngsters will be more independent in thinking and action because they can get information from many channels, instead of the state media. But one thing here, UCC has a long way to go in this Communist Party ruled country. Anything related to politics is sensitive and easily gets shut down online, like what Facebook, Youtube, and Danwei have suffered this year. Less-controlled information only remains to food, travel, shopping, IT gadgets, except the flaws of the management of this country. (zhangnan)

But there are still exceptions. There are two interviewees who express their doubts about the UCC’s impact. There definitely are changes which will take place on the way of how things get going in that field. Users will become more journalists-like guys, because they have to be equipped with themselves more and more advances gears like camera, DV and other equipment you could only found in news media years ago. In addition, the way of how people treat news will be changed. They are not satisfied with being told anymore, instead, they want to make themselves more involved in story telling. Based on these changes, the Chinese political environment will become more open and people will enjoy more freedom in expressing their own ideas, theoretically, in the future. Pessimistically, the user-generated content will not be fully developed in china under the tightening management on the online media. (Yinhang)

Here, there is not much prospect for the UCC. We can see from the recent micro-blog being shut down repeatedly, that the authorities are not used to “dialogue” approach, and still likes to “propaganda”. Even in the field of UCC, such as BBS, the members are so-called network propagandist, so I am full of pessimism. In some sense, UCC make people full of "Onlookers" mentality and the culture of popular tours is prevalent. Only a few who are really dedicated in this UCC, and only those few get some more or less right to speak. However, compared with more government propaganda tools and business marketing skills, they are not worth mentioning. (Wei Wuhui)

**UCC vs Freedom of express**

In terms of UCC that might bring some changes to the freedom of expression. The interviewees are not so optimistic. Wei Wuhui said that is impossible. However, there is a peak point of the path may help: because of some things, the West found the pressure to the government led to some changes (such as the final suspension of green dam¹). However, there are very few such examples.

¹Green Dam was a software developed by the Chinese government to control internet content, which was widely criticized for its massive censorship. Its suspension was seen as a positive development for internet freedom in China.
Also Keso expressed his worries that freedom of expression brought about by UCC, in fact, is a kind of passive freedom, which actually is the freedom the government does not want, but it has not fully under control, and ultimately it had to passively accept this freedom. It brings the consequences of both, on the one hand, the Government then had to consider the existence of the Internet, UCC existence, on the other hand, the Chinese government is stepping up efforts to control the Internet, and UCC site operators’ increasing risk is so unprecedented. (keso)

For the other interviewees, they think it will make some differences, for sure, but they don’t know when (zhangnan). It’s unlike that we will witness dramatic and tremendous changes in the future; however, I firmly believe the user-generated-content will push forward the gradual improvement of the Chinese internet management policies (yinhang)

A case: Urumqi Massive incidents in Xinjiang
Just before the interview, a big event happened in China. Hong Kong-owned factories in Shaoguan, Guangdong province, a former worker spread the Internet posting: six Xinjiang boys from Xu Ri toy factory raped two innocent Han women. Online rumours resulted in gang fights. Shaoguan, gang fights and “rumours stirred up ethnic conflicts” which led to ethnic conflict: Urumqi Massive incidents in Xinjiang on July, 5, 2009. Also as UCC, rumour works in some way. What does it mean in China?

For Shaoguan massive incident, there are many cases failed to clarify the facts, but July 5 incidents in Xinjiang certainly is relevant. After Shaoguan gang fights, the user mobile phone video shot soon appeared on the Internet and was widely disseminated. Government is only related to the seizure of video, but failed to respond to the incident and processing, resulting in Xinjiang Urumqi massive incidents, which have been related to the spread of rumours from Shaoguan. This incident proves that the Government has adopted the approach to cover groups of events, it is simply impossible to achieve the effect of the past. The existence of the Internet makes the idea of control impossible, and even may lead to greater suspicion. (Keso)

The internet, the user-generated content especially are more correlated in our lives. The problem is how to achieve balance between supervision and freedom. Personally, a key-words tagging technology is needed in supervising some topics and materials which may trigger some social turbulence like this one. (yinhang)

The development of UCC in China
The UCC in China largely focus on demanding for personal rights (online petition), mainly expressing themselves and still lacking contribution to the social and cultural construction. No websites like Wikipedia, YouTube and Twitter, which are of social, cultural, and commercial significance. Strict control of the Internet prohibited users from speaking loudly. In some way, self-expression is temporary, incomplete, limited and oppressed. The gap with the West, reflects the different stages of social development. Chinese society is not a democratic society, citizens have very limited avenues of expression, the Internet, therefore play a greater role in this. (Keso)

UCC is developing in a pretty fast speed, yet it is still developing in the initial period. In terms

1 In June, 2009, Chinese government launched a project called Green Dam Youth Escort is designed to protect minors from harmful information. And every computer should install the software. People are strongly against. And the government stopped it.
of freedom of speech, China UCC is having a larger say, which however is still under limitations. After the Xinjiang incident in 2009, websites such as danwei.org\(^1\), youtube, facebook are closed up. Whether the closure of these websites is related to the Xinjiang incident is still not clear, but at least chronologically it offered such impression that they are related.

There are several reasons for distance between China and the west in the opening up of UCC: for one, Chinese government haven’t found out a better way to control online speech of the public, rather it is easier just to cut access to some websites. It is understandable that due to poor media literacy of main Chinese population, over half population of which is peasants who have little access to higher education, the major public may be misled by some speech online. But this should not serve as an excuse of sudden closure of certain websites. It is also a sigh of short of confidence in the public once the freedom of speech online is totally granted. The situation will change, but it definitely takes time, long time. (Zhangying)

Compared with the development of user-generated content in the westerner countries, the development of user-generated content in china is still lagging far behind. Some scholars, even in Journalism College of some top Chinese universities, never heard of the user-generated-content. Although the user-generated-content has become popular in china nowadays, the related researches are not paid enough attention.

4.6 UCC: what the users have created

Objectively speaking, China has produced a "pressure group", which are the 338 million Internet users. Within this figure, 226 million netizens read online news, and follow-on posts are the most grassroots, mass-orientated Internet opinion; 100 million people visit BBSs and these are the main pushers for the formation and fermentation of public opinion; 108.2 million netizens have blogs and 64.25 million update them within half a year, the so-called blogs of the "opinion leader" has the most "weight" in Internet opinion; 15.5 million netizens use their mobile phones to get on the Internet, 24 million netizens use instantaneous tools for dispatching information, and the "citizen reporters" in this crowd has helped to give prominence to two new carriers of Internet opinion — micro-blogging and QQ groups, and each day it is possible to use their mobile phones and the Internet to timely publish public incidents. (CNNIC, Jan 2009)

Why UCC is so important in Chinese society? It is a way to do things that couldn’t be done before. Every device works now, mobile, blog, tweet, flickr, YouTube and so on. They enable people to act together in new ways and in situations where collective action was not possible before. When we change the way we communicate, we change the society. The tools that a society uses to create and maintain are as central to human life as a hive is to bee life (Clay Shirky 2008). In China, nowadays, people might say that the Internet is a god, because when people don’t have any other recourse, you think of putting it up on the Net, like people who have fallen through the cracks of social welfare, taking some action for Anti-fraud activities, or people who want to point out official corruption: People now have a recourse. And they also have a mission to make the world better. In web 2.0 Age, everyone is a media outlet. “Our social tools remove older obstacles

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\(^1\) This is a English website about China current affairs, and someone called it “little Xinhua News Agency”
to public expression, and thus remove the bottlenecks that characterized mass media. The result is the mass amateurization of efforts previously reserved for media professionals.” (Clay Shirky 2008:55)

Internet can be understood both as a medium to communicate, propagate and interact, as well as a battlefield— the struggle not only for power, but for democracy, liberty, and justice. With web 2.0, people are better equipped with efficient weapons and the online participation is often about moving people to action offline which can push the society forward in some sense.

The relationship between new media technologies such as web 2.0 and social/political mobilization is a specifically new phenomenon. In china, where there is the strongest Great Wall Firewall in the world, people have taken the first and important step: to use web 2.0 to participate and take some actions and won the victory. This is a good beginning for everyone in the country. And everyone can see the huge potential for social and political mobilization and resistance. We are witnessing the free access to information and participation in mainstream communications, and participation then can be both online and offline. So, what the users have created in China?

**Mobilization and collective action**

Many massive incidents happened in recent years. Did their movements push Chinese society a lot? How UCC has involved in their incidents? UCC is a type of mobilization. This type of mobilization would not have been possible before internet age, which would have required a lot of organization. The other effect is that there have been other social movements that have disappeared without a trace. Because if you don’t use the Internet, you’re cut off from the outside, and cut off from the support you could receive if you opened up. For example, when everybody in the country knows what’s going on in Xiamen on June 1, 2007: The Xiamen Px street walking march, it’s very difficult for the country to silence the movement and delegitimize what had happened. Residents there mobilized a rare mass campaign over fears of toxins from the petrochemicals, used to make polyester and fabrics. Before new media came into being, this would be unimaginable. Now, because of text messaging and the Internet, there is no need for leadership and there is no need for a physical space for people to form a public sphere to discuss or persuade or organize. And on the internet they can cross barriers of class. All they had to do in order to amass the several thousand people for the demonstration was send messages that said “let’s go on a stroll on a certain day at a certain time” and told the people why it is so vital for them to protest, showing the map on Google, taking the video on YouTube and spreading the news from RSS reader (which is difficult to filter) and setting up blogs to publicize. After the march, all the websites can show the protestors’ pictures, videos and comments from all over the world. This type of mobilization would not have been possible before. Xiamen XP incident is a victory for mass participation, also a victory for UCC. Collective action, where a group acts as a whole, is even more complex than collaborative production, but here again new tools give life to new forms of action. This in turn challenges existing institutions, by eroding the institutional monopoly on large-scale coordination. (Clay Shirk 2008)

Internet use has been very empowering for public movements in China. If we have a look again at the user, or individual, or empowered participant who has created content online, we can say that UCC plays a lot in the mobilization and collective action. For example: the Sun Zhigang incident. In April, 2003 in the China Youth Daily, there were many reports like the Sun Zhigang case, but they didn’t have a big impact. But when someone posted the case on the BBS forum, where most people can read and spread, it attracted the attention of the whole country. On March
20, 2003, 27-year-old Sun Zhigang died in the medical clinic of a detention centre in an area of south China that depends on migrant labour. Sun was a Wuhan university graduate and fashion designer who had gone to Guangzhou to work. Three weeks later, as he walked to an internet bar, police asked for his temporary living permit and his identity card. He had not applied for the permit and he had forgotten the ID card. The police detained him. Because Sun was a university graduate, he probably argued or resisted the police over what he considered a human rights issue. And three days later, a friend called his family to tell them of the death. And his family showed a savage beating of his body 72 hours before the death, although there were no signs of external damage. Everyone was angry with such an incident and commented on the websites, appealing the government to take action against such a torture. Online movement and resistance coordinate with offline campaign and action, as a result, on 20 June 2003, Premier Wen Jiabao announced that C&R (Custody and repatriation) regulations were abolished (effective August 1, 2003) and the detention centers would be replaced by simply Measures for Assisting Vagrants and Beggars with No Means of Support in Cities, just to care for poor beggars or homeless persons. Significantly, human rights lawyers considered the Sun case as a victory for human rights legal struggle in Chinese history. This is also the first case for online mobilization and action, a victory for online participation.

Equipped with web 2.0 weapons, the Chinese users can come head-to-head with the extremely strong power of the government. They often use the weapons of the weak: buying soy sauce¹, speaking out about push-ups² and Evade the cat¹, raising the topic of anti-anti-vulgarity. They use


¹ As rumours of official corruption after the earthquake were swirling, the emotional young Internet crowd often turned to this phrase when they felt frustration, but had little else to add… at least without having their post deleted by censors. (“More corruption? Whatever, who gives a $@*%#, I’m just here to buy soy sauce.”)

² The origin of push-up, with significant political implication, has to be traced back to the riot happened in Weng’an, Guizhou, China on 28, June, 2008. The death of a 15-year-old school girl led to the riot. And police said raped and then killed girl committed suicide because of a push-up joke and people were angry with the explanation.
technology to show the abuses of power. Netizens of China are becoming more and more innovative in the ways they are protesting. And just as it is discovered, the internet users are finding that these weapons are very effective.

**Triumph of public opinion**

UCC becomes a main source for public opinion, China has entered into the era of the media spotlight and people with microphones. Today, not only does the Party have its Party newspapers and Party publications, and State-owned radio and TV stations, but there are metropolitan newspapers as well as Internet media, and the foreign media. Especially since the Internet has become "a distribution center for cultural information and a magnifying glass for social opinion" (President Hu Jingtai). In the Internet age, everyone can be the information outlet, and a main source for opinion expression. There is an image for this, which is that in front of everyone there now stands a microphone. Local governments are absent on sudden events and sensitive issues, lacking in expression about it, telling lies and even wanting to keep a check on the "mass voices" on the Internet. This doesn't help the situations, doesn't solve the conflict, and is not in line with the gist of the 17th CPC National Congress, which asked for the protection of the people's rights to gain information, rights to participate, rights for expression, and the rights to monitor.

An official at the Propaganda department of the Hunan Party Committee was right in saying that when news happens it is number one, whoever publishes the news becomes number two; you can stop a journalist from speaking, but you can't stop the mouths of all netizens on the Internet.

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1. Elude the cat: the Yunnan provincial public security bureau and the Kunming city procurator stated: The detainee Li Qiaoming in the Jinning county detention centre had been beaten to death by cell mates. The game of "elude the cat" was the excuse by which the prison bullies abuse and assault newcomers.

In China, you can’t imagine people can expression their opinion against the government’s decision before. Now, with UCC, people have many channels to say no. In June, 2009, Chinese government launched a project called Green Dam Youth Escort is designed to protect minors from harmful information. And every computer should install the software. What kinds of information are harmful? In the western world, it would be sex and violence. In China, politics may be added. The users all over the country reviewed and discussed about the project. Most people are strongly against and resist it. At last, the government stopped to ask people to embed the Green Dam Youth Escort in their computers. This is a victory of public opinion.

Another case is the waitress, Deng Yujiao, who fatally stabbed Deng Guida on May 10, 2009, after she refused to provide "special services," slang for sex. Deng Guida pulled out a stack of cash and tossed it at Deng Yujiao, and pushed her down twice on a sofa. The waitress picked up a knife and stabbed him and injured another official Huang. Thousands Marched For Deng Yujiao, carrying banners in support of the service worker who killed a government official supposedly in self-defense. Banners said: "The Badong Police: Shame and Calamity for all Police." And "Punish criminal rapists severely; release Deng Yujiao." After receiving widespread Internet challenges and media inquiries, the local government has to act fairly in accordance with the law because everyone pays close attention to the progress of this case." These developments showed the influence of public attention on the case. No matter how the case develops in the future, the government, the officials and the netizens have all agreed that there has been a social revolution in this information age. New technology has empowered the people with the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of speech to express their opinions, to which all the parties must pay minimal attention and express concern (even if these are mere postures).

Actually, on January 4, 2008, the article in <People's Daily> , 2007, Listen to the Chinese Netizens1 had described the emerging situation. The article affirmed that the year 2007 was the year in which the Internet became public space for the people. With the attention of both the people and the government, the Internet has become a channel to rationally bring about fairness and justice. At the same time, the importance of "protecting the people's right to know, the right to participate, the right to express and the right to monitor" was emphasized.

**Working as a monitor**

In 2008, the Internet's function as monitor reached unprecedented levels. It is no longer difficult for netizens to monitor government officials. Some government officials have even lost their jobs as a result.

Some netizens use these words to warn certain government officials: "The netizens are everywhere. We are watching you. You’d better be worried about your job!"

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The video of Shenzhen Marine Affairs Bureau Disciplinary Committee party secretary Lin Jiaxiang allegedly molesting a girl and subsequently using his official job position to bully people was posted on the Internet and that caused him to lose his job; a netizen found the overseas travel invoices and receipts for Wenzhou government officials on the Shanghai subway and a number of officials were dismissed or disciplined as a result; some netizens determined from photos of Nanjing City Housing Authority official Zhou Jiugeng that he wore an expensive Vacheron Constantin watch and smoked 150 yuan/pack cigarettes and he was dismissed from his job one week later; Liaoning province Xifeng county party secretary sent police to arrest a female reporter in Beijing and he lost his job after the Internet exposure; nine months later, he was appointed to a new position elsewhere but the netizens exposed that too and he lost his job again. Human Flesh Search\(^1\) is used in massive supervision in China. Not only are government officials monitored, but even the websites are monitored by netizens too. The public has the right to dispute the veracity of any official reports or even government statements. The people have the right to monitor the government. The government can work harder to make information more open in order to eliminate the worries of the public and eliminate untrue statements.\(^2\)

CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions
User-created content is a huge topic since everyone can be equipped with media or social tools. The essay focus on how internet users influence China society to some extent, and tries to explore

\(^{1}\) Human Flesh Search (Chinese: 人肉搜索) is a phenomenon of massive researching using Internet media such as blogs and forums. It is based on massive human collaboration, thus the name.  

\(^{2}\) [http://www.infzm.com/content/23064](http://www.infzm.com/content/23064), accessed June 28, 2009
how people involve in social movement with User- Created Content. Also UCC’s increasing role in communication draws out implications for social, cultural and political influences.

With the attention of both the people and the government, the Internet has become a channel to rationally bring about fairness and justice. At the same time, in China, the importance of "protecting the people's right to know, the right to participate, the right to express and the right to monitor" was emphasized. In the past year, so many things happened in China such as social problem riots, ethnical riots, anti-corruption, environmental protest. Basically, this study get answers: the influence of UCC in China is increasing, and more people realized its importance. UCC has more powerful discourse and plays a lot in mobilization and public expression in China.

5.2 Recommendations for further research
User-created Content is a quite new topic for both researchers and media professionals. Actually, there is still no widely accepted definition of user-created content and measuring its social, cultural and economic impacts are also in the early stages, though in the essay, some work has been done to explain UCC. There are still a lot to be explored for late research. For example, UCC is in many ways a form of personal expression, and user/creators are engaging in a form of democracy where they can directly publish and enable access to their opinions, knowledge and experience. But a balance must be struck between freedom and expression and other behaviour, e.g. the posting of illegal or unauthorised copyrighted content.

In China, we have the biggest online population, but the internet and UCC may also raise social challenges. A greater gap between digitally literate users and others (elderly, handicapped, poor people, rural citizens) may occur. Other challenges relate to information accuracy and content quality, privacy issues, safety on the internet. Future studies on UCC should be more extensive and deep. This essay is just a beginning, hopefully a helpful start.

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