Media Coverage, News Exposure and the American Public’s Perceptions of China

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Abstract

The content analysis of newspaper articles in this study shows that international news coverage in the U.S. media seldom promoted a favorable image of China, but constructed negative images of China in anti-Communist frames. China’s rising economic and military power was portrayed as a big threat to the interests of the United States. A secondary data analysis of the survey conducted by Chicago Council on Global Affairs in 2006 further proves that international news exposure is associated with the American public’s unfavorable perceptions of China. More international news exposure can lead the American public to be more negative toward the rise of China, more afraid of China as a critical threat to the interests of the U.S., more against free trade with China, and more convinced of China’s military power as a potential threat to international security.

Keywords: media coverage; news exposure; public opinion; China; content analysis; secondary data analysis
It is documented that news media play a vital role in constructing and shaping the image of a country (e.g. Adoni & Mane, 1984; Wolfsfeld et al., 1988). National image is often called a national stereotype—a generalized, abstracted profile of a nation or its people (Frederick, 1993). By framing other counties within ideological, political and cultural contexts, news media create the images from which individuals picture the world and construct their conceptions of “us” and “them” (Kellner, 1995). Previous research shows that international news coverage in Western mainstream media tend to be biased, negative, crisis-oriented, looking down developing countries and communist countries to support Western justification of superiority (e.g. Huang & McAdams, 2000; McNelly & Izcaray, 1986; Said, 1993).

The American public is heavily dependent on the media for news about the outside world. Media construct the social reality for the American public who from news coverage transform the world outside into pictures in their heads (Peng, 2004). Since foreign affairs are often beyond direct experience and involvement of average American citizens, their understandings of other countries are greatly influenced by how the issues and consequences are framed by news media (Chang, 1988).

The purpose of this study is to examine how China is portrayed in the American media and investigate the impact of international news exposure on the American public’s perceptions of China. With the rapid economic and social development since the opening and reform policy in the late 1970s, China received increasing international media coverage. Although the U.S. media claim to be objective and balanced, China has long been criticizing the U.S. media of demonizing China’s international image, spreading anti-China notions, presenting China in negative Cold War frames, and portraying depressing and concocted version of the China threat theory (Beijing Review, 1997).
Although the concern about the role of mass media in contributing to people’s understanding or misunderstanding of each other’s countries is not new (McNelly & Izcaray, 1986) and there are a number of studies on framing China in the U.S. media, the actual effects of exposure to international news on the American public perceptions of China as a global power have not been tested yet and remained to be unverified assumptions. This study not only aims to examine the international news coverage of China in the U.S. media, but attempts to statistically testify whether news exposure influences the American public’s attitudes toward China and their understandings of China’s rising economic and military power, in order to provides some evidence about the impact of international news on people’s images of nations.

**Framing China in the U.S. media**

As a geographically distant country drastically different from the United States in every socio-political and cultural aspect, China was not in the spotlight for generations in the U.S. media until President Nixon visited Beijing in 1972 (Xu & Parsons, 1997). Even though the U.S. media showed an increased interest in China to some extent after the normalization of Sino-American relations in 1972, the predominant ‘China frame’ used by US media has always been that of ‘anti-Communism’, ‘the deceitfulness of Communists’ and ‘the problems and failures of Marxist government’ (Kobland et al., 1992).

Evidence of this anti-Communist frame is found in the U.S. international news coverage of two similar student demonstrations in South Korea in 1980 and China in 1989 (Kobland et al., 1992). The U.S. media portrayed the Korean government actions as an understandable response to the threat imposed by the demonstrators’ ‘rebellious insurrection’, but the reporting of the demonstrations at Beijing’s Tiananmen Square emphasized the legitimacy of the demonstrators’ goals while describing the government as ‘cruelly repressive’. The dominant anti-communist
ideology also exerted an influence in the U.S. news coverage of the Fourth U.N. conference and the NGO forum in Beijing in 1995 (Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad, 2000). The findings showed that the U.S. news coverage obscured the conference’s objectives to raise the global consciousness of women’s rights and feminist movement, but focused on criticism on China as an oppressive and deceitful communist nation. The depiction of China was full of dramatic references to China as a nation with a ‘loathsome human rights record’, and a nation harboring ‘dirty secrets’ and unwilling to submit to ‘a rule of law’ (p.54).

The breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 represented a dramatic change in the global structure. The United States, the world’s remaining superpower, and China, the last Communist stronghold and the world’s most populous country, are often brought into a post-Cold War power equation (Stone & Xiao, 2007). With rapid economic development and growing international influence, China has received increasing attention and reporting from the Western media. Based on the content analysis of sample news articles drawn from the New York Times and Los Angeles Times between 1992 and 2001, Peng’s (2004) study found that coverage of China in both newspapers had increased significantly over time. Because of strengthening economic ties between the United States and China, the American media tend to cover China more with favorable economic frames. However, the overall tone of the stories on China remained negative across time. Specifically, stories presented in political frames and ideological frames were more likely to be unfavorable, which proved that political and ideological biases in the American mainstream media remain persistent despite the dramatic political, social and economic changes that have taken place in China.

In a comparison between the news coverage of HIV/AIDS in China by the Associated Press and Xinhua News Agency, Wu (2006) found an overarching frame of the ‘repressive
communist government’ in AP’s report, focusing on the Chinese government’s dishonest and oppressive nature in dealing with HIV/AIDS, depicting the Chinese government as a ‘human rights abuser’, and portraying an incompetent and inept government in the face of such public health issues. By contrast, Xinhua News Agency has constructed a favorable and positive image of the Chinese government, stressing its ‘open’ attitude, ‘concrete’ action, repeated ‘commitment’ in addressing the HIV/AIDS problem in China, and progress in fighting the epidemic. Luther and Zhou (2005) found that the extent and manner of news frame use between the U.S. newspapers and Chinese newspapers varied in their reporting of the SARS epidemic in 2003. The U.S. newspapers frequently used conflict frame, highlighting the negative economic consequences of the epidemic and attributing the spread of SARS to the Chinese leaders; while Chinese newspaper defended the roles of the Chinese leaders, emphasizing their efforts to curtail any negative economic impact of the disease.

Through a content analysis of three US weekly news magazines *Time*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News and World Report* from 1984 to 1999, Stone and Xiao (2007) found that China received significantly more U.S. media coverage after the Soviet Union breakup. With the demise of the Communist bloc and the former Soviet Union, the balance of global power dramatically shifted (Chang, 1998). The United States, the world’s remaining superpower, and China, the last Communist stronghold and the world’s most populous country, are often brought into a post-Cold War power equation, which alters the patterns of frames U.S media use in covering China (Stone & Xiao, 2007). China coverage was found to be more negative after the breakup than before, and China was depicted as a more domestically oppressive nation. An explanation for this negative coverage is that U.S. treated China as a major competitor and regarded it more as an enemy nation when China became the largest remaining Communist
country after the fall of Soviet Union. As Song Yimin (2002) wrote, “Because the United States always keeps a wary eye on rising or emerging powers, it seems that it will view China as its arch rival or as a thorn in its side in the next decade or so, ranking above Russia” (p.35).

Based on previous research, this study attempts to examine how the American media portray China, especially China’s rising economic and military power. Four hypotheses were proposed as follows:

\( H1 \): Overall, the U.S. media coverage of China tends to be negative.

\( H2 \): The anti-Communist frames are still dominant in the U.S. media coverage of China.

\( H3 \): Regarding trade issues, the U.S. media coverage of China tends to be negative.

\( H4 \): Regarding military affairs, the U.S. media coverage of China tends to be negative.

Since the image of China predicts to be negative in the international news coverage, the attentiveness to international news is supposed to be associated with unfavorable perceptions of China in the public’s minds. Therefore, another four hypotheses are proposed to further explore how international news exposure influences the American public’s attitudes toward China and their understandings of China’s rising economic and military power.

\( H5 \): More international news exposure can lead the American public to have more unfavorable feelings toward China and Chinese.

\( H6 \): More international news exposure can lead the American public more likely to consider the rise of China as a threat to the vital interest of the United States.

\( H7 \): More international news exposure can lead the American public less likely to support free trade with China.

\( H8 \): More international news exposure can lead the American public more likely to regard the growth of Chinese military power as a threat to international security.
Method

Two methods were employed in this study to testify the hypotheses. A content analysis of newspaper articles was conducted to determine how the U.S. media portray China in the news. A secondary data analysis of the survey conducted by Chicago Council on Global Affairs in 2006 was used to investigate the relationship between international news exposure and the American public perceptions of China.

Content analysis of newspaper articles

Sampling. Two elite newspapers, the New York Times and the Washington Post, were chosen as the media samples, because of their large circulations and their great influence in setting the agenda for other U.S. news media (Danielian & Reese, 1989; McCombs, 2004). The Lexis-Nexis Academic database was used to collect newspaper articles. Although previous studies used “China” or “Chinese” as the keywords for searching in the full-text (e.g. Peng, 2004; Stone & Xiao, 2007), this study only sampled news articles with “China” or “Chinese” in the headlines, therefore the sampled articles were more likely to focus on China and the issues about China were more prominent in the articles. The sampling frame of newspaper articles was from June 1, 2005 to June 1, 2006, a year before the survey was conducted. A total of 1080 news articles were obtained, 686 from the New York Times and 394 from the Washington Post. Because of the large sample size, systematic sampling was used to select every 5th news article from each newspaper, resulting in a total of 217 news stories for coding.

Coding categories. Two broad coding categories were constructed: issue and tone. The issue categories adopted in this study were evolved from previous research (Stone & Xiao, 2007)
and then collapsed into nine broad issue categories: trade, domestic economy, politics, human rights, social issues, military, culture, technology, and other. ¹

The tone of issue coverage was also coded. Since objectivity is the core value of professional news reporting, the neutrality of news coverage should be considered as a default in the coding. Three tone categories were generalized: 1) positive tone: the prevailing tone of issue coverage is to praise China’s strength/progress in certain field, which promotes a favorable image of China; 2) negative tone: the prevailing tone of issue coverage is to criticize China’s problems/weakness in certain field, or suggest China’s behaviors/achievements will threaten the other country or area’s interests, which contributes to an unfavorable image of China; 3) neutral: the issue coverage merely presents the news facts, or a balance of positive and negative statements.

Unit of Analysis. The unit of analysis in this study was the news article. The mention of certain issue categories was recorded and only counted once in each news article. The main issue in each article was coded, which received the most coverage in the news article. The coverage was measured by the number of words given to certain issue. The tones of issue categories were coded in context and given the values as “-1=negative, 0=neutral, 1=positive.”

¹ The issue categories into which they were coded are as follows:
(1) Trade: imports or exports, international investment, international finance, exchange rate, free trade issues, and etc. (2) Domestic economy: internal economic activities within the country, economic reform, economic development, and etc. (3) Politics: political system, political reform, party issues, judiciary issues, government administration/censorship, foreign relation/policies, Taiwan issues, and etc. (4) Human rights: freedom of speech, freedom of press, civil rights, political rights, legal rights, religious freedom, and etc. (5) Social issues: social inequality, social instability, farm riots, labor disputes, minority issues, public health, environmental issues, and etc. (6) Military: military build-up, military expenses, military technology, arm sales, national/international security, and etc. (7) Culture: arts (drawing, painting, architecture, literature, dancing, music, etc.), Chinese traditions, Chinese holidays, and etc. (8) Technology: technology development and innovation in general or in certain filed such as space technology, communication technology, and etc. (9) Other: any other issue that is not included in the categories above, such as education, sports, recreations, weather report, and etc.
**Coding procedure.** The coding process was conducted by two graduate students, who are fluent in English. A training session was arranged to train the coders including a read-through of the coding instructions. A pretest using 10 samples of the news stories was conducted to clarify and refine the definitions of the categories. Modified coding instructions were provided to the coders. Intercoder reliability was established by randomly selecting 10% of the news stories for every coder to analyze. Intercoder reliability, calculated using Scott’s Pi (Holsti, 1969), averaged 0.85 across all variables with individual score at 0.81 and above.

**Secondary data analysis**

**Data source.** The secondary data used in this study was collected from the survey of Public Opinion and Foreign Policy in the United States, China, India, Australia, and South Korea, 2006. The data set was downloaded from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research ([http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/cocoon/ICPSR/STUDY/04650.xml](http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/cocoon/ICPSR/STUDY/04650.xml)). Only the first part of the data set (Part 1, United States Public Opinion Survey) was analyzed to investigate the American public’s attitudes toward China.

The United States Public Opinion Survey was conducted by Chicago Council on Global Affairs between June 23 and July 9 in 2006, using a randomly selected sample from a large-scale, nationwide research panel. The panel was itself randomly selected from the national population of households using stratified random-digit-dial (RDD) telephone sampling and subsequently was provided Internet access for the completion of surveys. The respondents were aged 18 and older living in the United States, with the average age of 47.12 (Mode=29). The total sample size was 1127, 613 were males and 614 were females.

**Variables and measures.** International news exposure as the key independent variable was measured by the survey question, “When you follow the news these days, how interested are
you in news about the relations between the United States with other countries?” This question was used to infer the level of international news exposure, since respondents were more likely to follow the international news with the increase of their interests. Although the measurement needs to be refined, no other direct news exposure question was asked in the survey, which is the limitation of the secondary data analysis. The values of this variable were recoded as “1=don’t follow the news, 2=hardly interested, 3=somewhat interested, 4=very interested.”

The dependent variables included “feelings toward China and Chinese,” “China as a threat to the interest of the U.S.,” “free trade with China,” and “China as a threat to international security.” These dependent variables were measured respectively by the following four questions (the values of some variables were recoded for the purpose of the data analysis): 1) “Please rate your feelings toward some countries and peoples [China-Scale (1-100)];” 2) “Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interest of the United States in the next 10 year [The development of China as a world power]” (1=not important, 2=important but not critical, 3=critical threat); 3) “Do you think the U.S. should have a free trade agreement that would lower barriers such as tariffs with each of the following countries? [China]” (1=yes, 0=no); 4) “Thinking about the future, how likely do you think it is that each of the following will be a potential source of conflict between major powers in Asia? [The growth of Chinese military power]” (1=not very likely, 2=somewhat likely, 3=very likely).

The demographic variables as control variables include gender, race, age, education, party identity and party ideology. Except from age and education, all the other demographic variables were recoded as dummy variables for the regression analysis, including gender (male=1, female=0), race (white=1, other ethnicity=0), party identity (Democrat=1, other=0), and party ideology (liberal=1, other=0).
Results

The results of content analysis

As shown in Table 1, the issues that received the most coverage in the New York Times and the Washington Post were “trade” (26.6%), followed by “politics” (20.1%), “social issues” (14.3%), and “domestic economy” (10.4%). The economic issues combining trade and domestic economy accounted for 37.1% of news coverage. The political issues combining politics and human rights accounted for 27% of news coverage. These two broad areas got the most attention, receiving 64.1% of news coverage together.

Table 1. The frequency of issues in the news coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic economy</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>64.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social issues</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>78.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>83.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>89.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>91.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>259</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the tone of issue coverage, the statistics show that the mean of tones is -0.42, which implies that the American media coverage of China was more likely to be negative. As shown in Table 2, the majority (50.6%) of the issue coverage portrayed China negatively, whereas only less than 10% of the issue coverage promoted a favorable image of China. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was supported.
Table 2. The distribution of tones in each issue category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Freq.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic economy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social issues</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are some differences in the distribution of tones in each issue category as illustrated in Table 2. Five issues received more negative news coverage, including trade, politics, human rights, social issues and military. A majority (52.2%) of news coverage about trade was negative, so hypothesis 3 was supported. Negative news about politics accounted for 55.8%. Human rights received the most negative coverage, and the tone of all the news articles about human rights was negative. A majority (62.2%) of news coverage about social issues was negative. Besides, almost all the news coverage (91.7%) about military was negative. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was supported. Three issues categories got more neutral coverage, including domestic economy, culture, and other. 63.0% of news coverage about domestic economy was neutral. A large majority (87.5%) of new coverage about culture was neutral, and cultural issues were never portrayed negatively in the news articles. Technology received neutral and negative coverage equally, each accounting for 42.9%.

The qualitative analysis of favorable or unfavorable words or sentences in the news articles found that the anti-Communist frames were still dominant and hypothesis 2 was supported. In trade issues, China was often depicted as currency manipulator, artificially
undervaluing currency for giving Chinese exports a competitive edge that leads to the increase of American’s trade deficit and the cost of American jobs. China was perceived as potential enemy; some trade practices of Chinese companies were highly politicized and prohibited for security concerns, including a Chinese government-controlled company’s computer sales to the U.S. State Department and a Chinese company’s bid to take over a U.S. oil company. In military affairs, China was portrayed as a big threat to the United State and international security. China’s military buildup, military spending, and arms sales were strongly criticized in the news coverage. In political issues, the Communist Party and the Chinese government were depicted to be repressive, and the attitude of U.S. coverage toward China was entirely negative in human rights. In social issues, China was depicted as an unstable country with many serious problems such as labor disputes, farm riots, and social protest.

The results of secondary data analysis

The secondary data analysis shows that the average rating for the American public’s feelings toward China and Chinese was lower (M=40.61) than their feelings toward other capitalist Asia countries and peoples, such as Japan (M=58.60), South Korea (M=45.65), and India (M=45.96). Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between international new exposure and the public’s attitudes toward different counties and peoples. Overall, with the increase of international news exposure, the American public was more likely to have favorable feelings toward other counties except China. When American people were very interested in the international news, the ranking of the feelings toward China and Chinese suddenly decreased and became much lower than that of the feelings toward other countries and peoples.
Figure 1: International news exposure and feelings toward countries and peoples

Table 3. International news exposure and feelings toward China and Chinese

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>39.771***</td>
<td>4.331</td>
<td>9.184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (Male)</td>
<td>-3.089</td>
<td>1.497</td>
<td>-2.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (White)</td>
<td>-2.742</td>
<td>1.883</td>
<td>-1.456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.028</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>-.575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1.978***</td>
<td>.449</td>
<td>4.405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party ID (Democrat)</td>
<td>-1.964</td>
<td>1.500</td>
<td>-1.310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (Liberal)</td>
<td>1.157</td>
<td>1.898</td>
<td>.610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter. news exposure</td>
<td>-.407</td>
<td>0.964</td>
<td>-.422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

As shown in Table 3, the regression analysis indicates that international news exposure has a negative impact on the American public’s feelings toward China and Chinese (B= -.407), which implies that more international news exposure would lead to more unfavorable attitudes toward China and Chinese. However, such effect is not statistically significant (t=−.422, p>.05),
after controlling for all the demographic variables. Therefore, hypothesis 5 cannot be supported. Education is proved to be the only predictor in this model that is significantly and positively related to people’s feelings ($B=1.978$, $t=.449$, $p<.001$). People with higher level of education would have more positive attitudes toward China and Chinese.

As indicated in Table 4, there is a significantly positive relationship between international news exposure and the perceptions of China as a threat to the interest of the U.S. ($B=.110$, $t=.105$, $p<.001$), even after controlling the demographic variables. It supports hypothesis 6, and proves that more international news exposure can lead the American public more likely to believe that the rise of China as a world power is a threat to the interest of the U.S.. In addition, age ($B=-.003$, $t=-2.878$, $p<.01$) and education ($B=-.031$, $t=-2.783$, $p<.01$) were found to be significantly and negatively correlated with the attitudes toward the rise of China. It indicates that older people and more educated American people are more positive toward China’s world leadership and less likely to regard China as a threat to the interest of the U.S..

Table 4. International news exposure and China as a threat to the interest of the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>$t$ Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1.909***</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>18.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (Male)</td>
<td>-.060</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>-1.614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (White)</td>
<td>-.003</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>-.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.003**</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>-2.878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.031**</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>-2.783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party ID (Democrat)</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>1.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology (Liberal)</td>
<td>-.081</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>-1.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter. news exposure</td>
<td>.110***</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>4.719</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$R^2=.046$

* $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$

As far as China’s economic development is concerned, Table 5 shows that international new exposure has a significant and negative impact on the American public’s attitudes toward
free trade with China \((B = -.131, t = -2.45, p < .05)\), after the demographic variables were controlled. Therefore, hypothesis 7 was supported. It implies that more international news exposure can lead American people less likely to support that the U.S. should have a free trade agreement with China. Another three variables also prove to be significantly and negatively related to the attitudes toward free trade with China, including gender \((B = -.237, t = -2.82, p < .01)\), age \((B = -.013, t = -4.42, p < .001)\), and education \((B = -.075, t = -2.91, p < .01)\). It indicates that young, female American people with lower level of education are more likely to support free trade with China.

Table 6. International News exposure and China as a threat to international security

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>2.074*</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>19.601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (Male)</td>
<td>-.039</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>-1.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (White)</td>
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*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001
Regarding the American public’s attitudes toward China’s military power, international news exposure proves to be the only significant predictor as shown in Table 6. There is a significant and positive relationship between international news exposure and the American public’s perceptions of China as a threat to international security ($B = 0.125$, $t = 5.383$, $p < .001$), even controlling for all the demographic variables. Thus, Hypothesis 8 was supported. It proves that more international news exposure can make American people more likely believe that the growth of Chinese military power will threaten international security and become a potential source of conflict between major powers in Asia.

**Discussions and Conclusions**

Previous research suggests that it is news media that are creating and destroying images of nations. Through the biased news coverage of the American media, American people are more likely to have distorted perceptions of the other parts of the world (Galtung & Ruge, 1995; Perlmutter, 1998), especially regarding the communist countries which are believed to violate the American social and cultural principles of democracy, individual liberty and human rights (Dorogi, 2001).

With its rise as a global power, China has received much more international news coverage in the U.S. media. The content analysis of newspaper articles in this study found that the U.S. press was more concerned with broader economic/trade issues of China due to China’s achievements in economic development and the increasing China-U.S. trade. The political issues of China were still a great concern in the U.S. press, because of China’s communist political system and human rights record.

Although China has received significantly more attention from the U.S. media, the news coverage of China tends to be negative in tone. The content analysis shows that the U.S. press
seldom promoted a favorable image of China, but constructed negative images of China in anti-Communist frames. China was more often to be viewed by the U.S. press as an adversary than an ally, a competitor than a partner. China was depicted as domestically oppressive and unstable nation. China’s rising economic and military power was perceived as a big threat to the interest of the United States.

Since average American people have no direct experience of visiting other countries, they have to rely on the news media for information about the outside world. The attentiveness to international news can have an impact on the public’s perceptions and evaluations of other countries. The secondary data analysis in this study provides empirical evidence that international news exposure has a great impact on the American public’s perceptions of China and their attitudes toward the rise of China as the world power. Although international news exposure turns out to be insignificantly related to American people’s feelings toward China and Chinese when respondents’ demographic characteristics are controlled, it shows that American people have much more negative views of China than other countries when they are highly exposed to international news coverage. All the other three hypotheses are statistically supported even controlling for the demographic variables, which indicates that more international news exposure can lead the American public to be more negative toward the rise of China, more afraid of China as a critical threat to the interest of the U.S., more against free trade with China, and more convinced that China’s military power can become a potential threat to international security.

In some cases, the demographic variables also have a significant influence on the American public’s perceptions of China. One notable finding is that education proves to be the only factor that is significantly and positively correlated with the public’s feelings toward China
and Chinese. Education’s influence on the friendliness people feel toward other countries documented in previous studies (e.g. McNelly & Izcaray, 1986) is also supported here. American people with higher level of education have more positive views of China and Chinese. One of the reasons is that well-educated people are more critical of international news coverage and they are more likely to get information from other sources besides news media to construct less-distorted images of other countries.

This exploratory study has some limitations. As mentioned before, secondary data may not offer well-grounded measurement for the variables. The measurement of the concepts needs to be refined in future research. Second, more variables need to be controlled in the future analysis besides the basic demographic variables. For the dependent variables, this study only used direct survey questions to measure them instead of constructing some indexes or using more advanced statistical tools such as factor analysis. More sophisticated statistical analysis need to be done to better explicate the impact of international news exposure. Besides, future research need to select a broader news samples from different media formats such as magazines and television to get a more comprehensive view of how China is portrayed in the U.S. media. Since the survey data used in this study presents a unique comparison of public attitudes toward the rise of China and India, a comparative study can also be designed to see how the American media portray China and India in different ways, and how such portrayals influence the American public’s understandings and evaluations of these two countries.

Reference


Examining the impact of soft news and social media use on the political knowledge of the Chinese younger generation

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Introduction

Since the 1990s, much discussion of the rise of the internet within the People’s Republic of China has focused on the political consequences of the technology on China’s Communist Party. The popularization of internet access was once regarded as a sign of significant progress in Chinese political democratization. Especially when considering the impact of internet use on the Chinese younger generation, the importance of political issues which are put onto the internet should be more amplified. One interesting phenomenon which needs attention to is the emergence of political soft news in recent years on the Chinese national social network, which never arose before in the history of the People’s Republic of China. Different from any type of solemn political news that appeared in Chinese media, the soft news tends to emphasize entertaining aspects of political issues more and engages with high readability. It pays more attention to the gender, personality, appearance—even the daily life of the leaders, who were once the most mysterious and paramount group in Chinese political system.

One important trait of this kind of news is that most news items emerged in social networks and websites that young adults are frequently exposed to. Along with the rapid rise of Chinese social media, will the major participants, Chinese young adults be strongly influenced by political soft news spread through the internet? Will they be attracted by the soft news initially and then try to know some further information about the government’s policies? Or, will they only dwell on the soft news?
This paper tries to explore and provide the answer to these questions and focus on the impact of the soft news on Chinese young adults’ understanding of politics.

**Literature Review**

Soft news, as an innovative news format (2003, Prior), has attracted several scholars to study it. Tom Patterson (2000, p. 4) provided a description, calling soft news “typically more sensational, more personality-centered, less time-bound, more practical, and more incident-based than other news.” Actually, most soft news involved in politics is usually engaged with the leaders’ gender, personality, appearance, even daily life; it is especially highly employed with entertaining elements compared with hard news (Prior, 2003). Due to these traits, numerous previous studies provided convincing evidence to indicate that soft news demonstrated more attractiveness to audiences than other news formats. In the most important analysis to date, Matt Baum (2002b) showed that some people who would otherwise not watch any news at all pay attention to soft news coverage of wars and foreign crises. According to Baum, some people do not watch hard news programs because the opportunity costs from forfeiting payoffs from entertainment are too high. As mentioned by Baum in another article (2003), if hard and soft news programs cover the same aspect of a story at about the same time, and a viewer consumes both types of programming, hard news use will tend to be incidental for politically unengaged individuals. And the result may probably be because soft news outlets are in the business of making information highly accessible (Baum, 2003).
makes such information easier for politically unsophisticated consumers to understand (Hamilton, 2003), and, hence, presumably also more appealing to them. What’s more, people’s appreciation of entertainment is one of the factors determining news exposure and, by extension, attention to politics (Baum 2002). That is, by focusing on the more entertaining, shocking, or scandalous aspects of politics, soft news offers these people an alternative that maximizes their utility because it combines entertainment and information (Prior, 2003).

In terms of the entertaining aspect of soft news, several previous studies (e.g. Prior, 2003; Baum, 2002b) demonstrated a number of factual examples in their studies through the method of content analysis. Among the eight formats in Prior’s (2003) study, two were classified as soft news: talk shows and so-called “infotainment” programs which primarily report on lifestyle, wardrobe, and scandals of Hollywood stars and the more glamorous politicians. Some more concrete samples were also given. The news topics talked about in “Hardcopy,” “Entertainment Tonight” (Prior, 2003) and “Oprah Winfrey” (Baum, 2002b) are defined as “infotainment” news, which refers to soft news that combines information and entertainment. Thus, soft news obviously appeals to people unwilling to give up on entertainment, even while they are watching news since it informs and entertains at the same time. Baum (2002b), for example, writes that “Entertainment Tonight and Oprah Winfrey are watched by about as many households as the evening newscasts of the major networks.” And, according to his findings, soft news attracts millions of viewers and ranks among the top three news formats for about a third of the population in the
Examining the impact of soft news and social media use on the political knowledge of the Chinese younger generations

United States.

Numerous studies have been conducted on this issue in the United States. However, little attention has been paid to international cases. How about the popularity of soft news when comparing it with hard news among Chinese audiences, especially young Chinese audiences? As mentioned previously, the soft news, especially news covering politics, emerged during recent years among the Chinese mainland media, and is entirely new to Chinese audiences.

This study looks at Chinese audiences’ feelings towards political soft news, which is utterly different from any type of solemn political news that has traditionally appeared in Chinese media. The particular target is to focus on the audience in the Chinese young generation, a group which can more probably represent Chinese contemporary culture and public opinion. There are some terms and definitions about the Chinese “young generation.” The most typical one is named as X-generation (China: X-Gen Study 1996). It is easy to tell that their values can exactly represent Chinese modern culture from the description in Time Asia (2000). The article says, “Strolling down Shanghai’s boulevards, one sees well-dressed young Chinese constantly talking on their mobile phones, switching easily between English and Chinese. They jam the city's Western-style bars and discos, even on weekday nights. They work at Internet startups or at Western firms. They are ambitious and confident. They are the models for Generation Yellow (equivalent to the X-Generation)--the rising middle-class in China, aged 18 to 35--and they are the future” (Time Asia 2000). Due to the special social political environment and
relaxed policy of government, the Chinese young generation is experiencing a totally
different life compared with their parents. Most of them are highly educated and
exposed to an international and influential environment, which may imply that their
opinion will be regarded as mainstream among Chinese society and also have a
powerful impact on others. Therefore, their attitude towards political soft news and
the influence of soft news on their factual political knowledge are extremely
significant to any Chinese political communication study.

As mentioned above, political soft news involves political content presented
with more attractiveness to the audience than other news formats. Will this finding
also be shown in effects on the Chinese young generation, especially when they
initially experienced political soft news? Thus, the first hypothesis is developed as:

\[ H_1: \text{Soft news covering politics will appear more attractive to the Chinese young}
generation than hard news does. \]

The previous studies indicated that soft news involve in politics is usually
engaged with the leaders’ gender, personality, appearance, and even daily life. Prior
(2003) mentioned in his research that soft news leads people to pay more attention to
the “entertaining” aspect of politics, but does not actually produce any learning effects.
According to his research, people’s preferences on news formats certainly have some
effect on their political knowledge. The result showed that people who prefer hard
news tend to be more knowledgeable in the first place. Zaller (1992) also found that
readers of People magazine were more likely to recall details about a story on Zsa Zsa
Gabor story. Entertainment talk shows, however, usually present politics in less
political, less partisan terms (Baum, 2002a). According to Baum, a limited positive effect of liking the talk show format is evident. People’s ranking of soft news consumption did not produce any significant effects in terms of increasing their political knowledge.

Different from the United States, China has a special political system and social ideology background. Any information about Chinese political leaders or the central government was regarded as confidential a few decades ago. After Deng Xiao Ping declared his open-door policy in 1979, the reform of the Chinese economic system has achieved enormous success. Along with the development of the economy and the improvement of political system, the process of democracy has also taken its step on an arduous but meaningful journey. To most of the overall Chinese audience in the last generation, a brief message with several pictures broadcast through CCTV was the typical regular political news (Ma & Guo, 2006). Its solemn style, oversimplification, and plain content aggravated Chinese audiences, creating aversion and apathy on public affairs and politic issues (Li, 2003). During recent years, however, political soft news has generally emerged on Chinese media, which tends to explore more entertaining elements compared to the serious political issues (Ma & Guo, 2006). Examples include, “Romantic stories of Chairman Jingtao Hu and his wife,” and “The most pretty female member of the CPPCC national consultative Conference.” Similar to the format in the U.S., Chinese political soft news emphasizes more the personality, appearance, and daily life of Chinese politicians, who were once the most mysterious and paramount group in the Chinese
central government. Thus, Chinese soft news also highly stresses the entertaining aspects more than the instructive. One essential propose of this study is to examine whether the Chinese soft news on political topics shows learning effect on the Chinese young generation's political knowledge, similar to what was found in the U.S., even given a situation where little hard political news can be obtained.

Based on this, the second hypothesis was developed:

H2: Consuming political soft news has no effect on learning of factual political knowledge for Chinese young adults.

As mentioned before, the soft news in China has more frequently emerged in social networks and websites such as blogs. Since social media is a fairly recent communication tool based on the internet, only a slight amount of literature exists on the subject. Nevertheless, the enormous influence and extremely rapid rise and speed of the social networks have been engendered as an innovative channel for the public to obtain and share information. By 2007 – after a short three years of existence – Facebook had more than 21 million registered Chinese members who generated 1.6 billion page views each day (Needham & Company, 2007, as cited in Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Two-thirds of Facebook users log in at least once a day; the typical user spends about 20 minutes a day on the site (Needham & Company, 2007, as cited in Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). The similar social media tool also rapidly budding based on the Chinese internet, Renren Network (Chinese: 人人网; literally "everyone network"), formerly known as Xiaonei Network (Chinese: 校内网; literally "on-campus network") is a typically Chinese social media
entity with an interface similar to that of Facebook. According to data provided by Xiaonei, as of July 2008, Xiaonei was the "Chinese largest online community website among universities" with more than 22 million active users and an estimated 40 million users who have registered their real names.

As previously mentioned, the Chinese X-generation is more familiar with new technology than the last generation and actually make up most of the current net citizens in Chinese Internet. In this case, the Chinese young generation is the most likely target for the information and news spread through Internet. In other words, the young adult who more frequently participates in social networks will tend to be more influenced by the information released though the internet, especially when the issue or information seems appealing to him or her. Since the soft news is attractive and initially emerged through internet due to less pressure of censorship on the internet, young adults will have a higher opportunity to experience the political soft news, or they will be impacted more by soft news. Then the third hypothesis will be:

H3: The young adults who frequently participate in a social network or browse the websites involved in political content will tend to find political soft news more appealing.

The case studied in this paper is based on a country with a special political background, China, which is under control of the central government owned by China’s Communist Party. According to previous studies, the Chinese central government is the most restrictive in content control and suppression of political speech in mass media (Xueping Du, 1999). Under this situation, the emergence of
political soft news may easily send a misleading message to the Chinese young adults that they obtain more freedom in political speech since they know more about their paramount leaders. As we know, soft news pays high attention to the entertainment aspects instead of talking about the concrete policies made by the central government. Many scholars have argued that a knowledgeable electorate is normatively good for democracy and that a woefully ignorant public may be incapable of fulfilling its democratic responsibilities (e.g., Almond, 1950; Lippmann, 1955; Key, 1961; Cohen, 1973; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). According to this statement, if soft news has no factual effects on the Chinese younger generation’s political knowledge, it’s hard to come to the conclusion that the Chinese political system reform has been accomplished. Something even worse, the soft news consuming may bring Chinese young adults a misconception that they know more about Chinese politics than in the past, which may aggravate their ignorance on concrete political knowledge learning and further weaken their ability to fulfilling their democratic responsibilities.

Thus, one research question raised in this paper is that:

R₁: Will soft news consumption impact on Chinese young adults’ opinion about Chinese democracy level?

Methods

A convenience sample of 114 Chinese college students was selected from the top universities in Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou and Hong Kong, which ensured a diversity of demographic background of the samples. These four cities were chosen
not only for their important geographic position, but also for their highly developed economies, which ensured the popularization of the internet. All 114 students were invited to answer a survey questionnaire sent by e-mail, with a short description of the study, information about confidentiality and incentives, and information about the survey conductor. The survey conducted through May 3 to May 5, 2010. Different measures were taken to move the possible biases. Different from the U.S., the age level of college students is quite concentrated on the spectrum from 18 to 25. Since our target is to figure out the impact of political soft news on Chinese X-generation, the sample distribution designed above definitely supports the research. In addition, the number of male (56.6%) and female (43.4%) students is approximately equal.

The major dependent variables of the study were political soft news consumption and opinions about the democracy level of the Chinese political system, while the major independent variable was social media use of political information. Additional control variables included prior interest in politics, age, political affiliation, and others as described further.

**Measurements**

The selection of political soft and hard news consumption dimensions for the study was based on the following three criteria: quantity, frequency of news, soft/hard reading, and degree of preference for soft/hard news. In each category, three questions were employed to measure political news consumption: 1) “Please estimate the quantity of political soft news you have read this semester.” (“Hard news”)
replaced “soft news” in following questions), 2) “How often do you read or watch political soft news?” (Again, “Hard news” replaced “soft news” in following questions) and 3) “How much do you like the political soft news?” (“Hard news” replaced “soft news” in following questions) Two categories were separately combined into two measurements which were denoted as “Soft news consumption” and “Hard news consumption.” A seven-point response scale was adopted (1 = “Not at all” to 7 = “Very much”) to indicate the participant's degree of interest and frequency of political news consumption. In addition, before all these questions, some concrete examples were provided to interpret the term “soft” and “hard” news. (e.g. “The most pretty female member of the CPPCC national consultative Conference” in soft news category)

The political knowledge scale employed in the questionnaire consisted of five items and was modified from Delli Carpini and Keeter (1993). They created a five-item scale to evaluate U.S. voters' political knowledge and provided sample questions for each category. Based on the reality of the Chinese political system, the five evaluation questions that were designed in the questionnaire followed parts of the criteria in their study and the familiar level to these questions were reported on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = “Not at all” to 7 = “Very much”).

To examine the influence of political soft news consumption on social media usage, attitudinal questions were designed to tap the range of active participant engagement in online organized communities that reflected interest in political content. The questions asked included the following: 1) “How much are you
interested in the opinions expressed about political topics in online social media?” 2) “How much do you participate in online organized communities that reflect your interest in political news?” A seven-point Likert scales (1 = “Not at all” to 7 = “Very much”) was provided for each of the questions.

In terms of the measurement of opinion about democracy, two attitudinal questions were employed to gauge the impact of soft news consumption on the young generation’s opinion about the democracy level of the Chinese political system. Questions were designed as: 1) “Do you agree that you could know more about the Chinese current political situation and political figures through soft news?” 2) “Do you agree that soft news is a sign of democracy for the Chinese political system?” A seven-point response scale was followed (1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree”) to indicate the participants’ opinion on Chinese political democracy.

In addition to political news consumption, political knowledge and social media use, further demographic information and interest level in political issues was collected. Since the major dependent variable – political soft news consuming and opinion about democracy – are social behaviors and concepts, the potential for multiple hidden variables to threaten the internal validity of the research could increase. To address this concern, gender, year in college, political affiliation and interesting in political issues were used as control variables. For the political interest measure, the student was asked to rate how much he or she likes the political journals or newspapers (“television programs” replaced “journal or newspapers” in following questions) and how frequently they utilize a political journal or newspaper to get
political information (again, “television programs” replaced “journal or newspapers” in following questions) on seven-point response scales (1 = “Not at all” to 7 = “Very much”). Some concrete examples, such as “Sanlian Life Weekly” and “Reference News,” which are Chinese mainstream political journals, were provided to illustrate the term “political journal or newspapers”. To ensure reliability, another measure question asked was: “How many political television programs have you watched in this semester?”, which was added with the four items mentioned above to composite the political interest scale. Political affiliation measurement was comprised of Communist Party, communist league (organizations that serve as a recruitment ground for Communist Party membership and the officialdom with the mission to galvanize support for state policies.) (Oksenberg, 2001), democratic parties and other categories according to Chinese political reality, while freshman, sophomore, junior, senior and graduate categories comprised the year in college dimension.

**Descriptive Statistics**

The sample consisted of 56.6 percent male students and 43.4 percent female students, and the average year in college was concentrated in the junior and senior years. In addition, 60.2 percent of the students aligned themselves with communist league political affiliation, which was the largest part of the sample, compared with 26.9 percent and 5.6 percent of students who reported as member of communist party and democratic parties, respectively.

In terms of the political news consumption measurements, two composite scores were created for soft news and hard news, averaging three items in each
categories (Cronbach’s alpha=.88 for soft news measure and .94 for hard news).

For the political knowledge scale, five items were averaged. The reliability for Cronbach’s alpha (.89) was in a highly acceptable range. To examine the social media usage involving political content, two Likert-scale attitudinal questions were combined (Cronbach’s alpha=.90). In term of the measurement of the young generation’s opinion about the democracy level of the Chinese political system, two attitudinal questions were composited (Cronbach’s alpha=.89). Lastly, the measurement created for interest in political issues was composed of scales of favorite level and frequency of reading political journal or newspapers and watching television programs (Cronbach’s alpha=.85). Each measurement and the correlation among all measurements, as well as the survey descriptive statistics, are summarized in Table 1.

[Table 1 can be placed about here]

According to the correlations test, there are significant positive relationships between political knowledge and soft news consumption, hard news consumption, and social media usage. A strong positive relationship (r = .306, p < .001) between social media usage and political soft news consumption among participants was also observed. In terms of the correlation between opinion about democracy and political news consumption, a positive significant relationship was found in soft news consumption (r = .378, p < .001), while no significant relationship existed for hard news consumption.

Compelling correlations arose from control variables, including gender, interest in political issues, and political affiliation. Interest in political issues (r
Examining the impact of soft news and social media use on the political knowledge of the Chinese younger generations

= .508, p < .001) and gender(r = .221, p < .05) were positively associated with soft news consumption, while political affiliation (r = -.192, p < .05) was negatively related. According to these results, the student who consumes more of both soft and hard news tends to have higher political knowledge. Meanwhile, the students who participate more in social media groups involved in political issues have a propensity to consuming more political soft news. In addition, female students and the participants who reported being members of the communist party displayed higher interest in soft news.

Data Analysis

The final sample consisted of 114 college students. Three separate multiple regressions were run for political knowledge, soft news consumption and opinion about democracy. The Wilcoxon signed ranks test was adopted to examine the difference between students’ preference level for soft news and hard news. The analysis procedure was the same for each dependent variable. The Wilcoxon signed ranks test showed a borderline significance (P = 0.062, Table 2) on the difference between Chinese college students’ partiality to soft news and hard news. Based on the observation from table 2, the predilection toward soft news is slightly higher than on hard news.

[Table 2 can be placed about here]

As is evident in previous studies, the political soft news also demonstrated its’ appeal to Chinese young audience, though the significance is not so strong; the
median value of soft news preference tends to higher. Thus, hypothesis 1 is faintly supported.

According to the findings, the demographic characteristics of political affiliation and interest in political issues were significantly related to political knowledge. The students who reported more interest in political issues presented higher levels of political knowledge (b = .266, p < .05). Furthermore, the students who reported being members of the communist party also maintained further political knowledge than members of the communist youth league and democracy parties (b = -1.255, p < .05).

As predicted, a statistically significant relationship was only found between hard news consumption and students’ political knowledge, while no significant relationship existed with soft news consumption. (See Table 3)

[Table 3 can be placed about here]

According to Table 3 (F = 10.282, p < .001, $r^2 = .411$), hard news consumption was significantly related to the political knowledge level with a positive association (b = .489, p < .001). Although some correlations were observed in Table 1, no completely significant relationship existed between soft news consumption and political knowledge when hard news consumption and other factors are used as control variables. Therefore, there is strong evidence to prove that soft news consumption has no influence in political knowledge increasing, and hypothesis 2 is supported.

Moreover, powerful evidence, illustrated in Table 4, indicated that social
media usage has a significant positive relationship with soft news consumption.

[Table 4 can be placed about here]

Based on the result displayed in Table 4 (F = 15.590, p < .001, $r^2 = .411$), the frequency of participation in social media groups involved in political content is significantly related with soft news consumption ($b = .287$, $p < 0.05$). What’s more, only the control variable of interest in political issues ($b = .385$, $P < 0.001$) showed significant association with soft news consumption, while no statistically significant relationship existed between others. In this case, hypothesis 3 is successfully proven.

Finally, results in Table 5 (F = 2.276, $p < .05$, $r^2 = .159$) demonstrated that the students who consumed more political soft news have a higher tendency to believe that the Chinese political system is more democratic than before (See Table 5).

[Table 5 can be placed about here]

More so than any of the respondents’ demographic characteristics, the soft news consumption variable was significantly related to opinion about the democracy level of the Chinese political system in a positive direction ($b = .303$, $p < .05$). Therefore, the research question was answered "yes" as political soft news does have influence on the Chinese young generations’ opinion about the democracy level of the Chinese political system in a positive slant.
Discussion

The purpose of this research was to find connections between Chinese young adults’ political knowledge and political soft news consumption, together with exploring the impact of social media usage on soft news consumption. Moreover, the study also attempted to analyze whether political soft news consumption affected college students’ ideas on the democracy level of the Chinese political system.

The current research revealed that Chinese students exhibit slightly higher partiality on political soft news. Meanwhile, strong evidence was provided to demonstrate that political soft news provide no assistance on increasing Chinese college students’ political knowledge. The results are meaningful in relation to current Chinese political news standards, including target audiences. The more students participate in social media oriented towards political content, the more they are influenced by political soft news. This result indicates that social media use reinforces political soft news consumption and participation.

The final component of this research involved attempting to identify a correlation between soft news consumption and students' opinion about Chinese political democracy. Similar to the hypotheses, the research question was answered with a strong significant relationship observed between these two variables. More specifically, soft news consumption is the only effective factor among others to influence students’ opinion about democracy, which means, the more they consume soft news, the more positive their opinion about Chinese democracy level is.
The current study presents important contributions and implications for research and international cultural understanding. Even though prior research identified relationships between political soft news and political knowledge in the U.S. (2003, Prior), none existed that analyzed the impact of soft news within the People's Republic of China since it is still new to most Chinese. The study examined the influence of soft news on Chinese young college students’ political knowledge as well as social media practices. Furthermore, as social media is considered new and rapidly evolving, few studies exist concerning social media practices in general. The research gives evidence about the impact of media’s ability to influence opinions and knowledge. The political soft news’ attractiveness directly reaches the Chinese young generation, with a null effect on their political knowledge escalating.

Another essential finding indicates that soft news consumption certainly sent the Chinese young generation a message that they have are embraced in a more democratic political system in China while absent of concrete political knowledge. As demonstrated in the literature review, this roseate viewpoint may mislead them to neglect some crucial information about the Chinese political system, aggravate their ignorance on concrete political knowledge learning, and further weaken the ability to fulfill democratic responsibilities.

These results imply that it is difficult for political soft news in China to be considered as a preferred method for the young generation to obtain political knowledge. These results further imply that this misinterpretation of soft news not only exists in Chinese contemporary society, but that social media and networks
reinforce the impact and continue to shape students’ opinion about the democracy level in an over-optimistic direction while the reality is still hard to gauge.

The study has limitations that must be addressed. A major limitation is the sample population. With restricted resources, I attempted to survey a broad population; however, all of the individuals were students from first-rate universities in China, with the majority between 20 and 24 years of age and majoring in science or engineering. Due to general trends of apathy on humanities issues, the surveyed student sample could have skewed results with a narrow ideology range.

The method of the research must be considered for potential limitations as well; while correlation can be identified with the cross-sectional survey method, causality does not exist. The research provides data proving that soft news consumption and opinions about democracy are correlated, but it cannot be concluded that soft news consumption causes certain beliefs about Chinese democracy. Perhaps using a panel data analysis with a reversed hypothesis (the higher level of democracy opinion maintained, the more political soft news consumed) could show different correlations, illuminating the relationship between soft news and opinion about democracy in the Chinese political system.

Notes:

1. Soft news refers to both news stories and entire programs. Using Patterson’s definition, any given news story can be classified as hard or soft, regardless of the
news program in which it appears. Alternatively, several new news formats, blends of information and entertainment, that have emerged in the past two decades, are labeled “soft news” and thereby contrasted to more traditional hard news formats, most notably the national network news (e.g., Baum, 2002b).

Reference


Examining the impact of soft news and social media use on the political knowledge of the Chinese younger generations

*Telecommunication Policy and Research Conference.* September 25-27


Time Asia (2000). The Ranks of Revolutionaries (October 23), 156.

Examining the impact of soft news and social media use on the political knowledge of the Chinese younger generations

Journal of Contemporary China, 12(36), 453–475

Examining the impact of soft news and social media use on the political knowledge of the Chinese younger generations

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Variables

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<td>a. Soft news Consuming</td>
<td>10.21</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Hard news Consuming</td>
<td>9.64</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.473**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Social media usage</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>.306**</td>
<td>.201*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Political knowledge</td>
<td>12.49</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>.374**</td>
<td>.549**</td>
<td>.244**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Opinion in democracy</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>.378**</td>
<td>.901</td>
<td>.126</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Interesting in politics</td>
<td>16.77</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>.508**</td>
<td>.562**</td>
<td>.290**</td>
<td>.502**</td>
<td>.195*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. political affiliation</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>-.192*</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>-.186*</td>
<td>-.148</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. gender</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.221*</td>
<td>-.177</td>
<td>.147</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.160</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>-.144</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * < .05, ** < .001
Examining the impact of soft news and social media use on the political knowledge of the Chinese younger generations

Table 2. The comparison between soft news and hard news preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Prefer Soft News</th>
<th>Prefer Hard News</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-value</td>
<td>.062</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N=113

Table 5. Effects of Soft on Opinion about Democracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variable</th>
<th>Opinion About Democracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B and Beta Coefficients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft news Consuming</td>
<td>.303 (.404)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard news Consuming</td>
<td>-.046 (-.062)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting in politics</td>
<td>.034 (.064)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Knowledge</td>
<td>-.076 (-.120)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Usage</td>
<td>-.014 (-.015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year in school</td>
<td>-.180 (-.070)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political affiliation</td>
<td>-.304 (-.074)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.068 (.011)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note: * < .05, ** < .001
### Table 3. Effects of Soft and Hard News Consuming on Political Knowledge

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Predictor Variable</th>
<th>Political Knowledge</th>
<th>B and Beta Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft news Consuming</td>
<td>-.077 (-.065)</td>
<td>-.643</td>
<td>.522</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard news Consuming</td>
<td>.489 (.403)</td>
<td>3.992</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting in politics</td>
<td>.266 (.308)</td>
<td>3.021</td>
<td>.003*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Usage</td>
<td>.106 (.070)</td>
<td>.854</td>
<td>.395</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year in school</td>
<td>-.304 (-.071)</td>
<td>-.930</td>
<td>.355</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political affiliation</td>
<td>-1.255 (-.182)</td>
<td>-2.327</td>
<td>.022*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.702 (.068)</td>
<td>.820</td>
<td>.414</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * < .05, ** < .001

### Table 4. Effects of Social Media Use on Soft News Consuming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variable</th>
<th>Soft News Consuming</th>
<th>B and Beta Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Usage</td>
<td>.287 (.226)</td>
<td>2.878</td>
<td>.005*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting in politics</td>
<td>.385 (.534)</td>
<td>6.863</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year in school</td>
<td>.031 (.009)</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>.906</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political affiliation</td>
<td>-.655 (-.119)</td>
<td>-1.559</td>
<td>.112</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1.161 (.143)</td>
<td>1.842</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * < .05, ** < .001
從台灣媒體發展看報業主義變遷
The Changing of Newspaper Doctrine on Taiwan

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從台灣媒體發展看報業主義變遷

壹、前言：報業理論


究其發展歷史和內涵，社會責任論是報業主義的一種修正，而民主參與報業理論則是自由主義脈絡下的一種次型態，民主報業理論本就主張「新聞要充分表達、溝通意見」，社會責任論則是再進一步彰顯人的理性與自主，強調「公民意識」與「媒體接近使用權」，而民族主義報業理論和發展性報業理論則是邁向民族民主國家或已開發國家的一種過渡型態。

報業制度乃政治制度與社會制度之一環，因此極權主義國家必為極權報業，共產主義國家必為共產報業，資本主義國家亦必為資本主義的自由報業。

不同的報業主義，基於對人性及人與社會的關係有不同的哲學基礎，對於媒體的社會角色也有不同的認定，期待它發揮不同的功能。也因此，媒介的倫理表現是否合乎所謂的標準，也視其所處環境、文化傳統、歷史精神、基本制度、國民意志，與客觀需求而定。不同的報業主義環境下，就有不同的媒體表現。

快速瀏覽中國新聞史，新聞發布始於漢代，封建制度促成邸報的發展，大唐盛世促進開元雜報的發達，宋代實施「定本制」，管制新聞的手段，反而催生「小報」的興行，雕版印刷術的發明，促使民間小報成為一種商品，清末的中國積弱不振，士人紛紛以辦報的方式，喚起民衆對國家所處境地的認識，並提出改革、解決之道，不論以康、梁為首的「維新派」，或以孫文為主的「革命派」，在這中產力挽救危機而存在，現代化的中文報刊，也是從清末開始的。綜觀新聞史的發展，媒介生態的發展及所受影響因素有三，分別為政治、經濟與科技。

歷史制度論（Historical Institutionalism）是新制度主義（New Institutionalism）的途徑之一，新制度主義是社會科學領域於二十世紀末興起的概念之一，廣泛運
用於政治學、社會學、組織理論…等領域的研究中。歷史制度論是從比較與制度的觀點來研究制度的影響，所謂制度是指人類社會中的遊戲規則，用以形塑與影響人們之間的互動，具有結構化的客觀外在，可反映人類行為的持續性、安定性和可預測性。但制度的歷史表現，並不完全是直線的靜態過程，人類行動的主觀意願，有時會打破客觀結構的藩籬，主動地去改變外在的制度結構，者也使得制度的歷史更富動態與變化。本文建基於歷史制度論，檢視光復後，影響台灣媒體發展環境之因素，進而了解媒介發展的表相狀況，再探究表相下所蘊含報業制度的變遷情形，推論架構如下：

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>國家領域</th>
<th>歷史制度論</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>政治民主化</td>
<td>報業主義</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>市場自由化</td>
<td>科技數位化</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>公共領域</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>市民社會</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

貳、影響台灣新聞媒體發展主要因素探討

一、政治

所謂政治，係資源與權力的分配，也是至主導制度的主要力量。近年來，台灣的政治民主，全球有目共睹，對於媒介發展而言，結束資訊全面管制或稱保護時期，開啓自由經營時期的兩大政策：一為解除報業四禁，即報紙發行張數限制、報紙登記限制、印報地點限制，以及報紙價格限制；另一為陸續推出的「天空開放政策」，即政府釋出頻道，使有線電視、通訊衛星電視、調幅廣播、調頻廣播，甚至無線電視皆可依法開創或增加頻道。前者使全國報紙、雜誌，以及通訊社之增加數以倍數計；後者則使各種電子媒體，全天候地將來自世界各地的資訊，藉由電波送到台澎金馬的每一個家庭。政治可以造就開放、自由的環境，但也可以影響、限制發展。

楊和縉，新制度主義論中國大陸國家公務員考試錄用制度之建構與發展，中國文化大學中山學術研究所碩士論文，台北：中國文化大學中山學術研究所，2005年6月，頁22。引自謝俊義，新制度論與公共行政：整合性的觀點，中國行政評論，第7卷第4期，台北：中華民公共行政學會，1998年9月，頁155-188。
1. 二二八事件、國民政府遷台及實施報禁

1947 年 2 月 28 日，因查緝私菸行動演變成擴及全台的警民衝突、省籍對立，許多報社受到重創，難以復刊。

1949 年國民政府撤退台，由於局勢緊張，對報業用紙實施配給政策，1950 年 11 月，以國際風雲日益險惡，製紙木漿需作軍用，各報應縮減篇幅，是為「限紙」及「限張」。其次，1951 年 6 月，以全臺報紙已達飽和，為節約用紙，今後新申請登記之報社，應從嚴限制登記，是為「限證」，是項規定，使台灣報業直到 1988 年元旦報禁解除為止，一直保持 31 家。接著：1952 年 11 月，規定同一新聞紙若在他地出版發行，應先申請核准登記，但事實上，登記已經停止，此項規定形同「限印」。此外，私下還有「限價」，三十餘年的報禁於焉形成。

2. 兩蔣不同風格的強人政治

1975 年 4 月 5 日，蔣中正逝世，蔣經國於 1978 年正式繼任總統，同是強人政治，但掌政風格大有不同，蔣經國在政治方面依然採取威權体制，經濟方面則透過有效的計劃經濟，帶動台灣經濟實力的上揚，人民只要肯付出，就能獲得溫飽與富足，大多數人並不在意是否有完整的公民參政權或言論自由。

3. 解嚴與解除報禁

八O年代，臺灣的政治大步向民主化跨進，「解除戒嚴」為執政者政治改革決心的最具體說明，也為媒體改革展開序幕。1988 年元旦，限制台灣報業發展近四十年的報禁正式解除。

4. 天空開放政策

開放天空後的廣播事業，電台節目多元化、本土化、地方化及類型化是主要特色；call-in 節目增加，促進聽眾之參與感，成爲電子媒體的新風尚，但也易發生浮濫現象；經營管理則以企業化方式取代傳統經驗法則。

除了政治民主化起了帶頭作用，配合大環境的諸多進步，如：教育普及、閱讀人口及意願提高、經濟發展、民衆消費能力提昇，及傳播科技進步等因素，更提供媒介發展的絕佳環境。

二、經濟

1. 經濟起飛

台灣的經濟於六O年代全面上揚，經濟景況佳、廣告量必然增加，人民對資訊的渴求也提昇，但受限制核發報紙發行許可證的保護，既有報刊成了壟斷事業，聲光效果俱佳的電子媒體在政府禁令保護下，更是閱聽人的新寵，廣告主的最愛。

2. 閱報率／收視率下降

閱報率和收視率是廣告主刊播廣告的重要考量，1963 年前，電視尚未在台播出，印刷媒體可謂一枝獨秀，電視機出現在家戶客廳中，瓜分了報章雜誌的讀者，但不至於威脅到報刊的生存。

隨著電視普及率上升，無線電視已不再是天子驕子，但整體而言，電視仍是民衆每日接觸比例最高的媒體：網路出現，成了新一代媒介消費者的最愛，當
調查結果顯示，民眾每日接觸媒介之比例，網路超過50%，而閱報率下降至45%，形成所謂「死亡交叉點」，也敲響報社關閉的喪鐘。

表1：台灣人民媒介使用率演變情形（單位：%）

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>媒介接觸率</th>
<th>歷史紀錄</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>報紙</td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>雜誌</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>廣播電台</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>無線電視台</td>
<td>85.9</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>77.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>網路</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>76.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. 廣告量下滑

廣告是媒體生存的命脈，台灣的媒體廣告量總額於2000年達到1000億的高峰，便開始一路下滑，從2004年到2009年，逐年遞減，唯有2010年上半年呈現上揚的趨勢，一到六月的廣告量已達到2009年全年的56%。從前述閱報率與收視率的下降，再看到廣告量減少，可知各類、各家媒體，都處在背腹受敵的狀態，不斷在背腹受敵的狀態，不再像以往只是和同類媒體主要對手競爭，不同媒體之間也要相互爭奪閱讀人的目光！結合網路的興起，又連帶導致大新聞平臺的形成，跨媒體經營的型態產生。

表2：台灣媒體廣告量演變情形（單位：百萬）

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>五大媒體總量</td>
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<td></td>
<td>49043</td>
<td>39419</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>報紙</td>
<td>11856</td>
<td>27713.70</td>
<td>21895</td>
<td>15708</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 林聖芬，台灣媒介生態，2009年大陸地區大眾傳播研究生來台實習活動專題課程，台北：中國文化大學新聞暨傳播學院，2009年10月26日。
5 2007，2008，及2010年資料為YAHOO！奇摩新聞第二～五屆「理想媒介大調查」結果。
6 林聖芬，台灣媒介生態，2009年大陸地區大眾傳播研究生來台實習活動專題課程，台北：中國文化大學新聞暨傳播學院，2009年10月26日。
7 台灣易普索（Ipsos Taiwan）市場研究公司於2005年10月以電話訪問調查之「跨媒介使用行為調查」節結。
8 浩騰媒體執行調查結果。
9 林聖芬，台灣媒介生態，2009年大陸地區大眾傳播研究生來台實習活動專題課程，台北：中國文化大學新聞暨傳播學院，2009年10月26日。
11 浩騰媒體，2010年上半年媒體廣告成長24%，2010年8月4日發布於動腦雜誌網站。
12 資料來源：動腦雜誌，第139期，1989年1月，動腦雜誌，第217期，1994年3月，動腦雜誌，第303期，2001年7月，動腦雜誌，第358期，2006年2月。
| 雜誌 | 1165 | 4683.69 | 3775 | 8670 |
| 廣播電台 | 1138 | 3159.81 | 2966 |   |
| 無線電台 | 8080 | 13451 | 8369 |   |
| 有線電視 | 24949.80 | 10958 | 18746 |   |
| 網路 |   | 700 | 2940 |   |
| 戶外媒體 |   | 320 | 5071 |   |

4. 蘋果日報加入市場

2003年5月2日蘋果日報在台創刊，其編、採政策，經常引起兩極化的批評，形成所謂「蘋果化」的新聞處理方式。各報無不跟進，加強圖片的運用與彩色印刷的版面，所影響者不僅報業，電子媒體也跟進，以說故事的手法報導新聞，常有煽情（sensational）演出。

三、科技

1. 印刷、傳版技術與交通運輸的提昇

報禁開放前，在報紙發行張數受到限制，但廣告量逐年激增的情況下，廣告版面或時段變得奇貨可居，各報不能增張，只好採取「縮版」、「分版」方式處理。縮版乃縮小字體，分類廣告的字體極小，年長者要使用放大鏡才能看清；分版則是在政府許可下，新聞版面從南到北完全保持一致，但廣告版面則有不同，分A、B或甲、乙版處理，以消化大量廣告主的需求。電子媒體亦同，想要在收視率高的節目時段播出廣告，必需「一搭三」、甚至「一搭七」，一同購買其他收視率低的節目的廣告時段，完全的「賣方市場」。

因應報紙限於報社登記地點印刷一項，各報社無不採用高速輪轉印刷機印刷，搭配卡車司機南來北往在省道（後改高速公路）奔馳，以便在清晨時分，將新聞送達讀者手中。

2. 數位革命

就傳播科技而言，金屬活字印刷象徵第一次傳播革命，數百年之後，廣播與電視的發明，又形成第二次重要的科技革命。不到一世紀，以電腦爲中心的第三次傳播科技革命，又使「超媒體」出現。此際所稱之超媒體，有別於任何時代都可能出現之新媒體，而是指結合電腦、電視、電信、電信，及衛星通訊等多種電子科技所組成的網路，用以傳送數位化的資訊，在美稱之爲資訊高速公路。網際網路儼然成爲跨世紀當紅的新媒體！

隨著科技進步，頻道壓縮技術和線纜材質的改良，使得線纜所能傳送的訊號量愈來愈大，所能容納的頻道也愈來愈多，因此，有線電視的頻道自然較無線電視來得豐富，選擇也更多，自然受到觀眾喜愛。

三項因素，除直接對媒體發展產生作用，又有交互作用所製造的影響，而且，
政治、經濟與科技三項因素也彼此連動，互相影響。

參、台灣新聞媒體之發展概況

台灣的中文報業發展，肇始於光復之後，甫脫離日本殖民統治半世紀，曾出現短暫開放、蓬勃發展的光景，但受二二八事件及國民政府撤退來台大事件的影響，進入為期近四十年的「報禁時期」。

自1987年解嚴迄今，二十餘年的時間，發生於台灣地區的改革與開放，遠超過台灣光復以後的四十二年。正確的政策、人民辛勤努力，帶動不斷向上攀升的發展指數，再加上一連串的改革與開放政策，使得台灣經驗，不僅限於經濟成就，更包含民主政治的落實，象徵民主最具代表性的指標——資訊自由，亦可從新聞媒體的蓬勃發展獲得印證。

表3：台灣媒體發展情形（單位：家數）

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>通訊社（通訊稿業）</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td>238</td>
<td>1102</td>
<td>1638</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>報紙</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td>367</td>
<td>2473</td>
<td>2073</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>雜誌</td>
<td>3922</td>
<td></td>
<td>5884</td>
<td>4786</td>
<td>7088</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>廣播電台</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>無線電視台</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有線電視播送系統業者</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>128</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

宣偉伯(Willer Schramm)曾將人類的歷史，大約是一百萬年的時間，比喻為一天的二十四小時，而發明於距今三千五百年前的傳播工具——文字，是出現在這一天的最後第七分鐘；也就是說，在這一天的前二十三小時五十三分，人類傳播史上幾乎完全空白，一切重大的傳播工具發展，都集中在這天的最後七分鐘！

採用同樣的道理，將台灣光復至今六十年的時間，相當於一天二十四小時，

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15余也魯，門內門外，再版，香港：海天書樓，1986年，頁9。
則1988年—月報禁開放前，台灣的報紙家數有31家，現有2473家，其中有2437家是成立於最後的七小時十二分。

而無線廣播電台，在1992年頻道開放之前，全台有29家廣播公司，經過十梯次開放設立電台，現有172家獲准成立的新電台，增加的143家，是在“一天”中的最後五小時三十六分鐘；目前所有合法的有線電視播送系統業者，共128家，亦完全在最後五小時十二分內，取得合法地位。

無線電視台方面，全民民間電視公司與公共電視台，是在最後四小時，正式對民衆發射電波。

與人類的歷史相較，脫離日本人統治的六十年，實在不長，因此我們計算不出七分鐘這樣驚人的數字，但自解嚴以來，各類新聞媒體有大幅度地開放與長足的進步，媒體的發展集中在一天的最後八個小時以內，日以繼夜提供各類資訊，亦令民衆充分體認到世界千變萬化、變化之速，縱使這些在開放政策下激增的媒體，未能全數維持正常營運，多有停刊、合併或只登記發行證而未真正發行者，但仍彰顯一個重要意義，即傳播的決定權在於民衆而非政府。

一、通訊社

報禁實施期間，通訊社之登記未在限制之列，使得許多有志從事報業者，改辦通訊社，一來，可天天發稿，若經報社採用，亦如同自辦報刊；二來，如有一家以上報社採用，則通訊社的普及率及影響力，又比報社提高。因此，報禁實施期間，全國報刊只有31家，但例行發稿之通訊社卻有356家之多，形成原料供應商比製造廠商還要多的奇特景象。

但通訊社終究不是直接向閱聽人發稿的新聞媒體，收入少、開支大，尤其沒有巨額的廣告收入和發行收入，只能向訂用社稿的媒體收費，收入極為有限，經營最為不易，世界各國的通訊社多面臨此困境，台灣的通訊社亦不例外，且報社之成立受限，如同市場毫無開發的空間，更是雪上加霜，即使政府未予限制，後繼投入者有限，截至報禁解除，其發展與報業相同，皆呈穩定狀態。

在報禁解除之前的三十多年裏，唯一有能力發行綜合新聞稿者，只有中央通訊社一家。

報禁解除之初，新報登記逐月激增，通訊社亦水漲船高，1991年時，共有227家，是為空前的繁榮景象。

現代新聞通訊社之服務對象，已擴大到任何個人或機構，而不限於新聞媒體，且其供應之新聞或相關資訊，採用文字、圖畫、語音、乃至影片及各種型態，更可結合電腦網路傳佈全球，然成本高、利潤低，想維持全國性或全球性之獨立營運，絕非易事。因此，雨後春筍般所出現的新通訊社，朝向小規模、專業性發展，而專業又以股市訊息、財經資訊為最多，現有通訊社，多屬此類。

可見，這種繁榮景象，也只限於登記家數，對於通訊社的地位與業務，未有太多實質的幫助，即便是歷史悠久的中央社，也歷經一段艱苦經營的歲月。

前已提及，中央通訊社隸屬於中國國民黨，雖其始終擔負國家通訊社的角
色，但以政黨所屬機構獲得政府財力補助，在解嚴之後飽受抨擊，亦實有不須。隨著台灣走向國際，以及經濟發展之需要，中央社在資訊自由化的趨勢下，需於現有基礎上作體質之改變，成為國家通訊社，使其在接受政府補助下，保持財團法人地位獨立經營，如同法國之法新社、日本之共同社等。

中央通訊社設置條例於 1995 年底經立法院三讀通過，1996 年 1 月 17 日明令公佈，中央社正式成為國家通訊社。16

二、平面媒體

1. 報紙

1945 年台灣光復，脫離日本長達五十年的殖民統治，日本人統治期間，台灣也有報刊發行，但幾乎全是日文報刊，直到光復，中文報刊才在台灣露出曙光。

在台發行的第一份中文報刊——新生報，是接收日人留下來的唯一報紙「台灣新報」。光復之初，由於大多數台灣同胞不識中文，因此陸續出刊的新報仍保留部份日文版面，到 1946 年 10 月才全部取消日文版面。

光復初期，政府對報業採取開放政策，強調「創刊不須許可、言論不須檢查」，造就了二二八事件之前，民營報業的蓬勃發展。

1947 年 2 月，在各種歷史因素的交織情境下，台灣發生了「二二八事件」，也挑戰了開放報業制度下被濫用的新聞自由，許多報紙因報導不公或推波助瀾，遭到嚴重破壞無法復員而關閉；再加上 1949 年，國民政府撤退來台，也為台灣報業帶來重大的改變。

政府遷台，許多支持中央政府的報刊亦播遷來台，使得台灣報業霎時熱鬧非凡，且原本地方色彩濃厚的報紙，都變成「全國性」報刊；也因局勢緊張，開啓了對報業一連串的管制措施。

報禁實施期間，報業發展受到相當大的阻礙，原有的報紙同質性高、風格雷同；又由於篇幅受限，廣告經常與新聞搶版面；廣告收入不足以支應報社營運，只好轉往發行方面發展，但又有限額規定...，一切的規定，在在使得民營報業生存不易，得靠各種聯盟及策略，才能維持下去；黨公營報業，則因有政府的支持，機具設備及人才均優於民營報社，在五〇年代，成為報業主流，其中又以中央日報最受重視。

報禁是對報業嚴格的管制，但從另一個角度來看，也是一種缺乏公平性的保護，保護既存在的報刊，不會有新的競爭者分食市場大餅。民營報業方面，市場的穩定，加上報社本身各方面長期的努力，奠定未來發展的雄厚實力基礎，即使經營不善，單憑奇貨可居的發行登記證，轉手亦可獲取暴利。反觀黨公營報業，政黨的背景，曾是他們發展的後盾，隨著環境改變，卻也成爲言論的阻礙。七〇年代，民營報業和公黨營報業就在大環境的諸多變遷下，相互消長、地位互易，聯合報及中國時報成為台灣二大報。

整理自王天濱，台灣新聞傳播史，台北：亞太圖書出版社，2002 年。
報禁解除後十餘年，報社家數逐年增加，新增者多，停刊者亦不在少數，現有三百六十家登記報刊，但真正正常發行者不過三十餘家，與報禁期間相差無多，顯示報業在一番蓬勃發展、市場淘汰後，再次進入穩定的狀態。17

直到蘋果日報在台創刊，再度引起波瀾。2003年5月2日蘋果日報在台創刊，定位為台灣最貼近讀者生活的一份日報，每日提供綜合新聞、財經、娛樂、體育、副刊等五大類資訊，並提供讀者每日24小時無休的讀者爆料、投訴與服務熱線，成立蘋果日報慈善基金會，專門提供需要急難救助的人度過難關。18

自創刊以來，蘋果日報引發的話題不斷，時而因頭版照片過於血腥，引發學界撻伐、家長抗議，時而獨家揭露官員不法、名人不當行徑，執行第四權，也令人不得不在心中暗地為它鼓掌。

縱使他的編、採政策，經常引起兩極化的批評，但它的美術編輯、彩色印刷，以及消費新聞的平衡處理方式，也在報業從業人員進行每日比較報紙時，列為學習的對象，形成所謂「蘋果化」的新聞處理方式。

報業的蘋果化現象，從好的一方面來看，各報都開始加強美編與比較性資訊，但令人憂心的是，所謂「八卦」新聞，在不能獨漏的壓力下，紛紛跟進，尤其是電視媒體，有過之而無不及。

在A.C. Nielson媒介調查中，2005年第二季蘋果日報閱讀率名列全台報紙第一名，19也是境內唯一一家接受中華民國發行公信會（Audit Bureau of Circulations, ABC）稽核發行量的報社。

目前的報業，在強敵環伺的情況下艱辛地生存，除了面臨同為報業的競爭，甚至集團內的不同報紙，也有競合問題，更要面對電子媒體及網路媒體節節進逼、取代聲四起的壓力。2005年11月1日起，中時晚報正式停刊，充份反映報業所面臨的困境。

在A.C. Nielson媒介調查中，2005年第二季蘋果日報閱讀率名列全台報紙第一名，19也是境內唯一一家接受中華民國發行公信會（Audit Bureau of Circulations, ABC）稽核發行量的報社。

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黨外雜誌也在此時勃興，散播民主思想，民進黨執政時期，許多政治要員，都在當時都曾參與雜誌工作。

許多知識份子或學者專家為抒發理念，鼓吹理想，提筆為文，為有更寬闊的發表園地，則集資自辦雜誌，舉凡政論、文學、音樂等等，各類型雜誌兼而有之，但未必經過審慎的讀者定位及市場評估，貿然出刊，期復一期，對資金及稿件的消耗量大且快，其理想雖高，存活率卻偏低，往往在現實的壓力下難以維系，最後無疾而終。雜誌上市此起彼落，但也生機不斷。

六O年代後期，漸有雜誌創辦人擺脫文人辦刊物的窠臼，編輯、廣告、發行並重。內容紮實、具時宜性、可讀性高、版面美觀大方、休閒取向的刊物，在經濟快速發展的社會環境下，頗受喜愛。1978 年時報週刊問世，強調新、快，內容包羅萬象又有趣，開啓大開本雜誌的新頁，迄今不衰。

八O年代初，標榜人文精神的財經雜誌——《天下》創刊，其精寫精編的風格，雖為財經專業雜誌，不乏新觀念、新趨勢的介紹，也為雜誌樹立良好的典範。

八O年代中期至今，雜誌先是經過解嚴後的大鳴大放，與報業同樣進入競爭激烈的戰國時期；而後進口關稅降低，股市大漲，景氣看好，雜誌也欣欣向榮；接著電子媒體開放，雜誌也面臨讀者流失的困境。

比起1999年1月25日，出版法廢止前，台灣登記的雜誌有5884家，目前只有4786家，不增反減，可看出雜誌經營的困境。現有多是為特殊興趣所刊行的專業雜誌，其中又以報導時尚流行的刊物，及以一般電腦使用為主要對象的電腦雜誌為二大宗。由於雜誌專業暨深入的報導，也使雜誌常與出版社一同經營。

三、電子媒體

1.廣播

1928年，中國國民黨之中央廣播電台成立，1946年，中央廣播電台易名為中國廣播公司，分台及發射機遍及全國，一台獨大之局面，非其他公營電台所能比擬。

政府遷台，廣播政策承接大陸時期之經驗，配合當時反共復國之國家目標作任務性的發展。對中廣公司、軍中、情報、治安單位所屬電台，大量擴充；對民間電台則加以管制。截至1959年，各政、黨、軍、民營電台紛紛設立與復播，幾乎將當時所有的調幅頻率所佔滿，亦將廣播事業由凋零帶入興盛，藉由廣播媒體的獨具特性，有效的傳播訊息、宣揚政令、傳衍文化、散佈娛樂，成為最受大眾所喜愛的傳播媒介，聽廣播亦是一般民衆最普遍的休閒娛樂，前途一片大好。

1959年，政府以電波干擾問題嚴重，停止民營電台的申設，民營廣播事業停止擴展，情形一如報禁。回顧當時調幅頻率的使用情形，確實已達飽和，除非既行使用者中止或撤回，很難再有頻道供大衆使用，但這項凍結措施，也為各類軍營及黨營電台保留發展的空間。同時，範限民營電台的設立，造成廣播事業成爲封閉系統，發展緩慢且有限。
1968 年，政府釋出部份調頻頻道，仍遵行先前之禁令，只提供軍營、政營、黨營電台，做全台廣播網使用，使原本就以非營營電台為主體的廣播事業生態更為強勢。黨政軍營電台不過十二家，佔有頻率卻超過全國總頻率量的一半以上！

解嚴後的台灣，在民主化、自由化、經濟化、國際化的政策下，社會朝向多元化發展，資訊流通、言論自由、媒介接近使用權等意識高漲，對媒介的需求與要求急速提昇，但廣播媒介的開放政策，未能同步提昇，致使九○年代初期，地下電台興起。

未經合法申請執照而自行播音的地下廣播電台，以打破頻率壟斷、強調言論自由為主，在台各地設立，以鮮明的立場、爭議的話題、尖銳的言詞、大量的 call-in 節目，快速吸引大量的聽眾，形成主流廣播外的新文化。

1992 年，政府開放頻率設立電台，長達三十四年的限制措施，終於解凍。迄今，經過多梯次頻率開放，包含全區網、區域性之中功率電台及社區性之小功率電台，現有各級電台 144 家，是頻道開放前的四倍有餘。

至今，廣播電台已歷經十梯次的開放，廣播電台從開放前的 29 家增加到目前的 172 家。

2. 電視

1962 年，教育電視實驗廣播電台開播，是台灣電視事業之起點。至七○年間，台灣電視公司、中國電視公司及中華電視公司相繼成立，形成往後二十五年，電視事業鼎足而三的局面。

在台灣，觀看電視是國人日常生活中最主要的休閒活動，電視不只是提供娛樂的機器，更是塑造現代人價值觀與行爲的重要管道，電視節目的品質與視訊科技的研發，亦成為國人共同關注的話題。三家電視台於生態穩定的二十五年間，即擔負起上述各項使命。

1992 至 1996 年，是台灣電視生態轉變最為顯著的時期。其一是有線電視與衛星電視頻道大舉進入我國的天空，藉由電纜到達每一個家庭中，與原有的三台分食觀眾市場。這項競爭不只是反應在廣告業績的消長，節目類型、表現策略、及觀眾反應，由於有線電視的加入，都促使三台必須力求精進，以獲取廣大觀眾的收視。

其二，是第四家無線電視台——民間全民電視台，於 1997 年 6 月開播。政府鑒於社會各界對於三台節目過於強調營業取向，而未能滿足觀眾日益多元化之視聽需求，於 1994 年公告接受第四家無線電視台之申設，經委員會多次審議，由民主進步黨所提出、擬設於高雄之民視審查獲通過，為我國電視史寫下重要的一章。民視的成立，矯正老三台分屬前省政府、中國國民黨、及國防部之不當現象，但民視最終仍設台於北部，無法平衡電視台分佈重北輕南的現象。民視強調以台灣為中心、節目製作本土化之政策，頗受觀眾好評，節目亦受學者專家青睞，1999 年金鐘獎，民視獲得多項大獎，足以證明。

其三，是延宕十八年的公共電視台，於 1998 年 7 月開播。由於國內三台均
屬商業台，國人普遍認為需要建立一個爲全民服務、使人民有平等之媒介接近使用權、提供廣泛而多樣化的高品質節目，並兼顧少數觀眾之特殊需要的公共電視台，乃於 1982 年成立「公共電視節目製作機構」，策畫公視節目製播相關事宜，惜一波三折，人才招募、機器採購…等工作皆已完成，公共電視法卻至 1998 年五月才通過，研議十八年之公共電視，終於獨立設台播出，或爲一向商業取向的電視生態，注入一股清流，但落於有線電視開放之後，意義不再。

公視節目來源可分爲二部份，一是委託三台及獨立製作業製作；另一是向國外購買高品質、符合公視精神之節目。

公視從借三台播出節目到獨立設台，之所以延宕多時，是因為它耗費政府龐大預算，但卻不想也不能受政府監督，否則又將淪爲監督預算執行的立法院的應聲蟲，失去公眾的精神。

隨著民主腳步大幅向前邁進，另一方面，也是對於電視媒體長期爲黨、政、軍長期壟斷的不滿與反撲，「黨政軍退出媒體」的呼聲震天價響。

立法院於 2006 年 1 月 3 日三讀通過「無線電視事業公股處理條例」，賦予政府退出台視、華視併入公視集團的法源。公股條例明定台視釋出公股的所得，將作為購回華視民股的財源。不過，條例並未明定台視公股轉讓的時程，因此台視公股轉讓的進程將影響華視公共化的腳步。公股處理條例雖然完成立法，黨政軍真正退出媒體的時程卻還在未定之天。

3. 有線電視

傳統的無線電視因爲先天的限制，電波常常會受到高山阻隔或無法穿透崎嶇地形，造成部份地區居民無法收視或收視不良，爲解決這些問題，必需加裝線纜，藉由線纜傳遞訊息，以擺脫地形限制及氣候的影響，是為「社區共同天線」，是有線電視的前身。

台灣有線電視還有一種類型，是業者利用電纜播放錄影帶節目，賺取利益，或是在野黨爲打破媒體壟斷所成立，在 1993 年之前，皆爲非法。

由於台灣自從進入電視時代，長久以來，只一直處在只有三台（台視、中視、華視）節目可看的情形，當有了另一種選擇出現的時後，一般民眾稱之爲「第四台」，即指鼎足而三的三家電視台以外，所能接收的電視節目，這是在台灣特有的電視生態下，所產生的特殊名詞。

第四台的源起可溯至 1976 年，經營者利用電線杆架線，播放錄影帶；八○年代初期，使用碟形天線接收鄰近國家之電視節目，充實第四台的節目內容；1984 年直播衛星問世，第四台與衛星電視結合，節目內容更多樣化，更增添有線電視的商機。

1990 年，台灣股市狂飆，第四台擴增股市資訊頻道，訂戶大增，然仔細推究，

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20 陳志平報導，「黨政軍退出三台立法完成，時程未定」，聯合報，A2 版，2006 年 1 月 4 日。
21 中國新聞學會，中華民國新聞年鑑（1996 年版），台北：中國新聞學會，1996 年，頁 136-137。
第四台實觸犯多項法令，如：廣播電視法、電信法、著作權法、所得稅法、電子電信器材管制辦法，播放競選廣告，又犯了當時的選罷法，且播放錄影帶，通常又都是盜版的院線片，觸法且危及電影院和錄影帶業的生存，引起業者恐慌，紛紛要求加以取締。

早在 1982 年修正廣播電視法時，即已將架設播放系統納入管理，1983 年起，亦雷厲風行、大舉取締，但第四台架線不難，即使遭到剪線、沒收設備，有龐大的利益為誘因，業者很容易就會東山再起，加上 1987 年解嚴後，報禁、黨禁開放，民意高漲，第四台活躍的情形，讓政府抓不勝抓。

1989 年，新聞局研究有線電視發展小組建議我國必需積極發展有線電視，新聞局會同交通部、電信總局等單位研擬相關法案，有線電視法終於在 1993 年八月通過，當時既存的有線電視播送系統業者「就地合法」。

與其他電子媒體相同，開放後的有線電視事業，電視節目呈現多元化、本土化、社區化及類型化等特色；call-in、show-in 及談話性節目促進觀眾之參與感，成爲電子媒體的新風尚，但也發生浮濫現象。然有線電視已成爲民衆生活的一部份，電視文化中必需討論的環節。更值得一提的是，新聞網的成立，如：無線衛星新聞台、東森新聞台、民視新聞台、三立新聞台、中天新聞台，及專門提供股市財經消息的非凡頻道，提供更新、更多角度之新聞報導，有些全天候的新聞網，更是二十四小時隨時提供最新消息，真正做到每一分鐘都是截稿時間！

然而，眾多頻道呈現在觀眾的選單中，帶來媒介消費者的未必是幸福，更嚴格地說，可能是一種浩劫。二十四小時不斷地播出，需要極大的節目量，因此，衡量新聞價值的標準降低，早期不足以成爲新聞的事件，都因時段需要填滿，而成爲家喻戶曉的新聞事件，加上媒體最害怕獨漏新聞，一窩蜂地追逐，時常造成原本微不足道的小事，成爲街頭巷尾議論紛紛的大事，call-in 節目盛行，相較於三台時期，電視媒體似乎更接近群眾；又，SNG 廣泛應用，觀眾仿佛親臨新聞現場，但看了太多未加以思考、嚴謹製作的新聞。另一方面，電視觀眾的市場並未擴張，台灣人口並無大幅增加，觀眾人數也就沒有成長，眾多頻道所能瓜分到的觀眾比起三台是大幅銳減，廣告收入減少，製作成本必需降低，才能營運生存，品質與精良度，反不若以往，近來，甚至演變成看報找新聞、上網找新聞。

4. 數位電視

數位電視是指從拍攝、編輯、製作、播出、傳輸、接收等全過程都使用數位技術的電視系統。數位電視節目訊號數位化，可消除雜訊及干擾，提升影、音效果，經過數位化「壓縮」的過程，一個數位頻道可播出三至四套節目，提供觀眾更多元化的節目選擇；無線數位電視並可使用於戶外及行動接收，觀眾不再侷限於室內看電視。[22]

22 戚毓倫，數位電視發展的課題探討，生活科技教育月刊，第 37 卷第 3 期，2004 年，頁 110-111。
23 參考網站：http://www.ttv.com.tw/serviceweb/FreeView/box.asp。
台灣自 1998 年起，由前所述及五家無線電視台、家電業界、電腦業界及政府相關研發單位等，共同組成「台灣數位電視委員會」，旨在推展數位電視，期順利轉換彩色類比電視，進入數位電視廣播的時代。2004 年，五家無線電電視台期待藉由雅典奧運的聲勢，提高民眾加購數位電視機上盒的意願，於 7 月 1 日正視推出無線數位電視多頻道節目的播出。

四、網路媒體

網路網路除了本身成爲一新式媒體，提供資訊服務外，也賦予傳統媒體新的呈現型式，在台最普遍者，如：電子報。時報報系於 1995 年 7 月開始之「全球資訊網」為一開端。

新興媒體帶给人類生活內容及型式上的改變，有其便利性，但因處於起步階段，所引起之相關問題，包含速度、品質、內容、技術、規範、跨媒體競爭，以及社會公平使用…等，待待解決，也成爲邁向二十一世紀，新聞傳播資訊業從業人員必需面對的重要課題。

近來，個人網誌（Weblog，簡稱 blog，俗稱布落格）興起，提供個人作品發表的園地，不論圖文作品，皆可上傳供大家瀏覽、發表意見。

網路的去中心化、雙向交流，彌補傳統的大衆媒體的不足，已逐漸成爲新一代國民生活中的主流媒體；然而，沒有專業人士的把關，也使得許多未經證實的訊息，最容易在網絡上流傳，且無法可管。網路分級的概念，於近來興起，但也只能做到呼籲，而無強制性。

唯，市場開放帶動激烈競爭，在蓬勃發展的「春秋戰國」時代之後，接續的是媒體的陸續關閉；九O年代中期，由於網路的興起，數位整合造就媒介的多樣性，瓜分了傳統大眾媒介的閱聽眾，主流媒體優勢不再，所謂大衆已相對成爲分眾或小眾；此際，伴隨產業整併導致廣告減少，又使媒體的經營雪上加霜，陷入商業競爭的惡化循環。

肆、台灣報業主義之變遷

自 1987 年解嚴迄今，二十餘年的時間，發生於台灣地區的改革與開放，遠超過台灣光復以後的四十二年。正確的經濟政策、人民辛勤努力，帶動不斷向上攀升的發展指數，再加上一連串的改革與開放，使得台灣經驗，不僅限於經濟成就，更包含民主政治的落實，也包括象徵民主最具代表性的指標——資訊自由。

報業主義之變遷，隨政治、經濟與社會制度的轉變，反映於實務運作上，平面媒體和電子媒體略有不同。

平面媒體經歷下述幾個時期。光復之初，是短暫的「自由主義報業」；二二八事件後，緊接著國政府撤退來台，政治局勢緊張，媒體受到嚴格的管控，形成

24 詳細參見參考網站：http://www.dtvc.org.tw/1-1.htm。
「極權主義報業」時期；待局勢穩定，政治面依然是保守、封閉的，經濟面則大
幅發展、開放，此一時期可謂「發展性報業理論」時期；後蔣後期與開放報禁初
期的「社會責任論的報業主義」時期；與電子媒介開放後的「自由主義報業」時
期，當然，「民主參與報業」也伴隨自由主義興起而生，媒體面臨生存的問題，「社
會責任」已然是其次。

電子媒介則以天空開放政策為界，開放前，如同報業，係「為了完成發展目
標，國家可以干預、限制媒介運作」的「發展性報業理論」，開放後，進入「自由主義報業」時期，隨網路興起，
傳播業的競爭複雜且加遽，各種弊端隨之興起。

表 4：台灣報業主義之變遷（筆者自行整理）

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>平面媒體</th>
<th>電子媒體</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945 年台灣光復</td>
<td>自由主義報業</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>1947 年二二八事件</td>
<td>極權主義報業</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978 年蔣經國繼任</td>
<td>發展性報業理論</td>
<td>發展性報業理論</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988 年報禁開放、報紙成立民意論壇版面</td>
<td>社會責任論的報業主義（民主參與報業理論）</td>
<td>發展性報業理論</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992 年天空開放政策、有線電視法通過、call-in節目興起</td>
<td>自由主義報業（民主參與報業理論）</td>
<td>自由主義報業（民主參與報業理論）</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995 年網路興起</td>
<td>自由主義報業</td>
<td>自由主義報業</td>
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伍、小結

綜觀台灣新聞事業之發展，確與國家處境與社會環境有密切關係，但也得到
另一個結論，媒體開放的效應，存在如刀之兩刃。

台灣的報業主體在報禁時期可謂帶有極權報業主義色彩的「發展性報業理
論」，從宣布報禁即將解除到解除初期，短暫實現過社會責任論，直到電子媒介解
禁，競爭加劇，陷入自由報業主義最可能發生的弊端──「黃色新聞」的泥沼之
中，這與美國報業發展──因過度的自由引發道德危機而開始提倡社會責任論
的途徑，恰恰背道而馳，正因為我國未曾衡酌自己的文化背景發展出新的報業理
念與政策。

理念上，模仿西方；政策上，七O年代中期，隨著民主開放的聲浪，大幅鬆
綁，再加上傳播科技的日新月異，引發傳播生態極大的變化，卻未建立出優勝劣
敗的新秩序。

台灣號稱實行三民主義，媒體秩序是否也建基於三民主義之上，找到符合自
己文化背景的報業理念與政策？
印刷媒體方面，如何掌握並發揮媒介之特性及優勢條件，以專業精神及現代
企業經營之智能向基層紮根；同質媒介乃至跨媒介間，在競爭之際，亦可多試探
於重大新聞之採訪，以及資訊傳送採取合作之方式，可為報業發展之新徑。

電子媒體方面，媒介需自行產生更大的內在動力，感知社會的需求，以製作
最能滿足社會需求的作品，促成良性循環與互動，達成媒介事業永續經營的理想。
除科技的改革提昇外，亦積極從事媒介教育之功能。

如今管制與保護期已結束，進入自由時期的台灣媒體，必當有倍於以往的變
數待克服，而新聞事業終究為文化事業，如何擺脫商業主義之主導，而以專業自
主，是為新聞媒介及其從業人員之使命。

至於適應新環境的媒體政策，端視政府官員對國家利益的感知，對國家目標
的建立，到底何在？能否制定出良好政策，讓民眾享其媒介之利而不受其害，值
得新一代領導者深思。

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### 作者整理自
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