Telematics and Informatics 30 (2013) 393–401

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Telematics and Informatics

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/tele

Technology adoption and content consumption in Chinese television: Local city, national city, and global city

Jia Lu [a,*], Ian Weber [b]

[a] School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University, China
[b] Learning and Teaching Support Unit, University of Southern Queensland, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 17 May 2010
Received in revised form 1 September 2010
Accepted 15 February 2011
Available online 21 February 2011

Keywords:
China
Television
New media technology
Programming
Community
Time
Space

ABSTRACT

Advances in media technologies allow people to restructure their relations across a broad range of time and space. As a result, modern communities are organized on local, national, and global bases. These communities are sustained and developed by media technologies their members adopt and characteristic media contents they consume. This article explores the relations between technology adoption, content consumption, and modern communities in Chinese television. The results indicate that the space-biased feature of television is enhanced by a combination of space-biased technologies and ritualized contents (i.e., drama and popular entertainment). Meanwhile, the over-emphasized space-biased feature is counterbalanced by a combination of time-biased technologies and instrumental contents (i.e., knowledge/information programs). Of more importance, the study supports three development trajectories of modern communities and media: (1) the larger scale the community has, the more the community relies on media to organize and coordinate; (2) the larger scale the community has, the less the community is tied to the traditional sources; and (3) the larger scale the community has, the less the community has shared cultural practices.

© 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are on the move, constantly evolving and changing the world we live in. Advances in ICTs have enhanced mediated proximity among people residing in multiple geographical locations (Tomlinson, 1999). People are allowed to restructure their relations across a broad range of time and space so as to form new types of modern communities. These emerging communities are sustained and developed by advanced ICTs their members adopt and characteristic media contents they consume (Rothenbuhler, 2001; Tomlinson, 1999). This article aims to explore the relations between modern communities, advanced ICTs, and characteristic media contents.

The topic is examined in the context of Chinese television. Television, which reaches 98% of China's 1.3 billion population, had undergone considerable changes in the country's ambitious program of telecommunication and information development (Weber, 2005). On one hand, the digital broadcasting infrastructure promises the delivery of a large number of high-definition television programs transcending the limits of time and space. On the other hand, the government's media reform provides a platform for profitability through commercialization and greatly expands quantity and diversity of television programming genres.

Advances in television technologies and contents contribute to the formation of modern communities that are organized on local, national, and global bases. This study uses Xi'an, Beijing, and Shanghai to represent local, national, and global

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: lujiantu@gmail.com (J. Lu).

0736-5853/$ - see front matter © 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1016/j.tele.2011.02.003

communities, and examines television viewers' adoption of new technologies and their consumption of television programs in these cities.

1.1. Modernity, community, and media: local city, national city, and global city

Modernity destructs traditional communities (i.e., Gemeinschaft) and creates new types of communities, including at least urban community (i.e., Gesellschaft), national community, and global community, all of which are organized across a broader range of time and space and have a larger number of participants (Giddens, 1990; Tomlinson, 1994). The formation of modern communities essentially depends on the mass-mediated experiences of media communication (Rothenbuhler, 2001).

Gesellschaft has been extensively studied by the Chicago School in the early 1900s. In Gesellschaft, feelings of attachment, identification, and involvement in a community are associated with communication, especially people's mass media consumption, such as reading local newspapers and listening to local radios (Rothenbuhler, 2001). The crucial role of mass media in the formation of modern communities leads to Anderson (1983) idea of imagined community, arguing that all communities, to some extent, are imagined and held together by shared cultural practices.

The nation exemplifies the imagined community. Edensor (2001) argued that the imagined national community only exists because their members believe in it, and maintain it with shared cultural practices that are organized by political institutions (e.g., governments) through their controlled mass communication systems. One important symbol of shared cultural practices is the nation's traditional capital city, for example, Moscow in Russia and Beijing in China (Anderson, 1983). The capital city is no longer a local city but a national city with special cultural and political meanings. In addition, political institutions also adopt national cinema and television drama to cohere the imagined national community. Morley and Robins (1995) suggested that television drama has been mobilized to construct national identities as a strategy of building imagined community and as a means of asserting national autonomy in the face of globalization.

Tomlinson (1994) moved imagined national community one step further to global community. A global community is made possible by two important factors: media globalization, and transnational corporations that promote universal advertising images and consumerist lifestyles on a global base to create shared cultural practices and, to some extent, the belonging to global community (Castells, 1997; Giddens, 1991; Tomlinson, 1994, 1999). Although there are still debates about the possible formation of global community, the emergence of global cities[1] seems to enhance the possibility. Different from other cities, global cities are featured with their cosmopolitanism that refers to "transnational cultural networks extended in space in which there is a good deal of overlapping and mingling which encourages an orientation to engage with the other" (Featherstone, 1990, p. 9). However, the cosmopolitan worldview does not give equal weight to all the cultures in the world. Brenner and Keil (2006) suggested that the global city must be viewed as a project of cultural hegemony that is based upon the domination of western cultural formations, especially western consumer cultures and lifestyles.

In China, Beijing is undoubtedly a national city. Beijing takes the central position in China's nationalist project that is referred to as a socialist culture with Chinese characteristics with core tenets of socialism, Confucianism, and patriotism (Weber, 2005). Yang (1994) suggested that as a cultural and political center of the country, Beijing has long embodied two kinds of cultures: the mainstream culture that reflects the ideology of the ruling class and the intellectual culture that is associated with the mainstream culture. As a result, the Beijing people are enthusiastic about politics, and, at the same time, devalue commerce and the comforts of life.

Shanghai is a global city with a long commercial tradition and a cosmopolitan worldview (Yang, 1994, 2002; Yu, 1992). Shanghai's culture is featured by economic entrepreneurs who derive their economic wealth and social status from the market economy (Li, 1996). As a result, the Shanghai people pay little attention to politics and mainstream culture but attach more importance to business achievement and the comforts of private life. Meanwhile, Shanghai's cosmopolitanism is part of transnational cultural identity that deflects state messages to wander imaginatively across the globe (Yang, 2002). Through transnational identities, the lines between home and world, one's own nation-state and another country, Chinese and foreign, and socialism and capitalism get blurred (Yang, 2002).

Different from Shanghai and Beijing, Xi'an represents the traditional type of Gesellschaft (local city). Xi'an, as the capital city of Shan'xi province, is located in the northwest China, the less developed region. Xi'an's culture is based on a strong sense of history with the globally renowned Mausoleum of Emperor Qin Shihuang and his Terracotta Warriors. Li (2008) noticed the critical role of history in Xi'an, leading to a closed, self-contained, and conservative culture. As a result, the Xi'an people are introverted, self-contented, and self-restraint (Li, 2008).

1.2. Social functions of media: technology and content

The review above recognized the critical functions media perform in the formation of modern communities. The social functions of media have been extensively studied in the theory of uses and gratifications. Katz et al. (1973) suggested that

[1] Brenner and Keil (2006) defined Global cities as "a set of global command and control centers that are connected in transnationally networked hierarchies of economic, demographic and sociocultural relationships" (p. 5).

Download English Version:

https://daneshyari.com/en/article/464463

Download Persian Version:

https://daneshyari.com/article/464463

Daneshyari.com