

The Comparative Analysis of the Utilization of Traditional Broadcast TV in the UK and China

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ABSTRACT

In the studies of TV, there are numerous researches on the tendency of visual media, but there are few studies on the variations in the TV industries between different countries. This could be a good viewpoint of observation. The UK and China are relatively representative countries in the West and the East, so this study uses them as the objects. The main content of this research is comparing and analyzing the differences in the utilization of traditional broadcast TV in both countries. This study investigates the topic by gathering pertinent data and discussing the social issues. The conclusion of this study is that the decline of the utilization of traditional broadcast TV in China is much more obvious than in the UK. And to the traditional broadcast TV industry, it would not be replaced in recent years, while its fusion with new media might be a trend.

Keywords: *Broadcast TV, Traditional media, Internet video, New media*

1. INTRODUCTION

Exploring and studying the influence of television (TV) media have become the hot spots of the current popular propagation research field. However, in the studies of TV, the problem of the media form is ontic. From the perspective of social media and mass communication, TV is considered as a mass media and a carrier to transmit public information, and digitization can make media forms richer. There are numerous researches on the tendency of the form of visual media, but there are few studies on the variations in the TV industries between different countries. This could be a good viewpoint of observation. The UK and China are relatively representative countries in the West and the East, so they are used as the contrast in this paper.

This paper regards the traditional broadcast TV as the foundation of studying, regards digitization and TV art as the research object, and researches the relation between new media, digitization and TV art. Discussing the prospective reality of traditional broadcast TV and the development trend of future TV media are the supporting foundation and core of this paper. This study investigates the topic by gathering pertinent data and discussing the social issues, which could help people to estimate the future of traditional broadcast TV, and to think about the

meaning of keeping it.

2. THE STATUS QUO OF THE UTILIZATION OF TRADITIONAL BROADCAST TV

Traditional media is relative to multimedia, it describes those media that regularly publish content to the public through some kinds of mechanical devices, such as newspapers, radio, TV and so on. Traditional media has limitations of time and space, while multimedia integrates sound, image and interaction. Since the rapid growth of wireless multimedia over the past few decades, there is a widespread perception these days that traditional media are in terminal decline. TV as the most competitive and representative traditional media has the trend of integration with the network, which is obvious and urgent.

Nowadays, audiences, particularly young ones, tend to spend less time in front of a TV screen, more on the Web. The internet does not in fact take away the TV viewers, but its technology has changed the way people watch TV. In contrast to traditional TV programs, which have a set time and venue, online videos have no such constraints. Viewers could pick any video they want to watch at any time.

Through the internet, viewers can not only watch records of broadcast TV programs but also watch many original videos. Before, the quality of those original videos online was much lower than traditional TV programs, as broadcasting systems have more experienced professional teams and financial capital. But with the vast development of the internet, the shift in fund spending from traditional broadcast TV to online and digital alternatives is taking place across the globe.

However, in different countries, the situations are slightly different. This study would use UK and China as examples, comparing the utilization of traditional broadcast TV in both countries, and analyzing the reasons behind the phenomenon.

2.1 The Traditional Broadcast TV in the UK and Its Utilization

As a country that has a strong science and technology base, the UK has made a certain contribution to the invention of the TV. In 1926, Scottish inventor John Logie Baird demonstrated the world’s first live working television system in the world. In 1936, the world’s first state-run broadcaster and television station, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) begins to broadcast regular high-definition TV programs.

However, at the time, television was still in its infancy. Only 9% of British houses had a TV set in 1951 when there were only 2 transmitters in London and Birmingham. And the government seemed to be influenced by conservative thinking, TV transmission hours were strictly limited by policy. However, in 1972, all limits on broadcasting hours were being eliminated, and the TV industry was hence further improved. [1] By the 1970s, 93% of British households were able to watch TV. [2]

With the popularity of the Internet, traditional media has inevitably suffered a certain impact. By the report of Ofcom, the UK government-approved regulatory authority for the broadcasting, telecommunications and postal industries, traditional TV viewing is falling at a slightly accelerating rate according to the report by Ofcom, While viewing traditional broadcast TV still accounts for most TV time. The average viewing TV time is 2 hours 52 minutes (172 minutes) per day in 2018 in the UK. [3]

2.2 The Traditional Broadcast TV in China and Its Utilization

China’s first TV set was successfully manufactured in 1958, but it was not widespread until the beginning of the 1980s that it started to enter Chinese homes. [4] Following that, the TV industry grew fast in the 1980s, becoming one of the main ways of mass communication and popular entertainment in China. To illustrate, TV was only available to about 350 million of China’s 1 billion people in 1982, [5] while an estimated 85% of the population had access to television in 1985. [6]

And the contents of TV programs were also becoming more and more varied, not just focusing on political education. Many TV shows were entertainment, including film, drama, sports, dance, music, opera, talk show, and so on.

As the conditions in the UK, there is a decreasing number of people watching TV in China with the popularization of the internet. According to a report by Fudan University in 2018, the surveyed users only watch TV 1.43 days per week. On the days that viewing TV, the average viewing time is only 1.92 hours per day. [6]

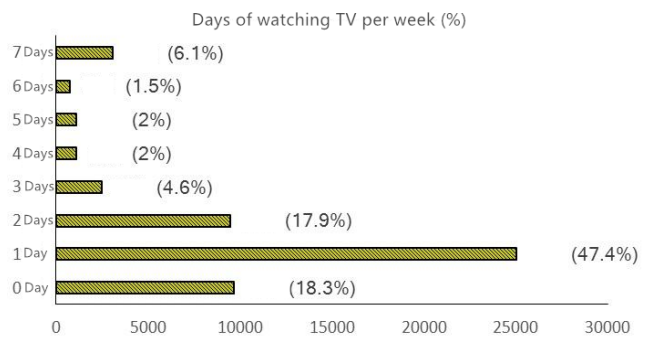


Figure 1 Days of watching TV per week in China in 2018

3. ANALYSIS OF THE REASONS FOR THE UTILIZATION RATE OF TRADITIONAL BROADCAST TV

To compare the data above more intuitively, people could transform the data into the same unit. The average

viewing TV time in the UK in 2018 by Ofcom’s Media Nations’ data is $172 \times 365 = 62780$ minutes, and the average viewing TV time in China in 2018 by Fudan University’s data is $1.43 \times 365 \div 7 \times 1.92 = 8590$ minutes.

Concerning these two values, it is clear that the decline of the utilization of traditional broadcast TV in China is much more obvious than in the UK. The causes

of this phenomenon will be analyzed below.

3.1 In China

3.1.1 The Influences of the National Radio and Television Administration

In China, the National Radio and Television Administration (NRTA) has censorship over all media including television, print media, radio, film, theater, text messaging, instant messaging, video games, literature, and the internet. NRTA censors content to mainly maintain harmony and stability of the society. Anything that deems to be corrosive to people's minds is prohibited. In 2019, at an internal conference of iQiyi, one of China's largest video platforms, a director summarized 12 "policy minefields": 1. Ethnicity and religion. 2. Copyright disputes. 3. Social problems and the dark side of human nature. 4. Historical figures and classics. 5. Feudal superstition. 6. Gore and violence. 7. Vulgar, philistine and kitsch. 8. Teens. 9. The underworld. 10. Time travel. 11. Royal struggle. 12. Public security. Therefore, TV practitioners are like "dancing in shackles", as they need to be very careful to avoid any probability of being controversial.

At the same time, there is an unwritten rule in the Chinese media industry that the censorship of satellite TV programs is the strictest of all media. The NRTA requires broadcasting systems to focus on news and education and has issued several restrictions on entertainment programs, which include talent competitions shows, game competitions shows, variety shows, talk shows, reality shows, and other types of programs. Hence the number of entertainment programs on TV is limited.

Although there are many high-quality programs on traditional broadcast TV, such as documentaries or science and educational programs, the ideas of those programs often adopt the traditional way of expatiating, which would make the audience feel like in class. It could be said that the masses are vulgar, most of them watch TV for fun and relaxation, very few are like to watch TV programs that require thinking after a hard day's work.

While the degree of freedom of online video is relatively higher, some content that cannot pass the censorship of TV could be posted online. So online video platforms could provide more different styles of content than traditional broadcast TV.

3.1.2 The Success of Online Video Platforms

Before, Chinese online video platforms are used to operate as supplementary broadcast platforms for TV stations. TV shows and series of good quality could bring more traffic and more paying users to the platform. Gradually, Online video platforms have found that offering exclusive content is a good way to ensure viewers do not defect to rivals. Hence, major online video

platforms in China such as iQiyi, Youku, Tencent, Sohu, and Mango TV have launched many original online variety shows and TV series.

Compared to traditional media, social networks have provided a more open platform for users to express their opinions and appeals. A large amount of information and highly interactive design is what is attracting the Chinese youth to the online video networks. Danmaku is a good example. It is a subtitle system that invites viewers to type in their thoughts while watching a show and simultaneously displays the comments on everyone's video screen. It originated in Japan, where they were first popularized by a Japanese ACG (animation, comics, games) video portal named Nicodou, which later became the inspiration for similar Chinese ACG video sites such as Bilibili. Other Chinese websites have also rolled out this feature in recent years. [8]

3.1.3 The Popularity of Short Video

The short video refers to the video content that is played on various new media platforms, suitable for viewing in mobile state and short-term leisure state, ranging from a few seconds to several minutes. The content combines skills sharing, humor, fashion trends, social hotspots, street interviews, public welfare education, advertising creativity, business customization, and other topics. It could be a separate piece or a series of columns.

Traditional media giants are faced with tough challenges to fight for attention and time from the audience as short videos. The short video market in China is highly sophisticated and widely used, a growing part of the economy in the Chinese media industry. In those apps, videos automatically slide endlessly one after the other, displaying content chosen specifically for viewers by an algorithm. It is so addictive that people suddenly realize hours have already passed. [9]

In addition to their ability to optimize the viewer's experience, short video apps represent a new type of format that perfectly suits Chinese viewers of this era. With the general increase of work pressure, Chinese workers are getting time-poor nowadays, meaning that the format of short videos adapts perfectly to their lifestyle, as they could be viewed anywhere, whether on public transport when leaving work, or at home before going to bed.

Outside of the short format, the success of such platforms could also be explained by the lifestyle of the new generation. With the progress of civilization and the transition of social circumstances, young people are more inclined to express individuality. While even if they hope to be perceived as independent, they are by no means immune to the influence of group behavior. Consequently, they love to interact with people they identify with, feeling that they participate in the conversation.

3.2 In the UK

3.2.1 British Traditional Habits

The UK is a country full of culture and traditions which have been around for hundreds of years, and the British are said to love tradition.

The British maintain many habits that have been eliminated in China. For example, in China, almost no one writes real letters today, as there are free messaging and calling apps. But in the UK, there are card shops everywhere in the streets, families and friends often send cards and letters to each other by mail. It is not hard to find a newsstand in the UK, but newsstands seem nearly disappeared in China.

Although there are more convenient alternatives, many British people like to keep the tradition. Therefore, the television industry may also be affected by this conservative thinking.

3.2.2 Power of Broadcasting Corporation

As a developed country in the media industries, the UK has advanced experience in TV content management, technical support, industry self-regulation, and laws and regulations. For example, BBC is one of the most influential broadcasters and television stations in the world.

As a state-run organization, each household or business in the UK must buy a TV license each year to ensure that the BBC has sufficient funds to educate, announce and entertain the public. The BBC has also received special grants from the UK government. Because of these particular funds, the BBC has no commercial advertisements. With the support of the state and the good environment that stimulates creativity, many TV programs, TV series, and documentaries produced by the BBC are of high quality.

In addition to BBC, there are also some influential broadcasting systems in the UK, such as ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5, sky, etc. British TV shows, with their unique sense of humor, delicate plots, and rich cultural connotations, are attracting vast audiences.

4. THE FUTURE OF TRADITIONAL BROADCAST TV

In 1985, Neil Postman in *Amusing Ourselves to Death* criticized the TV-derived content form, which brought bad entertainment tendencies to the serious public industry. [10] But what he did not expect was that with the further spread of the entertainment trend, TV, which was once a benchmark for entertainment, is no longer be popular.

Due to the large users of internet, and its increasing

ability to target customers through detailed information, it is widely expected that the shift from traditional to online media has become an irreversible trend.

However, traditional media outlets still act as arbiters of mass appeal. Hence there are more and more cooperations between the internet companies and traditional media. Through cooperation, Internet companies desire sustainable prosperity by using traditional media's established channels, while traditional media hope they could reverse the downfall in the digital era.

5. CONCLUSION

This study is a comparative analysis of the utilization of Traditional Broadcast TV in the UK and China. Through the data, it could be said that the decline of the utilization of traditional broadcast TV in China is much more obvious than in the UK: The average viewing TV time in the UK in 2018 by Ofcom's Media Nations' data is 62780 minutes, and the average viewing TV time at China in 2018 by Fudan University' data is 8590 minutes.

There might be a variety of causes for this phenomenon. In China, the successful development of online video software, and the popularity of short videos may be the reasons for the serious loss of TV viewers. In the UK, the British traditional viewing habits and the state's support for broadcasting systems may be the reason why TV did not decline so quickly as in China. It is early to say traditional broadcast TV is dying. The fusion of traditional and new media might be a trend.

Admittedly, this study has some shortcomings. The research was carried out on a modest scale, because of the lack of social networks. There should be more representative professional data in this study.

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