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Making Affective Masses: The Changing Media Ideas and Practices of Party Organ in Mobile Internet Era

Authors

Prof. Yang Chen - School of Journalism, Renmin University of China

Mr. zijie Zhou - School of Journalism, Renmin University of China

Abstract

Introduction

With the involvement of smart phone into audience's everyday life, innovation and transformation have become the keywords of global journalism. The circulation and influence of traditional media have greatly declined, while media ideas and practices also have been changed. The relationship between the idea change and practice change of journalism - that is, how they affect and interact with each other- becomes the interest of this study. Chinese party organ regards readers as the masses, and this study pays particular attention to what changes have taken place in this concept and what changes have been caused in practice in the era of mobile Internet.

Masses, Audience, and Public in Traditional Chinese Party Organ

In different times, the media have different views on their readers. In short, traditional Chinese press has three different views on readers: masses, audience and the public.

Since the new version of *Jiefang Daily* of Yan'an in 1942, with long-term exploration and practice, party organ in China has firmly established the concept of the masses. The basic responsibility of the media is to contact and mobilize the masses and convey the party's principles and policies (Lee, 2005) . However, in the era of mobile Internet, most of the networked digital expression and connection structures are characterized by emotion (Papacharissi, 2015 : 8) . Emotion takes precedence over facts on the social media platform, more and more emotional content can obtain more users' attention, and the media's view of users has also changed. We use the concept of 'affective masses' to explain the changing trend of masses view of party organ, that is, pay more attention to the regulation of masses emotion.

Institutionalization of Ideas

Only when new ideas become a part of social practice through institutionalization can they be fixed into conventions. Taking the discourse change of "audience" replacing "masses" since the economic reform in the 1980s as an example, the institutionalization of ideas is divided into three stages (Zhang,2000): formalization, routinization, and normalization.

Research Sample and Data

The sample of this paper is the WeChat official account of the *People's Daily*, the most important party organ in China, and the editorial team of the New Media Center of it.

The research materials of this paper come from participated and non-participated observations, face-to-face interviews of the editors, public speeches and articles as well as articles pushed by WeChat account from 2017 to 2021.

The Affective News Content

With the development of mobile Internet and social media, the emotional performance of WeChat account is totally different from that of printed newspaper, which can be mainly reflected in the following four aspects briefly: (1) mainly use personal pronouns in the title; (2) mainly in dialogue style in the body; (3) personalization of the news story, and (4) formalization in news writing.

Conclusion and Discussion

The most significant difference between the masses the affective masses is that the latter emphasizes the emotional connection between the media and the audience, and produces a series of new textual forms.

The difference between the two views also lies in the fact that the mass view arose in the 1940s in the context of social revolution, and users' reception terminals were printed newspapers, TV sets, and radio. In contrast, the affective masses began around 2010, in the context of social differentiation and the post-truth era, and the user's receiving terminal shifted to smart phones. As a result, under the masses view, the keywords in the practice of media such as the printed *People's Daily*, *Xinwen Lianbo* and Xinhua News Agency are propaganda and public opinion guidance. Under the other, the media publish content on the WeChat official account, and the keywords of which are presence, participation and connectivity.

As for the institutionalization of ideas, in the formalization stage, technology is an affordance factor. WeChat pages only show news headlines and images, not the body, so the media needs to attract users' interest with fewer words and more eye-catching images. The choose to strengthen the emotionality of the news, and gradually figure out stable news formats. In the stage of routinization, the same practice is repeated over and over again, for example, the chicken soup article has been released every night. And in the normalization stage, media practices become a matter of course, for example, more and more media outlets are starting to imitate the format of *People's Daily* by releasing chicken soup articles every night.

Submission ID

154

The communicative sphere of Bolsonarismo in Brazil: a country-wide qualitative study**Authors**

Prof. Joao Feres Junior - State University of Rio de Janeiro

Abstract

Elected in late 2018, Jair Bolsonaro has not faced an easy time as the head of Brazil's federal government. His administration has not been able to avert the economic crisis the country is facing, unemployment is very high, the dollar exchange rate soared to levels unseen before, the GDP is shrinking, and inflation is on the rise. In the realm of politics, Bolsonaro has not fared well either. Rather than focused on a common agenda, the governmental coalition in Congress is made of a plethora of small parties, much focused on obtaining pork barrel at each negotiation. The Senate has blocked several of his policy initiatives. To make things worse, Bolsonaro has been in constant conflict with the Supreme Court, which has not only blocked some of his policies but also is currently prosecuting him and several of his close allies in a number of criminal cases. Finally, his management of the Federal Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic has been catastrophic and includes campaigning against vaccines, supporting the adoption of an ineffective and harmful "treatment cocktail", and mocking the disease, the sick and even the deceased. Nonetheless, despite his overall poor performance in office, Bolsonaro has managed to keep the approval rate of his government around 30%. How can this be possible? Based on a country-wide qualitative study which I led comprised of 24 focus groups conducted in 6 major state capitals, I argue that Bolsonaro and his political group have managed to fracture the oligopoly on political communication held until recently by Brazil's mainstream media companies, creating their own communicative sphere. I intend to show that social media has a role in the communicative strategy of Bolsonarism, but some outlets of mainstream media are also important in reaching target publics. The paper also delves into the testimonies of Bolsonaro's followers to discuss the spread of misinformation and narratives that give credence to Bolsonaro and to his political agenda.

Submission ID

264

Institutional-based, Characteristic-based, Process-based, or Authoritarian-personality-based Media Trust? A Comparative Study of Traditional Media Credibility in China and the U.S.

Authors

Mr. Xiancheng Jiang - Renmin University of China

Abstract

Since the rise of social media, the credibility of traditional media has become the focus of academic and social attention. Previous studies have suggested that media trust may have three generation paths: characteristic-based trust, process-based trust, and institutional-based trust. Characteristic-based trust refers to individuals' trust in media that share the position of the group (community, party, etc.) to which they belong. Process-based trust refers to audiences' trust reinforced by repeated exposure to a certain type of media. Institutional-based trust refers to the trust audiences have in media due to their trust in the social institutional environment in which the media are embedded.

However, there is little literature to validate the applicability of these three paths to traditional media credibility in different countries in the new media era. In addition, although previous studies tend to emphasize the important role of psychological factors in media trust, they rarely include psychological factors in empirical analysis models. To remedy the shortcomings of previous studies, this paper conducts a comparative study for people in China and the United States, with 1254 samples from the United States and 4155 samples from China collected through online platforms.

The researchers found that these three paths are applicable in both countries. However, there are also distinct differences between the two countries: the most influential path for generating trust in traditional media in China is institution-based trust, while the other two paths are less influential; all three paths have a certain degree of influence on the generation of trust in traditional media in the United States, with some differences among media with different partisan positions. This study also found that authoritarian personality is a common psychological cause of media trust in both countries, i.e., the stronger the authoritarian personality of an individual is, the more likely he or she is to trust traditional media. This may indicate that media trust has a universal psychological basis.

This paper illustrates inter-country and inter-media differences in media trust. The most important finding of this study is that the dominant source of trust in Chinese traditional mainstream media is political trust rather than media use or political stance. On the one hand, this result is different from the "media use equals media trust" view in existing studies, and demonstrates the misalignment between media use and media trust in the new media environment. On the other hand, this study provides strong evidence that political trust is the most direct and central influence rather than a mediating factor in the generation of media trust in China.

The differences in the current state of media trust and its generation mechanisms largely reflect the different political and social environments in China and the United States. In recent years, media trust in the United States has shown a clear trend of polarization. The popularity of social media and politicians' attacks on opposing partisan media have further intensified the public's selective information exposure and partisan media trust, further exacerbating the division and political polarization of American society. In contrast, the Chinese public's trust in traditional media continues to grow, and the high credibility of traditional media is conducive to the cohesion of social consensus, the leading role of mainstream media in public opinion, and the further strengthening of the people's unity toward mainstream social values.

In a word, this paper compares the commonalities and differences of media trust generation mechanisms in China and the United States through an empirical approach, which is enlightening for understanding the current situation of media credibility in China and promoting the development of traditional media. In the follow-up study, the relationship between the three paths of media trust generation and psychological causes should be enhanced, and the applicability of this theoretical model to more countries and for more media types outside of China and the United States should be analyzed to help us better understand how media trust is generated and how it can be sustained in the social media era.

Submission ID

295

Communicating Health issues in Africa during Pandemics: An examination of socio-cultural factors

Authors

Prof. emmanuel Ngwainmbi - Independent Researcher

Abstract

The rapid spread of the SARs-COV 2, or novel coronavirus, the causative agent of COVID-19, from the City of Wuhan in China in late 2019, has wrought a lot of anxiety and economic downturn in the world. Political tempers have flared up with the West, led by the US, accusing China of either deliberately releasing the virus into the world or covering it up until the infection reached pandemic levels. The World Health Organization (WHO) has been equally accused of complicating China's 'hiding' of the coronavirus. The COVID-19 infodemic has also affected communication professionals, administrators, and journalists, essentially because most journalists were not prepared enough to cover science, diseases, and sanitation issues and do not have suitable reference materials, guidelines, and toolkits. As a result, coverage of pandemics and health is often shallow and somewhat haphazard in most African media. The linkage between development, international and national budgets, and disease is often missing. So does investigative journalism.

Moreover, based on personal experiences, communication officers in governmental, intergovernmental, and non-governmental institutions do not adequately construct or communicate health information to the affected population, leaving the masses vulnerable to infectious diseases and more reliant on unsafe traditional healing methods. This paper seeks to provide the historical context of the flow and sharing of information and communication on covid-19. It describes how traditional media and social media platforms report pandemics and pollute communities and emerging businesses with fake news. It also analyzes the impact of such communication on young people's physical and mental health. Drawing experiences from external healthcare providers like Doctors Without Borders and the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the paper offers approaches for Ministries of health and culture in the countries international development agencies interested in working with locally trained "healthcare journalists" to provide proper messages that can better educate the public on pandemic management and prevention measures.

Submission ID

489

The Marxism Ideological Analysis of China's Media Dual-Track System: Socialism Endogenous Legitimacy From a Planned Economy to a Market State

Authors

Mr. Qing Xiao - Communication University of China

Mr. Rongyi Chen - Communication University of China

Mr. Jiyi Yang - Xiangtan University

Ms. Yuhang Zheng - University of Amsterdam

Abstract

With the reform and opening up, the Chinese media system turned into the dual-track system, which means Chinese media are entrepreneurially managed based on the state-owned system. As Liangrong Li (1993, 2003) said, the Chinese media has the dual attributes of superstructure and information industry. On the one hand, the media needs to play the role of the Party's mouthpiece (*Hou She*), and on the other hand, the media has the nature of an information industry as the enterprise. This study aims to analyze the legitimacy of national system transformation from the Marxist ideological analysis perspective, specifically, the theoretical process that the dual-track media system received the license of the socialist party system, which in turn gave legitimacy to the transformed national system.

In this study, the dual-track system should not be understood in a superficial way as a contradiction between the capitalist market system and the socialist identity, but rather as a return to the grand understanding pointed out by Mao (1937): it is indeed governed and limited by the fundamental contradiction between modern state apparatus as superstructure and civil society as an economic base.

Since the 1980s, the Communist Party of China considered the directive media system no longer applicable and gave the mass media a very high degree of operational autonomy (Huang, 2003). The media became more independent to adapt to the market and also required to propagate the Chinese authority ideology. With the policy of "the primary stage of socialism," the Communist Party of China proposed that the media should be "people-oriented," and "the mouthpiece of the people" while no longer frequently mentions that "the media is a tool of class struggle" (Xu & Sun, 2018) .

In conclusion, the Party's ideological advancement is the key to the media's move toward a dual-track system. Only when the Party achieves this ideological replacement at the national level can the media simultaneously have the contradictory attributes of party mouthpiece and information industry. This ideological adaptation is not only to adapt to the need for reform, but also bring about the reform. Through this adaptation, the Party has achieved its subjectivation by adjusting the media's self-perception.

In commenting on other Marxists' misguided focus on turning points in Marxist history, Žižek (2007) argues that even if others were to be relentlessly critical of Marxism's past, they must first acknowledge that 'this is Marxism's own past.' Similarly, it should not be simply understood that the media dual-track system as an intrusion of market economy or neoliberalism into contemporary China, but need to carefully examine how this dual-track system is transformed by the Party's self.

As China transitioned from planned institutional socialism to an ostensibly free market, the transformation of the media reflected a proactive transformation of Chinese socialism and ideological self-adaptation. This guarantees the dominance of information in China after the restructuring of the relationship between the modern state apparatus (superstructure) and civil society (economic base). Likewise, this guarantee further ensures the fundamental legitimacy of the dual-track media system in contemporary China.

Submission ID

516

Strengthening Authoritarianism in the Age of Pandemics: On the Shutdown of Oppositional Media in Ukraine

Authors

Prof. Olga Baysha - National Research University 'Higher School of Economics'

Abstract

It is well known that the accusation of terrorism has been often used to quash political dissent and suppress freedom of expression. Framing ethno-political groups striving for independence as “terrorist others” justifies non-democratic methods of government targeting a nation’s own citizens. This paper traces how the discourse of counterterrorism may be structured with respect to oppositional media, which come to be articulated as “terrorists’ accomplices.” It discusses the case of the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. On February 2, 2020, he signed off the sanctions of the National Security and Defense Council (NSDC) against two parliamentary deputies from the Opposition Platform “For Life” (OPZZh)—the main political rival of Zelensky’s own party. As a result of these sanctions, three television channels controlled by the opposition—*NewsOne*, *112 Ukraine*, and *ZIK*—were shut down.

The sanctions against the oppositionists were imposed under the premise of investigating their alleged involvement in “financing terrorism”— i.e., having economic relations with Donbas and Luhansk People Republics (DNR and LNR), separatist quasi-states, which announced their independence from Ukraine in 2014. As this paper argues, Zelensky’s decision to sanction—in violation of Ukrainian laws—oppositional politicians and shut down oppositional news channels was driven by the desire of the Ukrainian president to silence oppositional voices amid his popularity in nosedive—a result of Zelensky’s neoliberal initiatives, especially his land reform, which had been opposed by up to 72% of Ukrainians. The new land law was adopted during an extraordinary parliamentary meeting, convened as an exception to a coronavirus lockdown while Ukrainians could not protest.

Analysis presented in this paper is based on (1) Zelensky’s address to the nation on the closure of the oppositional channels that was posted on the presidential *YouTube* channel and (2) primetime (from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.) talk shows of two oppositional channels, *NewsOne* and *112 Ukraine*, devoted to the land reform, which were broadcast between September 2, 2019 (the day Zelensky instructed the government to work out the land reform), and March 31, 2020 (the adoption of the new land code). Within this time period, the talk shows were monitored daily. Overall, 96 television programs on the land reform were analyzed.

For the purposes of this analysis, I employed a discourse-analytical method informed by the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) and Nico Carpentier’s model of Discursive-Material Knot (2017).

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Submission ID

630

China's media regulation evolution in the era of digital platform

Authors

Mr. Tao Zhang - Tampere University

Abstract

As the dominant technology platform giants in China, such as Tencent and Alibaba, have invested in news media entities or built in-house news teams, this study is aimed to examine China's media regulation change including the latest policy to ban the investment from technology platform companies and understand the rationale behind the change.

By analyzing major media regulations from the central government of China during the past ten years with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the research explores how the central government has been adjusting its media-control policies to adapt and respond to technology platform companies stepping into an area that used to be tightly controlled. The research provides a comprehensive review of the changes of the Chinese government's media regulation policies over time as resourceful technological companies have been playing a larger role in the news media. This serves as the basis to understand how the central government is evaluating the changing dynamics and regulating media through an established but also evolving legal and political system to support the legitimacy of the government while ensuring control over mass media.

On the basis of this comprehensive policy review, the research follows the categorization defined by Siochrú, Girard & Mahan (2002) to examine the rationale behind policy changes from two distinct perspectives: 1) regulating the media as a sector of the economy, or industry regulation, 2) regulating to sustain and strengthen the social, cultural and political role of media and communication. Differentiating regulation for industry management from regulation for social and political concerns, the research will develop a framework to understand the dynamics of the social, political and economic drivers that lead to the policy change and provide the foundation for further research on the relationship between the impact from technology platforms and policy reaction. In addition, as technology companies are expanding their presence in countries with tight media control, it is critical to understand the policy change and rationale in China for further comparative studies in other countries.

Submission ID

741

Bio-techno-politics under “state of exception”: Digital governance of trans-border travelers during COVID-19 pandemic in China

Authors

Dr. Yungeng Li - Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Ms. Qiqi Zhang - Shanghai University

Dr. Qijun He - Shanghai University

Abstract

In early 2020, the Covid-19 epidemic erupted in Wuhan and soon became a sweeping public health crisis across the globe. Since then, the rampant spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing mutation of the coronavirus has constantly deterred travelers from trans-border traveling. Most countries around the world bolt their doors against travelers from other countries, especially where the pandemic surges. China is no exception. The pandemic has propelled China into a “state of exception” under which the power of government expanded, and “in particular the conferral on the executive of the power to issue decrees having the force of law” (Agamben, 2005: 5). To control the spread of the epidemic, the Chinese government proactively utilizes ubiquitous information and communication technologies and big data in health surveillance, case identification, contact-tracing, mobility management as well as border governance. The health code system is one of the most prominent technological solutions with Chinese characteristics, which is widely adopted as the paramount identification during the pandemic and heavily relies on government imposition and compliance of citizens (Liang, 2020; Yang et al., 2021). After its early trudge out of the predicament in Wuhan, China had effectively contained the pandemic within a controllable magnitude and turned its focus on “guarding against imported cases and a rebound in indigenous cases”. The government’s effective crushing of the virus, in contrast with the rampant spread of covid-19 in much of the West, has boosted the credibility of made-in-China approaches (Schwartz, 2012; Lo, 2020; Cheng et al., 2020).

Drawing on semi-structured 30 in-depth interviews (including 2 government employees and 28 trans-border travelers), second-hand information (government documents and news reports), and social media posts (e.g. Xiaohongshu, etc.), this study sets out to unravel the endeavor that the Chinese government made to contain the imported risk of resurrecting pandemic in China. That is, how the Chinese government manages to register, investigate and coercively quarantine trans-border travelers to mainland China during the pandemic.

We specifically emphasized the role of information and communication technologies to facilitate and streamline governance. In addition, the effective digital governance on trans-border travelers resulted from the idiosyncratic mechanism of Chinese bio-techno-politics.

First, the centralized authority and the pressure of “upward accountability” in which officials are evaluated, rewarded, and allocated through a top-down process fostered the prompt response to the instant crisis and thus the draconic physical and digital intervention like coercive quarantine and surveillance can be implemented with full compliance. Due to the similar reason, “downward acceleration of implementation pressures” became a normal practice when coping with trans-border travelers across the whole country (Zhou, 2017).

Second, on one hand, benefit from the deep platformization of Chinese society and close collaboration between technological corporations and the governments, multifarious information and communication technologies such as WeChat, Alipay, Meituan, health code, and intelligent gate magnet alleviate both the anxiety of trans-border traveler during quarantine and the pressure imposed on staffs in implementing the quarantine policy. On the other hand, the excessive reliance on digital technologies deprived the travelers of idiosyncratic demands and treated them as dehumanized hordes of potential threats. Therefore, the transborder travelers were reduced to “temporary bare life” under the “state of exception”.

Third, regardless of Chinese or foreign travelers, most of them contended that trading part of individual privacy for greater safety under a “state of exception” was understandable and even indispensable. As opposed to other Western countries, Chinese approaches cannot be transferred due to the general compliance of Chinese people to the drastic policy and the ubiquitous, if not excessive, utility of digital infrastructures. Though the slight worries about the infringement of privacy, most trans-border travelers feel confidence and safeness under the draconian policy on trans-border traveling. This study testifies the Chinese way of utilizing digital technologies is ingrained in the persistent political and cultural mechanism and thus coproduce the legitimacy of bio-techno-politics under a “state of exception” in China.

Submission ID

812

Internet contre le blackout médiatique au Burundi (2015-...)

Authors

Dr. Marie Fierens - Université libre de Bruxelles

Abstract

Cette communication interrogera la place des technologies numériques dans les transformations politiques et médiatiques en cours au Burundi, leurs rôles stratégiques ainsi que les difficultés qui leur sont inhérentes. Elle se basera sur des entretiens menés avec des journalistes en exil au Rwanda en 2019 ; à Bruxelles en 2021 et 2022, sur des

entretiens téléphoniques menés en 2019 avec des acteurs médiatiques restés au Burundi ainsi que sur des analyses succinctes de contenus médiatiques circulant via internet.

En 2015, le paysage médiatique burundais a connu sa dernière mutation médiatique et politique de grande ampleur. Dans la nuit du coup d'état manqué du 13 au 14 mai 2015, la plupart des médias du pays, considérés jusqu'alors comme des exemples dans la sous-région, sont réduits au silence par le pouvoir en place. Le gouvernement de Pierre Nkurunziza leur reproche d'être des complices du putsch manqué. Les bâtiments des principales radios, écoutées avec assiduité par l'ensemble des Burundais, sont détruites et leurs journalistes sont traqués et contraints à l'exil. Une centaine d'entre eux gagnent le Rwanda voisin. Les tractations diplomatiques de la sous-région les obligent ensuite à chercher refuge hors du continent africain.

Aujourd'hui, six ans plus tard, leur perspective de retour au pays s'éloigne de plus en plus. Le gouvernement burundais, désormais conduit par Evariste Ndayishimiye, continue de traquer ceux qu'ils considèrent comme des « ennemis de la nation ». Cette accusation cache mal la volonté des autorités burundaises de museler des journalistes éminemment populaires, qui s'autorisaient à porter la voix de l'opposition, voire à l'incarner. Les soutiens extérieurs se sont également raréfiés. En raison des pourparlers en cours entre le Burundi et l'Union européenne, les bailleurs de fonds internationaux, autrefois prodigues, ne soutiennent que très timidement les journalistes en exil alors qu'au Burundi, la situation des droits de l'homme est alarmante.

Malgré ces nombreux obstacles, les journalistes exilés continuent à faire circuler des informations qu'ils produisent, au Burundi, principalement grâce à internet et aux réseaux sociaux. La plupart des Burundais considèrent ces informations comme une alternative vitale à celles, très surveillée, produites par les médias contrôlés formellement ou informellement par le gouvernement. Dès 2015, les acteurs médiatiques exilés ont créé Inzamba, une radio d'information qui diffuse ses programmes en ligne. Deux des médias burundais les plus populaires avant la crise, La Radio Publique Africaine (RPA) et la Radio-Télévision Renaissance, se sont également partiellement recomposés en ligne. Pour être entendus au Burundi et pour récolter des informations, les journalistes exilés misent désormais sur les réseaux sociaux, principalement WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter et Facebook ; facilement et discrètement consultables à partir d'un téléphone. Leur premier objectif est de « continuer à informer les Burundais et la communauté internationale sur les drames qui se [commettent] au Burundi » (Révérien Bazikamwe, entretien personnel, Kigali, 2020). Mais leurs conditions de travail sont difficiles, notamment parce qu'ils manquent de moyens et de matériel et parce que toute personne qui collabore avec eux met sa vie en danger.

Submission ID

975

How Chinese Cities Reflect Their Deliberative Democracy by Visualizing A Communicative City: A Computer-assisted Visual Analysis on City Promotional Film

Authors

Prof. Chengzhang Zhu - 1.The College of Literature and Journalism, Central South University 2、 Center for Intelligent Media and Communication Research, The College of Literature and Journalism, Central South University

Ms. Zimeng Yang - The College of Literature and Journalism, Central South University ; Center for Intelligent Media & Communication Research, The College of Literature and Journalism, Central South University

Mr. Yifeng Chen - The College of Literature and Journalism, Central South University & Center for Intelligent Media & Communication Research, The College of Literature and Journalism, Central South University

Mr. Xin Jin - Center for Intelligent Media and Communication Research, College of Literature and Journalism, Central South University

Dr. Jie Feng - 1.The College of Literature and Journalism, Central South University 2、 Center for Intelligent Media and Communication Research, The College of Literature and Journalism, Central South University

Abstract

City promotion is a key theme of urban governance (Wu, 2000), with the target to stimulate tourism, attract investments and impress inhabitants (Wong & Liu, 2017), which involves different stakeholders (Ma et al., 2020).

In the context of China, city promotional films are usually produced by municipal governments or party committees. Such government-oriented city promotional films have aroused many controversies.

Some argued that city promotion has fallen to be a “trendy action” to fulfill the bureaucratic instructions (Jeffres & Lin, 2006). But others regard it as a communicative action with diverse cultures and practices embedded (Wu, 2000), based on different interests of stakeholders rather than only the government. Therefore, the demonstration strategy in city promotional films can well reflect the understanding of deliberative democracy.

This research used the method of computer-assisted visual analysis to figure out the actuality of deliberative democracy in Chinese cities and whether the geographic factor plays an important role.

To measure the deliberative democracy, we used a representative concept, “communicative city”, whose core is the same as that of democracy. Both are related to

civic involvement (Jefferes, 2010) and are trying to reach a public agreement. The agreement emerges out of difference rather than above it (Bridge, G.,2005). In other words, a communicative city where different stakeholders exchange and communicate ideas can be seen as a new form of deliberative democracy.

For this study, a communicative city can be observed by three dimensions (Zhong, 2018): the spatial space which refers to physical features including buildings and scenery, the imagery space which refers to cultural symbols, and the practice space which refers to activities and close-ups of citizens. A communicative city should involve all three dimensions and especially emphasize the practice space where citizens are visible. This corresponds to the demand for democracy in involving different interests and respecting citizens' status.

Thus, we propose RQ1: what is the actuality of Chinese city promotional films when conveying a communicative and democratic city?

In general, the geographic position plays an important role in city branding choices in China (Qihui Yang 2017). Thus, we propose RQ2: Does the geographic factor influence the demonstration of a communicative and democratic city?

We selected 12 out of 70 large and medium-sized cities in China, which include 4 eastern, central, and western cities respectively. We use Python to exploit OpenCV for cutting frames, getting 89,872 images. After automatic deletion of similar images using RGB histogram, we use Baidu AI image recognition platform to label objects. Natural scenery (eg: seacoasts), historic buildings (eg:temples), and modern buildings (eg: skyscrapers) are classified into the spatial space. Historical (eg:bronzes), business (eg: hotels), technology (eg: robots), art (eg: sculptures), daily life(eg:furniture), entertainment (eg:bars), public facility (eg:subway stations) symbols are classified into the imagery space. Activities (eg: camping) and close-ups (eg: smiling) are classified into practice space. Two coders finished the classification, with reliability over 0.88 in Kappa tests.

The demonstration of a specific dimension was measured by its proportion in length. Results show that the 12 Chinese cities emphasize more on the imagery space(49.56%) while the practice space is a less concerned part, with an average proportion of 10.96%. All 12 cities allocate some length to 12 dimensions, trying to display a communicative city with diverse aspects involved.

Geographic factor greatly influences the demonstration of the practice space ($F=4.750$, $p<.05$) and citizens' activities ($F=4.535$, $p<.05$) in ANOVA. In Post Hoc Tests, western cities in China are less concerned about practice space than eastern cities ($M_{\text{western}}=.06, M_{\text{eastern}}=.15, M.D = -.09$, $SE = .03$, $p < .05$), and emphasized citizens' activities less than both eastern ($M_{\text{western}}=.03, M_{\text{eastern}}=.07, M.D = -.04$, $SE = .02$, $p < .05$) and central cities ($M_{\text{western}}=.03, M_{\text{central}}=.07, M.D= -.04$, $SE = .02$, $p < .05$), indicating a less progressive understanding of a communicative city and deliberative democracy where citizens' status should be respected and reflected. The demonstration of citizens' practices helps to

introduce a thick regional identity (Terlouw, 2009), which increases inhabitants' belonging and visibility related to deliberative democracy.

In conclusion, Chinese cities are trying to display a communicative and democratic city by demonstrating diverse dimensions. The imagery space is the most emphasized part as diverse symbols can well reflect the creations of citizens. The geographic factor influences the demonstration of the practice space. In the context of China, the factor functions owing to its close relation with the development stage, which influences visions and goals embedded in city promotion greatly (de Jong et al., 2018). This research finds that the difference especially appears in the aspect of citizens' practices.

Submission ID

1224

The multi-discourse fight of COVID-19 vaccine in the world of digital platforms: rethinking popularity of anti-intellectualism

Authors

Mr. Gopolang Dithokwa - Institute of Communication Studies, Communication University of China

Prof. Li Jidong - Institute of Communication Studies, Communication University of China

Mr. Nadeera Sri Ekanayake - Institute of Communication Studies, Communication University of China

Abstract

As communication technology continues to enhance global governance and augment the ease of content delivery to the public by both the state and non-state actors, the academic inquiry in communication studies is better placed to rationalize the adoption of digital platforms as channels of communication by examining the messages, their intentions, and impact to the global public. By applying the Kent and Taylor (1998) dialogic communication framework to assess the message effects, awareness purpose, and engagement of mediated communication strategies of the 21st century organization-to-public discourses for sustainability, this paper, recognizing health as a social sustainability necessity, will explore how government institutions used digital platforms to spark discussions and enhance knowledge, and share scientific information about development and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines by drawing samples from official Twitter and WeChat accounts in five different countries that were frontrunners in the vaccine manufacturing, being China, United States, Germany, India, and United Kingdom between 2020 and 2021. Previous researchers have made meaningful contributions to this area by aligning the usage of digital platforms to the provisions of the agenda 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals of promoting sustainability for a better future. According to scholars such as (Yu et al., 2018), Hancu-Budui et al. (2020), Ruggeri & Samoggia, (2018), and

Osborne et al. (2015), most institutions have adopted the use of social media to promote their services, and to some extent, attempting to shape public opinion especially in the areas of food security and health. Instead of focusing on how these institutions promote their services on social media, the current study will focus on how the messages were received and how they helped end-users understand scientific information during the pandemic. This study, therefore, hypothesizes that most institutions use digital platforms to advance political interests and divisions during global crises, while they do not focus more on how they can ignite dialogue on how science and technology benefit the public, and how the public understands and interpret these messages. It is through this study, that the researchers propose to employ a thematic analysis using sentiment scores on the collected texts from messages shared on these platforms. This study is timely and relevant to the current global pandemic and it will contribute to knowledge by informing future research about the confluence of digital platforms with science, technology, sustainability, and the public service and the rationale behind building anti-intellectual discourses towards scientific knowledge and evidence about the pandemic. Moreover, the findings of this study will help encourage best practices in communicating messages about science, technology, sustainability, and public service on digital platforms during the time of crisis management, to ensure that the messages' contexts are well understood and interpreted. The main goal of this study is to answer the following question: How was the content and delivery of messages for science, technology, sustainability, and public service on Twitter achieved during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Keywords: anti-intellectualism; COVID-19; dialogic communication

Submission ID

1293

Political Trust in China under the Pandemic: Study on the Blogs of CCTV News

Authors

Ms. Xingman Wu - School of Journalism and Communication, Wuhan University

Dr. Hao Cao - School of Journalism and Communication, Wuhan University

Abstract

Covid-19 has been considered as a crisis at multiple planes. In particular, the initial poor handling of the pandemic led to public outcries to governments across the globe and to international agencies. The idea that public health events have impacts on people's political trust has been explored in different countries, events, and different levels of political institutions. However, in these studies, the effects are not in the same direction. Commonly, countries that are not considered liberal democracies would have consistently higher political trust compared with other countries, especially in East Asia (Park, 2016).

Some scholars believe that the highest political trust in authoritarian governments may be caused by methodology fallacies, inequivalent meaning, and loyalty feeling (Meer, T. W. G. van der., 2017; Shi, 2014; Welzel & Dalton, 2015). Hence, finding a valid approach to evaluate the political trust of one authoritarian regime is a valuable topic. Then, we naturally raised two research questions:

RQ1: How did the political trust in China change during the Covid-19?

RQ2: If it increased/decreased, then what did people specifically trust/distrust in?

Considering the Chinese official media's special role as the "government mouthpiece", we decided to equal official media's communication effect as the political trust in China. This research took the "CCTV News" Weibo account as the research object. A total of 6,466 blogs posted by "CCTV News" from 01/01/2020 to 04/30/2020 were crawled, and three blogs were randomly selected from each day's blogs (set to not repeatedly select) to form a total of 363 samples of blogs for content analysis. Then, 60 comments of each sample blog were crawled. Finally, the 363 blogs and 14,631 comments were used as samples to analyze the communication effect.

Content analysis and discourse analysis were employed to answer the questions: categories of data analysis are "report subject, information source, report framework, the identity of main characters, and report mood" (Valkenburg PM, 1999). The reliability is good (Kappa: 0.88-1); Communication effect was calculated in the principle of: if the user's comment reflected recognition, and was consistent with the meaning of the blog, the communication effect was considered good, then it was denoted as 1; If the user's comment showed doubts over the information, policies, and institutions, denoted as -1; if the user's comment was not related to the blog, or it was difficult to understand its meaning, it was marked as 0. Then, the average value in each stage was regarded as the stage's communication effect.

Research finds that the media coverage can be divided into five stages: benchmark stage (1.1-1.21), outbreak period (1.22-1.28), persistent period (1.29-2.18), mitigation period (2.19-4.8), and recovery period (4.9-4.30). The political trust declined during the first three periods, and people's distrust showed a chronological chain of "authenticity, competence, and interest relationships." However, the political trust of the recovery period was significantly higher than that of the first three periods, and the recovery period's was also higher than the benchmark stage's, which partly indicated that political trust in China increased under the Covid-19.

This paper indirectly calculates the level of political trust by estimating the users' comment attitude, making it possible to quantify their attitude and reflect political trust in China with less bias.

Submission ID

1327

Self-Media: Concept, features, milieu, selected cases: WeChat and Telegram

Authors

Prof. Svetlana Pasti - Tampere University

Mr. Xiao Xiao Yang - Fudan University

Prof. Kamilla Nigmatullina - St. Petersburg University

Mr. Xi Zhu - Renmin University of China

Abstract

The term 'self-media' is well known in China and almost unknown outside of it. With the arrival of the supper app WeChat in 2011, China has experienced burgeoning self-media, which have become extremely lucrative services in the field of information, education, leisure, and entertainment. Self-media creates new jobs in the creative professions market, including journalism and high technology.

The paper recounts the origins of the concept of *self-media* as proposed by Chinese researchers and distinguishes the term from the Western concept of *WeMedia*. Next, we identify the differences between self-media (on the one hand,) and traditional/online media (on the other). Then we analyze selected cases of self-media in terms of their history, founders, business models, audience, and role in society. Finally, we discuss the political and cultural factors affecting the milieu of self-media, their specifics, and development opportunities in China and Russia.

The fieldwork was conducted in 2018-2019 in Shanghai and St Petersburg with the support of the School of Journalism of Fudan University and St. Petersburg University. Research data consists of in-depth interviews with journalists-entrepreneurs and secondary literature.

The main findings are summarized for a discussion. 'Self-media'(自媒体) *zì méitǐ* is a Chinese term coined in the process of domesticating the Western term *WeMedia* and addressing a shift from civic engagement to mass creativity and entrepreneurship, cultivated through new technology and aimed at commerce as a dominant. According to the shared opinions of respondents in both countries, the future lies with these media, which are not just media, but a blend of technology and social media. Their main differences from mainstream media are as follows: strong personality, clear market positioning, proactivity of interaction with subscribers, individual or small team, low cost, and risk. However, despite their common features, self-media in China and Russia are utterly different in terms of evolution and development paths.

The Chinese case demonstrates the cooperation of government, business, and society. *WeChat*, created by *Tencent*, operates under government control with a transparent

system for regulating and stimulating the self-media business. The Russian case demonstrates an unresolved conflict. *Telegram*, as a place for free communication was created in 2011 by the Durov brothers, who had previously created the most popular social network *Vkontakte*. It was ironic that *Telegram* was banned in Russia, but government officials, including *Roskomnadzor* (Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media), continued to open their information channels there. Side by side, political and commercial journalism, on-site news and fake news, government propaganda and criticism of the opposition compete for influence over the reader. These channels are of two types: authored and anonymous; the channel sponsors are unknown, likewise authors' funding. Summing up our observations, we conclude that China and Russia represent different worlds: Order (China) and Chaos (Russia), and this metaphor seems relevant to reflect on our findings.

Submission ID

1389

Anatomy of Online Activism in Hybrid Regime: Lessons from Bangladesh

Authors

Mr. Shudipta Sharma - Bowling Green State University

Abstract

This paper aims to explore the status of online activism in Bangladesh, where freedom of expression is reportedly being restricted. It also tries to contribute to the growing knowledge on the impact of new communication technologies on the rise of surveillance society and authoritarianism. In this era of Internet, online activism has been playing important roles in successful social movements across the world. However, the increasing polarization and its disruptive effects on democracy and freedom of expression have been limiting the prospects of online activism. Bangladesh, which has experienced fifteen years of military rule over its fifty-year-old history, is not different. Bertelsmann Stiftung in a report classified Bangladesh as an autocracy because it "no longer meets minimum standards for democracy," such as fair elections. Scholars also categorize the regime of the country as a hybrid. Moreover, Bangladesh has been experiencing a rapid rise of Islamic extremism in recent times, with the murders of several writers, bloggers, online activists, publishers, and foreigners. Such incidents and the government's failure to bring the murderers to justice led to a growing fear among the online activists that they no longer feel safe to exercise the rights of expression. A group of Islamic extremists also often declares progressive online activists as atheists and calls upon people to kill them as a holy duty. In response, the government has enacted several laws and strengthened its online monitoring, which are reportedly hampering the good practices of online activism. It is also said that in the name of controlling extremism, the government has been trying to

establish a surveillance society so that they can easily oppress dissenting voices. In this context, it is important to know the present status of online activism in Bangladesh. To help provide some insights into the dynamics of online activism, this study addresses following empirical questions: Who are the online activists in Bangladesh? Why do they engage themselves in this voluntary activism? What kind of challenges they are facing currently? How do they respond to those challenges? To answer these questions this study applies a qualitative approach. As research methodology grounded theory is selected to conduct this study. For data collection, semi-structured in-depth interviews of 20 online activists have been conducted. Activists were selected through snowball sampling method. The study finds that by using the social media platforms, especially Facebook, urban educated youths engage themselves in online activism to serve society. Several factors including the absence of functioning democracy contributed to the affected the freedom of expression in the country. It is found that in response to the incidents of murders, legal, physical, and psychological harassment, the online activists either went for self-censorship or abstained from writing on 'sensitive' issues. The study also finds that the technological and statutory steps and comments by the government exacerbated the situation and contributed to the rise of surveillance society and authoritarianism.

Submission ID

1526

“I am as soft as wool”: A discursive analysis of Emmerson Mnangagwa’s ‘new dispensation’ in Zimbabwe’s post-Mugabe era

Authors

Mr. Noah Kupeta - University of KwaZulu-Natal

Abstract

Emmerson Mnangagwa’s ascendancy to power in November 2017 was viewed from within and beyond Zimbabwe as the country’s opportunity to correct leadership deficiency brought about by Robert Mugabe. His leadership was meant to bring harmony, peace and collective shared national socio-economic political development in Zimbabwe. Under Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe experienced a long period of despotic rule characterised by vengeance, violence, chicanery, and arrests against his opponents. This present study argues that Emmerson Mnangagwa’s attempts to rebrand himself and the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) ruling party is marred with controversy. Extracted from my current qualitative Ph.D. research questioning change and continuity, the place and discourse of colonial memory in Zimbabwe’s post-Mugabe Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) politics, this study is an analysis of Emmerson Mnangagwa’s selected responses to criticism during the 2018 post presidential election violence mainly against the opposition party, Movement for Democratic Change

Alliance (MDC A). Data in this study is collected from purposively selected articles from *The Herald* – a state-owned daily newspaper and *NewsDay*- a daily private-owned newspaper. The intention is to explore, via qualitative content analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), if these responses reveal Emmerson Mnangagwa to be a reformist (compared with Robert Mugabe) or they are two same sides of the same coin. The study deploys political branding as the principal theory (Smith 2009) in order to explore Emmerson Mnangagwa's rule in Zimbabwean normative political culture. The theory is significant to unpack post Mugabe era in a Zimbabwean context so as to determine if there is any change and or continuity to talk about under Emmerson Mnangagwa's administration or he remains entangled in the past. Zimbabwe has suffered isolation from the international community as a result of complex factors such as disputed elections, the controversial land reform in 2000, politics of violence and impunity. This study's unique aspect is that it centres on the political communication of the post Mugabe era and how it is possibly influencing on -going conversations about transformations that are taking place in the nature of 'texts' to understand presidential discourse (Coe 2011). More so, the study also contribute to ongoing debates about the need to come with up with multitheoretical approaches that are non-western in order to explore African political communication practices grounded in decolonial lenses.

Submission ID

1917

Divergence in Background Expectancies: Battle between Media and Courts in High Profile Legal Trials in China

Authors

Ms. Chun Yang - Department of Media and Communication, City University of Hong Kong

Dr. Fen Lin - Department of Media and Communication, City University of Hong Kong

Abstract

Excessive media coverage of judicial trials is often a battlefield where notions of justice are in co-existence and constant competition. With a social constructionist perspective, this study examined high profile legal trials as the trial-based media events, in which the perceived justice is collectively constructed by the media and the courts. This article especially focuses on why and how the Chinese media tended to challenge court judgments when legal trials in which the socially disadvantaged people commit crimes become media events. To address this question, I analyze the discourse in news reports, court documents and statements, and interviews on legal reporters regarding the case of Xia Junfeng in 2013 among other similar cases. The disagreement between the media and the courts is elaborated in the three stages of social construction process, namely the externalization, objectivation and internalization. It is common to see in such cases the socially disadvantaged people committed the crime because of existing social grievances,

which awakened the media's advocate role and stirred up the sympathy of netizens. In the stage of externalization, the social media played a key role in putting the initially unknown case on the public agenda, increasing the publicity and effectively setting subsequent media frames. The grassroots identity motivated netizens' participation and laid the populist style for the news reporting. News reports tended to adopt a human-interest frame and further mobilized the emotion of sympathy. Other news reports employed institutional discourse and uncovered the broad social issues and structural problems under individual cases. The media drew on non-legal discourses, put emphasis on the issues other than legality, and expected the court decisions to respond to the social justice and common sense. However, in the objectivation stage, media opposition encountered the hardline courts who stuck to the law and justified their judgments with legal standards. The media and the courts could not convince each other due to a lack of shared background expectancies. The political force thus intervened to maintain judicial authority for the courts with both the coercive and soft means. On the one hand, the opposing media faced direct censorship, while the party organs began to celebrate the credibility and transparency of the courts. On the other hand, a process of civilization online specifically attacked emotional mobilization and undermined the legitimacy of the sympathy. In the internalization stage, the advocate role of some journalists reinforced their position of the weak in reporting. They valued speaking for the powerless and achieving macro social justice more than professional journalistic norms, which reflected certain features of populism. Another group of reporters adopted thematic framing and made constructive suggestions for practical motives, aiming to both avoid political risks and fulfill their social responsibilities.

Submission ID

1958

Chinese Nationalism and its Latest Manifestations in a Post-Pandemic Era

Authors

Prof. Wendy Su - University of California Riverside

Abstract

Vast volumes of studies have surveyed Chinese nationalism from its historical roots, international relations, cultural ramifications, and cyberspace expressions. While inheriting and acknowledging the legacy of previous studies, this research aims to delineate the latest manifestations of contemporary nationalism of the PRC and uncover its unique characteristics in a post-globalization and post-pandemic era.

Based on document analysis, online forum discussions, and intensive interviews, the research outlines four distinct manifestations of contemporary Chinese nationalism: State/Party Nationalism, Popular Nationalism, Ethnic Nationalism, and Pandemic

Nationalism. State/Party nationalism is the most visible and prominent nationalism of China. This nationalism is state-centric championing the CCP leadership and its anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism legitimacy in its tremendous endeavor to build a new, rich and strong China. With socialism and common prosperity stressed as the original aspiration and must-through path during the Xin Jinping era, the ultimate goal is to fulfill the Chinese dream and to achieve national rejuvenation. One ramification of State Nationalism is tech nationalism featuring the “Made in China 2025/2035 Plan” that centers around the most advanced technologies such as 5G, AI, and Metaverse that would enable China to lead the world, truly restoring China’s glory.

The discourse of State Nationalism has trickled down to bring about another manifestation—Popular Nationalism or grassroots nationalism. Popular Nationalism is increasingly expressed through cyberspace and hence named cyber/online/digital nationalism. It is responsiveness to Western sanctions during the trade war and demonization of China triggered by the psyche of “a century of humiliation,” but a somehow playful or heroic showcase of individualized denouncement of Western/American hegemony, and the demonstration of pride and complacency in China’s economic achievement.

Ethnic Nationalism is mainly represented by the Hanfu movement (the Han Clothing). This movement emphasizes the Han supremacy and the restoration of the status that the Han majority should enjoy by protesting against the privileges in the birthright, welfare, and college admission enjoyed by ethnic minorities. It believes the Han culture is the sole representative of the Chinese culture. With official intervention, the Hanfu movement is transformed into the Huaifu movement (the Chinese Clothing) and is integrated with the official agenda of national solidarity.

Pandemic Nationalism is the latest manifestation with striking characteristics. Its uniqueness is the association of personal and family well-being with a strong and big government that takes care of everybody’s health, safety, and the security of food/shelter accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through establishing a direct connection between individual welfare and a strong and responsible government, this nationalism indicates a skepticism toward central values of Western liberal democracies: individualism, freedom, and democracy; an acknowledgment of China’s workable system, and potential resistance to the radical structural change of China.

In a post-globalization era, nation-states increasingly play a significant role in shaping popular mentality. This research argues for two convergences of the Chinese society in a post-pandemic era: the convergence of State Nationalism and Popular Nationalism, and the convergence of nationalism and authoritarianism. Riding on the wings of nationalism, the power and control of the Party-state is continuing and expanding.

Submission ID
2073

From Changing Cities to Changing Online Spaces: Reconceptualizing the Role of Social Media and Digital Activism in Tajikistan in the Context of Urban Transformation of Dushanbe

Authors

Ms. Tahmina Inoyatova - Simo

Abstract

Dushanbe has been undergoing a dramatic transformation of its urban landscape with demolitions of the historic Soviet architecture and construction of new administrative and residential buildings as Tajikistan is actively engaged in constructing and promoting its new national image domestically and globally by rebuilding its capital through “spectacular urbanism” (Koch, 2018). This urban and political process is accompanied by displacement of residents, social injustice, gentrification, and violation of collective and individual memories of the native residents of Dushanbe. In the context of the burgeoning national project, privatization, neoliberal capitalist urban policies, with few real mechanisms for people to influence the top-down decision-making process in Tajikistan, urban residents often turn to social media to advocate for and seek change.

Through conducting interviews with several social media activists, as well as content analysis of social media accounts dedicated to the urban transformation of Dushanbe, this paper explores whether social media can be an effective tool in challenging the status quo in Tajikistan. The analysis finds that while social media has the potential for people to discuss, negotiate, imagine, and reimagine ideas, to challenge and rethink the past, present, and future of their city and the nation, it has its limitations when it comes to being an effective tool of social change and policy intervention in Tajikistan. This paper contributes to the study of social media and digital activism in the Global South and further suggests that it is important to reconceptualize the role of social media in Central Asia to avoid the language of technological determinism and techno-optimism when studying social media’s impact and democratizing effects, including in the Central Asian context. Furthermore, while the relationship between activism and online spaces is well researched in the context of political processes and social movements in Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, this issue remains largely understudied in Tajikistan.

This paper concludes that although there are limited political mechanisms for Dushanbe’s residents to claim their right to the city (Harvey, 2008) through the existing policies and to influence the ongoing transformation via social media, online platforms serve as strategic tools to find new ways of processing the changes, such as forming communities around the urban and social justice issues, documenting the changes on social media profiles,

expressing collective identities, and as a result, challenging and negotiating the narratives surrounding Dushanbe's post-Soviet transformation.

Submission ID

2349

Desire and authenticity in North Korea: Case study of child YouTuber Sujin

Authors

Dr. Soomin Seo - Temple University

Ms. Ye Ju Ki - Temple University

Abstract

This study shows how North Korea has appropriated its anti-Western Juche ideology of self-reliance to promote tourism and consumerism on the global Web. It analyzes 16 social media clips featuring Sujin, a child music prodigy of an elite Pyongyang family. Sujin debuted in 2020 as part of North Korea's efforts to promote itself on YouTube and other social media platforms. The clips are targeted primarily at the English and Chinese-speaking audience, as the general public in North Korea does not have access to YouTube. Preliminary analysis of the objects and places featuring Sujin highlights North Korea's affinity for capitalistic affluence, with Western brands like Apple and Nike in prominent display. Scenes like the unwrapping of new gifts are similar to images in popular child YouTube channels. We also find typical YouTube visual strategies such as panoramic videos of high-rise towers and riverfront, which depart significantly from previous propaganda videos made by North Korea. In terms of technology, Sujin's clips use high-end professional equipment such as full-frame DSLR cameras and drones, indicating strong support from the North Korean regime in terms of resources. At times, however, the clips use amateur equipment such as handheld action cameras, resulting in unsteady images making the clips look less staged and more 'authentic.' Mundane scenes of everyday life and baby pictures of Sujin are other devices to add authenticity to the videos. Her status as a child serves a dual purpose: in addition to humanizing the North Korean regime, it also inoculates her from potential criticism, findings consistent with previous research on the role of children in global media content (Moeller, 2002). Taken together, the videos indicate North Korea's grasp of YouTube as a platform where attention, softness, and distinction are awarded (Suh & Jun, 2021). The clips also reveal the regime's different and often conflicting desires: to become more affluent, promote the Juche ideology of self-reliance, and make more friends in the global arena at the same time. Findings can help explain the ideological shifts taking place in contemporary North Korea.

Submission ID

2358

An empirical study on how COVID-19 signify a paradigm shift in Communication and Culture in India**Authors**

Mrs. Moumita De Das - Adamas University

Abstract

Communication and culture are entwined as a yarn. Communication encourages and disseminates the behavioural outline of a society for social amalgamation. It moulds the cultural know-how for millions of people. The media are closely related to culture. It is through the media that creative people vent out their artistic advocacies. The media have the latent talent to make acquainted people with the finest of human ingenuity and culture. Yet this bonding of culture and communication can be battered by commercial enterprises to underpin hegemonic values and precedence. Over the next decade, Communication will radically transform and determine how we converse with others. This global pandemic of COVID-19 has taken a huge leap in this process and added a paradigm shift from the traditional mode of communication. We have been forced to embrace digital modes of communication for our everyday survival likewise through online advertisements, social media, online financial transactions, augmented reality and video conferencing etc. The author of this paper will conduct a brief online survey on the changing pattern of communication regarding varied mass media platforms across different age groups. It will also analyse how the varied groups embraced the new changes and also share their concern about the challenges of varying communication modes. How these alterations effect our Mass Culture in this era of neo-globalisation? why? and how? Whether in the decades to come it may throw us amid the task of either digital amalgamation or digital divide.

Keywords: COVID-19, Neo-globalisation, Communication, Culture, Mass Culture, Society, Internet, Digital

Submission ID

2363

Debating 'Visual' Arab Spring and 'Sensible' New Media in the Arab World**Authors**

Mr. Abdul Fahad - University of Malaya

Mr. Tarun Joshi - Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University

Abstract

For academicians and experts, the major outline of the phenomenon of Arab Spring, a *phenomenon looking for democratization; a meta-theme of Arab struggle*, simultaneously opened the gate for many other disciplines to engage with it. Though, disciplines like Area studies on the intellectual understanding of Arab studies were much flavored with civilizational trends in the discourse of imagining the 'right and wrong' and spaces of power interaction. It also tried to re-imagine ideological trends that dominated the sense of presenting, representing, and projecting emotions. Considering the whole trajectory of Arab Spring, this reading finds visual effects of Arab Spring as a rational phenomenon primarily shaped by the instrumentality of new media. It influenced desires, mentalities, and shaped the new Arab public sphere as well. Though this act has another shift seated in the Orientalist narrative of essentialism. This review paper also aims to study the impact of visuality as a phenomenon as a circular effect. But the prime intention here is more to trace meanings of Arab Spring which is recently being considered as more about the dominance of authoritarians confronting the *sense* of freedom, the emergence of neoliberal capitalism, the crisis in national political economies, jobs, and *feel* of individual existence in everyday life of the Arab World. In this regard, we can think of *experiencing* Arab Spring by its spectacles through a widespread visuality of the events that launch subjectivities; shape the local narrativity of the event and engage the quotidian nomenclature of the struggle benefitting from new media.

Keywords: Arab Spring, Visuality, Democratization, Authoritarians, Freedom

Submission ID

2365

Searching for “foreign agents”. The impact of labeling media as such on Russian media landscape

Authors

Dr. Daria Dergacheva - ZeMKI, Centre for Media, Communication & Information Research, University of Bremen

Abstract

Since the beginning of 2020, the Russian federal law (No 327-FZ) on media as foreign agents has been used in connection to media outlets. At least one Russian-registered large media organization, TV Dozhd, has been put on the list (as well as many others, smaller ones, which have both foreign and Russian registration, such as MBKH Media, radio Svoboda, Meduza etc) (Tass: 2021). In addition, adaptation of the law on news aggregators (Russian federal law (No 208-FZ) is holding news aggregators liable for spreading fake news. As Wijermars (2021) highlights, the law “has created a mechanism

of indirect media control enabling the Russian state to influence online news dissemination through existing media regulation structures” since it has effectively obliged local news aggregators to algorithmically choose only registered media.

This research suggests that the biggest search engine in Russia, Yandex, algorithm avoids using TV Dozhd news (and other outlets considered ‘foreign agents’) as main news stories of the news aggregator page and favors state-aligned media. Traditionally, Yandex News aggregator traffic has been important for Russian media outlets traffic numbers, sometimes even more so than social media. The research also investigates if the citation of several media considered ‘foreign agents’ has dropped in ‘traditional’ media and social media in Russia since the law enforcement in 2020 – 2021.

Research design:

For the dataset construction, this research is using the archived pages of Web Back Machine, a not-for-profit Internet archive organization which stores historical web pages and has been storing Yandex aggregator news pages since 2008. (Arora et al: 2015). Research methodology includes both digital methods as well as qualitative interviews with journalists from traditional media on reasons to avoid citation. To add to the archive data the official sources of Medialogia media analysis service (Medialogia: 2019, 2020, 2021) are analysed on citation of the media considered ‘foreign agents’ before and after the active enforcement of the law is contrasted.

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Submission ID

2390

Ethics in Political Communication on Social Media: A Study of the Indian General Elections of 2019

Authors

Ms. Sukriti Bhukkal - Panjab University, Chandigarh

Abstract

Social media has made Indian politics inclusive by allowing citizens, who were traditionally excluded from politics due to factors such as geography and demography, to become participants in the political process. It has also provided for an array of viewpoints and public engagement on an unprecedented scale. However, with the intervention of the digital media in political communication, new lows in public discourse, the pervasiveness of fake news and misinformation, and a routine flouting of ethical norms have also been witnessed. The proposed paper shall focus on ethics in political communication, which has always been a complex issue and is further complicated by the rise of digital technologies that are weakening traditional ethical constraints among all political actors—politicians, journalists and the mass media, and audiences. It shall highlight the rise of fissiparous and polarising content in the General Elections(Lok Sabha) of India held in the year 2019. The paper shall utilise the data collected from social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook while applying the methodology of 'content analysis' to discuss how the 'new media' has enabled a style of populist politics that is combative and personal, allowing hate speech and extreme speech to thrive in online spaces. Moreover, the paper shall also discuss the response of the related stakeholders both governmental and non - governmental vis a vis the maintenance of ethical code of conduct within the realm of communicating the message during political events such as the elections which hold the utmost importance in the democratic setup of India.

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Critical and investigative journalism in risk contexts. Knowledge-representation methodological approach for the comparative study of the independent press in Cuba and Mexico.

Authors

Dr. Dasniel Olivera Pérez - Centro de Estudios Sociológicos, Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

Dr. José Refugio Arellano Sánchez - Centro de Estudios Sociológicos, Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

Abstract

Violence against journalists in risk contexts, insecure democracies, authoritarian and 'post-authoritarian countries is an international emerging and relevant studies field (Brambila & Hughes, 2019, Hughes, Mellado, et al., 2017; Márquez- Ramírez, 2012). In this direction, the growing empirical evidence demonstrates that direct and indirect violence hamper

professional journalistic practice and limit press freedom and the right to information (Brambila & Hughes, 2019).

A comprehensive understanding of the multiple sources of threats to journalism's exercise should consider its interactions with political, economic, cultural, and technological systems. It also must understand the many non-institutional, extralegal and even absolute forms of reproduction, transformation and subversion of power (Chakravartty and Roy, 2013). But it should also be extended beyond the reflective models and include "generative models" of the media as active molders of political power (Chakravartty and Roy, 2013: 365).

Mexico and Cuba are countries with structures, political stories and different media systems, but both constitute contexts of risk for independent journalism. What factors intervene when some outlets choose to continue making critical and investigative journalism in these contexts is what this project attempts to explain using the comparative methods and the representation of knowledge.

In Mexico, some of the factors that explain this phenomenon are the configuration of an ambiguous press model, clientelism - including connections between political elites and organized crime - and a passive journalistic culture (Márquez-Ramírez, 2015). In Cuba, the instrumental relationship and subordination of the media to the Party-State have been pointed out, the lack of guarantees for the exercise of political plurality, and the inflection that has the US political conflict. Against Cuba in journalistic culture (Olivera, 2019). This paper discusses the hypotheses, derivative of the bibliographic and theoretical review, the methodological strategy, and the preliminary results.

In general, among the main structural, organizational and individual factors that prop up these journalistic practices are the context of ICT development and the possibility of building audience communities, the networks of professional, political and economic collaboration and support, and the defense of the shared professional ideals about journalism.

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