Developments and New Approaches of Internationalizing China's Media: A Case Study of China Global Television Network (CGTN) in Witness Perspective

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Abstract

China Global Television Network (CGTN, launched on December 31, 2016) is a multi-language, multi-platform media group (previously known as a part of CCTV). This article will offer an inside-out perspective by illustrating its motivations, developments, new approaches and implications.

Willing to improve the image of China in the world, CGTN aims to tell the story of China in its own way in the "going global" context. As for motivations of establishment, CGTN desires to be one of the world-famous news media in global communication rather than merely within the governmental sphere and to influence both television channels and social networks to attract users. In addition, CGTN adopts several strategies and new approaches in the process of internationalizing: globalization, localization, and socialization. Although accomplishments have been achieved, complicated barriers still exist in the long run.

Keywords: Internationalizing; CGTN; China's media.

Research Background

China Global Television Network (CGTN)[1], is a multi-language, multi-platform media group consisting of six television channels and including a 24-hour English-language news channel, a video content provider and a digital media division.[2] Former channels under CCTV (China Central Television) brand were simultaneously re-launched on December 31, 2016.[3] CCTV-4, the international channel in Mandarin Chinese, is not a part of this relatively new brand. In March 2018, CGTN became one part of China Media Group, the newly established mainstream state radio and television broadcaster in P.R. China **(Table 1)**.

CGTN releases news around the world through its headquarters in Beijing. Moreover, there are overseas subsidiary institutes including the American branch in Washington D.C. and the African operation in Nairobi as well as other overseas affiliated institutions. In addition, its the third branch operation in London is now under construction.

A significant decision was made top-down during 13th National People's Congress in 2018, which reconstructed the system of media in China. The merger meant that the following leading mainstream media would launch a brand-new China Media Group (CMG, literally called "The Voice of China" in Chinese): China Central Television (CCTV), China Global Television Network (CGTN), China National Radio (CNR) and China Radio International (CRI) **(Figure 1)**.

Research Object and Questions

The object of this research is to elaborate on the internationalizing

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1"CGTN's official website is CGTN.com.CGTN Television - The main English-language news channel CGTN has taken over from CCTVNEWS, while our other language channels are now CGTN Spanish, French, Arabic and Russian. CGTN Documentary replaced CCTV Documentary English and is China's first state-level English-language documentary channel to broadcast globally. We also deliver our content across a range of digital platforms. Not only are all television programs broadcast simultaneously online and on mobile, but the website and news app provide original stories from China and around the world, with the support of CGTN's global team. Audiences can also find us on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Weibo and WeChat."CGTN-About Us". CGTN homepage. https://www.cgtn.com/home/info/about_us.do 2018-05-17.

2"CGTN-About Us". CGTN homepage. https://www.cgtn.com/home/info/about_us.do 2017-03-08.

3"CCTV to launch CGTN". CCTV America. https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d4d6a4e3555544d/share_p.html 2016-12-31

Table 1: Information of CGTN Channels.

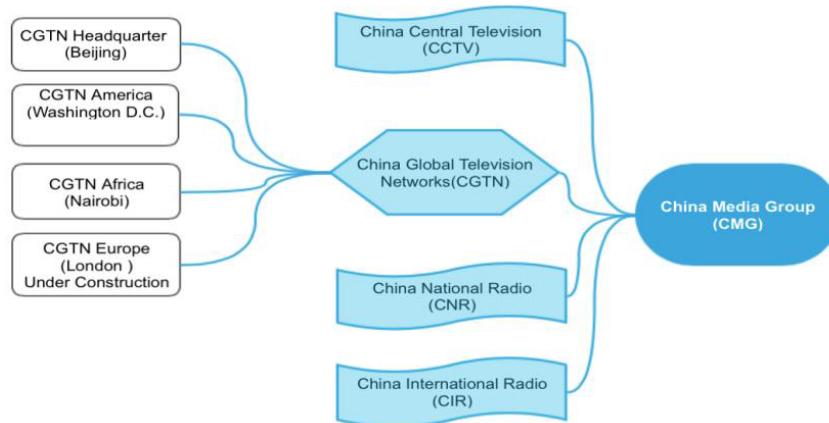| Name	Language	Launch Date	Previous Name
CGTN	English	20-Sep-97	CCTV News
CGTN Español	Spanish	1-Oct-07	CCTV-E/Español
CGTN Français	French	1-Oct-07	CCTV-F/Français
CGTN Arabic	Arabic	25-Jul-09	CCTV Arabic
CGTN Russian	Russian	10-Sep-09	CCTV Russian
CGTN Documentary	English	1-Jan-11	CCTV-9 Documentary

Figure 1 Illustration on the relationship between CGTN and CMG.

process of CGTN by focusing on three key aspects: motivations, challenges and implications.

Q1: What is the motivation for the launching of CGTN?

Q2: What are the developments and new approaches implemented by CGTN?

Q3: What are the challenges and implications for CGTN as well as the tendency to internationalize of China's media in the future?

Theoretical Framework

The booming of digital media[4] offers versatile opportunities and yet shifts circumstance in global communication. Emerging media and Digital technologies are relatively new social phenomena. In this sense, theories [1] which claim that digital technologies have produced or are about to produce such radical changes confuse the temporality of technical innovations with the temporality of social evolutions [2]. The use of the Internet has already become "an embedded, embodied, everyday experience" [3].

The need for international or global communication was due to the increasing effects and influences of globalization. International communication "encompasses political, economic, social, cultural and military concerns" [4]. The rise of new media has allowed

people to express themselves through blogs, websites, pictures, and other user-generated media. This perspective suggests that "the process of globalization is a determining factor" [5] in China's aspiration to open itself to the world.

Media technologies are adopted and promoted by many countries to promote economic growth. Governments of developing countries and international agencies a like view technology as a tool for leapfrogging developed countries and creating a knowledge economy. The ways in which a community uses and perceives media technology can affect the political, economic, and social development of the community in question.

Globalization has now more effectively interconnected cross-relations amid international companies, communities, and organizations than it did in the past. Any changes witnessed in any given community can now more quickly and effectively reach other groups via news, social reactions, etc. Within the digital media context, intercultural communication has gained further importance.

Methodology

This article applies one case study to present the CGTN's historic context, current situation and implications by using literature analysis and in-depth interviews. These interviews were conducted by the author while performing internship at the Beijing headquarters and visiting CGTN America in Washington D.C.

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[4]"Digital media" equally refers to complex material objects, communication facts and various communication productions, social situations or economic strategies. By reminding a simple list of technological artifacts which are ranged in this category (computers, tablets, smartphones, Internet, social networks, microblog, etc.), we point out the diversity and the complexity of digital media.

Motivations: The context of going Global[5]

Individuals cannot understand a society's contemporary policy in-depth without taking its social context into consideration. The progressive rise of China's comprehensive national strength and important international status has pushed the Chinese government to shift its policy from "keeping a low-profile" to a relatively more public initiative "going global", especially after Chinese president Xi Jingping took his office in 2012. It reflects the utterances and discourses in social culture and media coverage.

The globalization and internationalizing process of Chinese media have become an essential part of China's "going out" strategy, which means that China tries to improve its world-wide reputation and at the same time promote its national image by using its media, when encountering negative remarks especially concerning stereotypes in the international sphere.

The implementation of CGTN and establishment of China Media Group (CMG) represent the unprecedented expansion of Chinese global media. Meanwhile, the reshaping of global media landscape also has triggered unexpected consequences: pros and cons go hand in hand.

Thussu assumes that the global expansion of Chinese media "reflect[s] the recognition by the Beijing authorities of the importance of the English language as the key to success for global commerce and communication and their strategy to bring Chinese public diplomacy to a global audience".[6]

At the same time, some scholars put forward the controversial concept of "sharp power"[7] following the well-established "hard power" and "soft power". Walker C, Ludwig J asserted that some countries, China, in particular, attempt to alter international views to their advantage, which is a threat to vulnerable democracies. However, China does not agree with their way of thinking. By establishing and promoting the global media, China would like to "tell its story to the global audiences in their own way" in response to being portrayed as biased.

Media landscape around the World

There are many renowned international news outlets such as BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera. In recent years RT[8] (Russia Today) rose to fame swiftly which also set an example for China. RT is intended to improve the image of Russia abroad in "a Russian viewpoint on major global events". As a regrouped and newly established institute in 2005, the expansion of RT challenges the US-dominant global news pattern.

Another example is Singapore. Under the "neo-development media model", Singapore Press Holdings (SPH)[9] and MediaCorp[10] are two main multi-media groups. The Media's role in this model is to bring unity to a country and to support the "nation comes first" principle.

Although nearly all media outlets in China are still state-owned and operated, the media has undergone the most salient changes in the country's history since China started its economic reform in 1978 [6].

Some scholars [7] assert that "authoritarian liberalism"[11] form is favored by the Chinese state; whereas, the Chinese government is more accepting of a "development media model" which emphasizes on the media's positive function to promote development.

Developments and New Approaches

CGTN adopted several strategies and new approaches in the process of Internationalizing: globalization, localization and socialization.

Globalization

CGTN aims to avoid the traditional role of mouthpiece for Chinese government. Consequently, as for the content and discourse of its coverage, CGTN pays more attention to culture and social issues rather than political doctrine discourse in the eyes of overseas audiences. This also illustrates why it implemented "global" to depict itself. International communication emphasizes on communication between and among nation-states, whereas he term "global" implies a declining role of the state and state sovereignty. In addition, global communication has more versatile facets besides communication between or among governments. Global communication is the ability to provide and access information across cultures[12], multinational enterprisers, non-government organizations, transnational media corporations, cross-culture interpersonal communication, global public sphere etc. This also matters especially where language and cultural barriers can impact efficiency. CGTN's enjoys much looser regulation and relative freedom from the government, yet its ownership is still unchanged (state-owned).

Localization

While CGTN's headquarter is located in Beijing, it has worldwide overseas branches: CGTN America broadcast center is based in Washington D.C., CGTN Africa is in Nairobi and a European branch under-construction in London.

[5]Thussu D, de Burgh H, Shi A est. (2018) China's Media Go Global. Routledge, London. ISBN 9781138665859

[6]Thussu D (2006). International Communication: Continuity and Change (p.193).Hodder Arnold.

[7]Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence (https://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Sharp-Power-Rising-Authoritarian-Influence-Full-Report.pdf)

[8]RT is a Russian international television network funded by the Russian government. It operates cable and satellite television channels directed to audiences outside of Russia, as well as providing Internet content in various languages, including English, Spanish and Russian.

[9]Multi media groups Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) - publishes 15 newspapers and six periodicals a media organization in Singapore with businesses in print, Internet and new media, radio and outdoor media, and property and healthcare.

[10]MediaCorp operates entertainment-based Channel 5 and Channel 8, Malay channel Suria, Mandarin-language Channel U, and Channel NewsAsia

[11]Authoritarian liberalism a combination of economic liberalism and political illiberalism

[12]Tolliday, Daniel. (2017, September 26). A Definition of Global Communication. Bizfluent. Retrieved from https://bizfluent.com/facts-7601794-definition-global-communication.html

CGTN makes full use of localization strategies by hiring local international staff, which are familiar with native culture and already had a good reputation to attract the audiences. Meanwhile, the majority of CGTN's anchors and journalists are well trained and had relevant experience in other world famous global news organization. For instance, Elaine Reyes[13], the host of "Americas Now", previously worked for NBC station. Additionally, another America news anchor Mike Walter, whose reporting on September 11th won him global reputation, served for CBS and USA Today before joining CGTN in 2011. It is the same story for CGTN Africa. Beatrice Marshall, the host of "Talk Africa", was the chief anchor at Kenya's leading television network (KTN), which enables her to express an in-depth insight and views of Africa. Furthermore, all the news products made by branches are in real-time broadcasting rather than going through censoring process by Beijing headquarters. Recently, CGTN's TV channels have become accessible in 170 countries and regions with a total of 387 million viewers [8]. Unfortunately, not all the subscribers can get free access to cable TV. For example, U.S. users need to pay an extra charge in subscription of Netflix in order to watch CGTN's programs. This inconvenience is not a single barrier for CGTN.

Socialization

Both "television" channels and "networks" matter to CGTN, especially in emerging social media platforms. To some extent, the "mobile priority" principle pushs CGTN's to fulfill global user's satisfactions by offering content via various platforms rather than merely by television broadcasting. Hence, audiences could get access to CGTN programs simultaneously on television, online and on mobile devices. In addition, CGTN has specialized personnel to produce content and design layout customized on mobile applications. CGTN places emphasis on social media as well. Information is spreading by mobile applications as well as social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Weibo and WeChat. As a newly-establish brand, CGTN has inherent "media genes" adapting to the emerging media environment.

There are around 87 million global subscribers accumulating various digital media. In the end of 2017, CGTN's English Facebook account had 52.69 million followers, which hits the first among other global media organization, and its YouTube account had garnered over 300 million hits.

In addition, according to CGTN's chief executive Jiang, more than 3.1 million users download CGTN's mobile news app to date, 95 percent have originated outside China **(Table 2)**.[14]

Table 2: Main Global Media Outlets' Subscribers in Social Media.

Media Outlets	Twitter	Tweets	Facebook	YouTube
CGTN	8,267,995	56,367	61,770,702	389,787
CNN	40,445,675	184,672	17,211,681	3,658,842
BBC News	23,449,574	278,375	46,409,491	2,537,106
RT	2,702,157	256,842	5,106,755	2,585,329
Al Jazeera	4,926,312	204,433	11,028,502	2,153,839

[13]https://www.cgtn.com/info/reporter.do?catype=reporter_en&index=0

[14]https://news.cgtn.com/news/3449444d30637a6333566d54/share_p.html

Results

As for motivations of establishment, CGTN desires to be one of the world-famous news media in global communication rather than merely within the governmental sphere and to influence both television channels and social networks to attract users. Willing to improve the image of China in the world, CGTN aims to tell the story of China in its own way in the "going global" context. Although accomplishments have been achieved, complicated barriers still exist in the long run. In addition, CGTN adopts several strategies and new approaches in the process of internationalizing: globalization, localization, and socialization.

Conclusions and Discussions

CGTN is a relatively new global apparatus under the "going global" context in China. The name "CGTN" vividly depicts its missions: tell the story of "China" in its way, attempt to be one of the world-famous news media in "global" communication rather than merely within governmental sphere; emphasis on both "television" channels and social "networks" to attract users.

Admittedly, there are some challenges and barriers for CGTN. First and foremost, although press freedom is better for CGTN, censor mechanism still exits due to the state-ownership. In addition, there is still a big gap between CGTN and other world-class international broadcasting groups especially for levels of journalistic profession. Even though CGTN hires experienced international staff, it will still take a long time to cultivate its loyal audience and develop the uniqueness and brand reputation. At the same time, the difference on values and cultures hampers intercultural communication. Finally, the top-down decision of establishment of China Media Group is still in process, thus there are numerous things to see in the future.

Acknowledgements

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