

## **A Longitudinal Study of the Foreign TV Programming Pattern of China Chongqing TV, 1981 - 2010**

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**Abstract:** This paper analyzes foreign TV programming patterns of China's southwest CQTV during a 30-year time frame, focusing on how political and cultural issues affect TV content and program format change in a smaller TV station between the 1980s and 2010s. The study of the foreign TV programming pattern of CQTV suggests that western programming had strong presence in the early stage of China's economic reform. In the 2000s, after two decades of reform and the Open Door policy, Chinese audience preference for imported TV programs represents striking demographic differences. Local or culturally proximate programming is the preferred choice for most Chinese.

**Keywords:** Foreign TV programming, global TV flow, cultural proximity

### **1. Introduction**

The debate on the implications of media flows among nation-states has been an enduring subject in the international communication field. As Wert and Stevenson (1989) observe, "Nothing in the decade-long international debate over the dominance of the west in global communication has raised more controversy than the issue of television programming" (p. 182). The focus has been on the relations of media flows between nations to the power structure of the world. Therefore, the globalization of television raises many crucial issues regarding the broadcasting sovereignty of the nation-state, and the ability of developing countries to maintain their own cultures in the face of the ubiquitous Western media content.

Chinese television presents an interesting case of how the process of globalization permeates into the local cultural sphere. So far, scholarship on Chinese media has mostly taken a macro-institutional perspective, attempting to interpret the complicated and convoluted political and economic context (Lee, 2003; Zhao, 2003). However, not enough academic work has been done to investigate how the globalization pressure is affecting Chinese media content, especially television stations serving the economically less developed regions.

This paper is a case study of China's southwest Chongqing Television (CQTV) and explains the impact of China's global integration on its TV content. Specifically, it analyzes the foreign TV programming patterns of CQTV during a 30-year time frame, focusing on what are the major socio-economic changes that occurred in China over the past 30 years and what are their impacts on a local television station between 1981 and 2010.

### **2. Literature Review**

#### **2.1. CQTV**

CQTV is based in the city of Chongqing in Southwest China. Geographically, Chongqing is

an inland port, surrounded by mountains on all sides with rivers flowing through the city. It has been known as a “Mountain City,” which boasts a history of some 3,000 years. During the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), Chongqing was the capital of the Chinese Nationalist Government because the Japanese military occupied the eastern part of China. Many factories and universities moved to Chongqing to support the war against Japan, transforming the city into an important national industrial base. In 1997, with the central government’s policy to develop West China, Chongqing turned into the political and economic center of the area. It has become China’s fourth municipality after Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin, to be directly under the control of the central government, enjoying provincial-level status. The central government chose Chongqing as China’s new municipality in order to keep abreast of the prosperous eastern coastal areas of China and also to boost the development plan of the western region.

CQTV was founded in 1970 to transmit China Central Television (CCTV)’s programming in Chongqing. It started broadcasting self-produced programs in October 1981. During the past thirty years, CQTV has evolved from a city-level TV station with limited program production capability to a province-level TV station with 12 specialized channels plus one satellite channel covering the whole country. The change in CQTV programming is even more dramatic, represented by a striking increase in program supply and content complexity.

## 2.2. Research on Global Television Flow

When the debate about international television program flow started in the 1970s, it represented two competing research paradigms that attempt to interpret the nature of media flows: the “free flow of information” paradigm versus the “cultural hegemony” or “cultural imperialism” paradigm (Schement et. al, 1984). “Cultural imperialism” scholars linked the direction of information flows to the structure of the world system, arguing that the advanced countries have taken advantage of the “free flow of information” and contain or even control the developing countries’ domestic media development (Schiller, 1992). Organized by UNESCO, international communication scholars Varis (1974, 1984) and Nordenstreng (1974) conducted a series of research projects investigating international television traffic. These studies analyzed amounts, nature and trends of the international flow of television programs, and found that there was a “one-way flow” of television programs from a few exporting countries to the rest of the world, dominated by entertainment programs. Scholars from “free flow of information” discourse exclude the radical notion of domination and subordination between developed and developing countries (Chin, 2003), interpreting the global distribution of Western cultural products as a result of free market forces. First, Western countries maintain economic comparative and competitive advantage in the global media market in terms of their production budget, advanced technology and marketing strategy. Second, media products are pure commodities which can be traded freely (Comor, 1997). In addition, as Schement et al (1984) noted, the free flow of information is “seen as an integral component in the process of modernization and development” (p. 165).

Flow studies in the 1990s challenged the earlier picture of “a single global television market dominated by the U.S.” (Chin, 2003, p. 78). Instead, the authors suggested that “global, regional, national and even local circuits of program exchange overlap and interact in a multi-

faced way” (Sinclair, Jacka & Cunningham, 1996, p. 5). Case studies from Japan (Yoshimi, 2005), Latin America (Sinclair, 2005; Wert & Stevenson, 1989), Greater China (Chan, 1996) and the Arab World (Amin, 1996) showed that some semi-periphery countries such as Mexico, Brazil, India, China and Egypt have established strong national broadcasting systems and have successfully exported media products around the world.

Recent global communication studies focus more on local resistance of global homogenous culture, global-local interaction, the formation of hybrid culture, or even “glocalization”. A pilot study of “hybridization” is Israeli audience’s reading of Dallas (Katz & Liebes, 1984). The finding is that active audiences absorb the alien culture and create new meanings in their own cultural context. A semiotic analysis of MTV Europe media content shows that MTV is heavily inflected by local cultural conditions, helping to create a wide range of diverse identities with local youth (Sturmer, 1993). Similar research can be found in Strelitz’s (2003) ethnographic study of media consumption preferences of South America youth. She concluded that: “The identities of South African youth are often shaped by their structural location within the socio-political landscape and it is this location which mediates their relationship and response to global media” (p. 251). White’s (2005) case studies of global media in Japan, China and Hong Kong find that Western media conglomerates have been “remarkably unsuccessful” in these regions (p. 2). As examples, DirecTV has failed in Japan, MTV in Asia has to significantly localize its content to meet local tastes, and News Corporation in Japan and Time Warner in China have had to set up joint ventures with local media companies.

The findings of these research studies imply a critique of the media imperialism thesis with its claims for cultural homogenization as a result of media globalization. Instead, resistance and challenges to globalization exist when the global meets the local. Local culture is not necessarily the victim of homogenous global media influence. More specifically, the result of this tug-of-war between global and local indicates trends toward the localization of media content and counterweights the fear of cultural homogenization (Weber, 2003).

Today, popular television formats have been circulated across the world, raising questions for the traditional conceptual framework of media globalization. This line of research is becoming more popular in contemporary global media studies. Studies of global television formats challenge “structural/cultural imperialism”, “core/periphery” or “free flow of information” paradigms, and emphasize the need to establish a new framework to study the more complicated global-local cultural interaction. Kraidy and Murphy (2008) propose the theoretical framework of “translocalism” to study the explosion of global TV formats transformation. This approach will enable global communication studies to “refocus on local”, and provide a better understanding of “the increasingly complex entanglements of the local and the global” (p. 359). Format scholars such as Moran (2008) and Keane (2005)’s work inspire scholars to look at global circulation of reality TV, dance shows, sports, sitcoms, and dramas, and study how Western TV formats are produced locally, and what are the cultural implications of transnational media flows. Case studies of global popularity of *American Idol* or *Who Wants to Be Millionaire* (Ganguly, 2011), reality dance formats in France (Campaiola-Veen, 2011), global television formats in Africa (Ndelela, 2011), telenovelas in Brazil (Straubhaar, 2011), all provide substantial evidence that global formats traffic not only promote international entertainment business, but also facilitate nation building and construction of local identity.

### 2.2.1. Globalization of Television in China

Before the adoption of Deng's reform policy in 1978, Chinese TV was ideologically loaded and only served to distribute political propaganda (Huang, 1997). The dominant ideology under Mao's regime was anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism and anti-westernization. So China aligned itself with the Socialist bloc that included the Soviet Union, Eastern European countries and some post-colonial African and Latin American countries, running into hostility from most Western countries in international affairs. Political factors dominated decisions about importation selections of TV programs. According to Hong (2007), before 1978, a very limited number of TV programs from the Socialist bloc and developing countries were allowed to be shown on Chinese TV screens, and were programs that featured education or art, or that exposed the evil nature of capitalism. Television importation in China before the reform era was "quantitatively limited and politically and ideologically oriented" (p. 28).

The international flow of TV programs started coming into China right after the economic reforms. Under the "open door policy," the country has aggressively attracted Western investment and promoted international engagement. After conducting a 20-year longitudinal study of the importation of television programs in China, Hong (1998, 2007) concludes that media globalization has come to China. In 1978, China lifted the ban on importing Western programs, a visible sign towards the openness of television. Since then, Western TV dramas, education programs, sports, music, and a variety of other TV formats have been shown on Chinese TV one by one. The majority of the imported TV programs were dubbed in Mandarin Chinese. Only a few imported programs kept the original audio but inserted Chinese subtitles. In 1980, CCTV broadcast an American sci-fi *Man from Atlantis* every Thursday evening, symbolizing the normalization of China-U.S relations (Hong, 1998). The show was a big hit at that time: wearing sunglasses similar to those worn by actors of the show became a fashion must with many young Chinese. The most influential foreign TV programming in the early 1980s in China was the American TV series *Garrison's Gorillas*, featuring a group of trained prisoners fighting against German fascists behind the lines during the World War II. The show quickly cultivated a cult audience, and most of them were teenagers. However, the show was accused of triggering adolescent antisocial behaviors or even the formation of violent gangs. In 1981, the 26-episode show was suddenly removed from Chinese TV screens after it aired sixteen episodes because the Chinese government was wary of the negative influences on Chinese youth.

When Keane (2001) returned to China in early 2001 after his first visit in 1989, he was "amazed" by the development of Chinese television programming. He writes:

The Chinese television industry is currently in a state of unprecedented flux. With the largest television audience in the world, serviced by the most number of television stations, the industry has to adjust to the logic of supply and demand within an environment of market fragmentation. Television schedules are now more systematically attuned to audience demands. Prime time is dedicated to high-rating programs, and most significantly, there are plenty of channels, although the content across channels lacks real diversity (p. 223).

Keane points out that the development of Chinese television programming benefits from the successful exploitation of foreign television program formats through cloning, joint production and adaptation (2001, 2005, 2006). This process is termed by Keane (2001) as “cultural technology transfer,” and becomes the “means of the viability of a Chinese television industry bereft of imagination” (p. 234).

China started adaption of global television formats in the late 1990s, during that time the domestic TV market competition intensified as a result of China’s further economic reform. In 1997, Hunan TV launched a game show called *The Citadel of Happiness*, which was modeled after a Hong Kong TV program. The program is hosted by a pair of stylish young people and encourages the participation of audience members. A large number of celebrities are also invited to the show. One year later, Hunan TV launched a dating show called *Dating with Roses*, another spin-off program from a Taiwan dating program. The successful launch of the two entertainment shows provided Hunan TV not only with huge advertising returns, but also the status of being a pioneer of China’s entertainment TV. Soon after, almost every provincial TV channel produced dating shows and game shows, broadcasting the same schedule as Hunan TV. CCTV, which once considered itself the agenda setter for all other Chinese TV stations, was forced to keep pace with the changing media environment and broadcast similar shows to compete with Hunan TV.

But these two programs, *Dating with Roses* and *The Citadel of Happiness*, were only the beginning of Hunan TV for establishing its brand recognition. The reality TV show *Super Girl Voice Contest* in 2005 (or better called *American Idol Chinese Edition*) captured worldwide attention. Academic scholars and reporters from *The New York Times*, *Variety*, and *China Daily* have generated a great deal of literature that investigates the political and cultural implications of this program. According to Barboza (2005), the *Super Girl Contest* attracts 120,000 young women participants from across the country. What makes this show particularly interesting is that the audience decides who will survive each round of competition. The finale of the *Super Girl Voice Contest* drew more than 400 million viewers, making it one of the most-watched shows in China’s television history (Barboza, 2005). The viewers are even more numerous than the biggest annual TV event of the year — the *Spring Festival Eve Gala*, which is always broadcast by state-run flagship channel CCTV-1. But the significance of this program is far more than its advertising revenue. Academic scholars interpret its cultural and political implications, arguing that the audience’s enthusiastic voting to determine the winning *Super Voice Girl* as a sign that Chinese are “ready and eager for democracy” (Landreth, 2005).

Shanghai TV’s *Dance Competition* is another national hit. The show is a copycat program from ABC’s *Dancing with the Stars*, featuring celebrities from Hong Kong, Taiwan as well as mainland China competing against each other. As Keane (2005) observes, “format appropriation has become a dominant production mode in contemporary Chinese mediasphere” (p. 90). Those successful TV programs, including reality shows, talk shows, animations, and drama series from either Western or Asian countries are adapted to Chinese audience tastes. These include, for example, Shanghai TV’s *Sesame Street*, Guangdong TV’s *Challenging the Desperate Situation*, Hunan TV’s *Stories behind the News*, and lots of dating shows related to Taiwan or Hong Kong’s similar programs. Some popular Western drama series, such as *Sex and the City*, *Prison Break*, and *Desperate Housewives*, all have their Chinese editions.

Although these studies have provided insightful knowledge in describing various patterns and trends of global TV flow, little academic work has been done to investigate and analyze how global forces affect Chinese TV content based on a longitudinal analysis, and how local forces negotiate and respond to global culture, especially Chinese TV stations at the regional/local level. This paper seeks to answer the following research questions:

R1: What is the overall foreign programming pattern on CQTV from 1981 to 2010?

R2: What are the major changes of foreign programming content on CQTV over the past 30 years?

R3: What are the major changes of foreign programming attribution on CQTV over the past 30 years?

### 3. Method

This study of the international programming pattern of CQTV is modeled on similar lines as research by Wang and Chang (1996), and Hong's (1998) longitudinal study of China's television program importation from the late 1970s through the late 1990s. This study also adopts a longitudinal perspective, but differs from previous studies in two ways. First, the analysis of CQTV programming is situated within the historical context and examines the relationship between socio-political events in China and television content. Second, the features of foreign programming pattern and audience consumption are revealed in different stages of China's global integration. The data has been acquired from the *Chongqing TV Guide* and the network's own database. The analysis describes the distribution of program types and origin of programs, as well as the features of audience consumption in specific historical context. It consists of 30 sample weeks from 1981 to 2010 and more than 5,000 programs.

The unit of analysis for this study was the individual program listed. A one-week period of programming in each year was randomly chosen. The sample consisted of 30 weeks of all the programs that CQTV broadcast between 1981 and 2010. Lindlof (1995) defines this directed sampling strategy as "typical case sampling", which "proceeds through the identification of cases that seem to represent the 'essence' of the phenomenon under study" (p. 129). This definition clearly distinguishes non-random qualitative sampling from probability quantitative sampling strategy. Jensen (2002) emphasizes the "contextual orientation" of qualitative research (p. 238). Thus, according to Jensen (2002), qualitative studies often "sample in multi-steps", first "singling out the meaningful events" for detailed study (p. 238).

CQTV has an archive office that has saved all TV programming schedules since its first day of broadcast. This was found to be the best available source for TV programming information. The programming schedule contains very detailed information for TV programs. For example, each program has a brief introduction about the content and origin of the programming in front of the program title.

Two coders, including the author, participated in the actual coding. During the coding process, the author designed a coding sheet, which includes three questions: What is the type of program? Where is the original country of the program? What is the actual airing time of the program? Using Holsti's (1969) formula, the average intercoder reliability is 92%, 100%, and

98% for these three questions, respectively.

#### 4. Findings

The following section analyzes foreign TV programming patterns and features of audience consumption in the 1980s, 1990s and the 2000s. Content analysis of this study is situated in specific historical context.

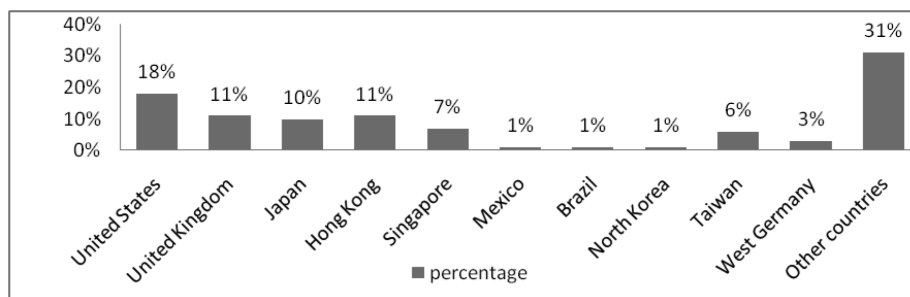
##### 4.1. Foreign TV Program Pattern in the 1980s

In the early 1980s, technology and a strict budget limited the production capability of CQTV. It could provide only fifteen minutes of local programming each day, three days a week. The rest of the evening was filled with TV dramas, local opera, imported films, and programs from other TV stations. After the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, Deng Xiaoping initiated economic reform in 1978 that was a significant step towards restoring the country's dysfunctional political and economic order after the Cultural Revolution. The national college examination resumed for selecting young intellectuals. The role of the intellectuals in national development was reaffirmed. Since the 1980s, slogans such as "Knowledge is power," "Science and technology are the most important forces," and "Development is the most essential criterion" have been promoted across different media and become one of the most influential slogans during the past decades (He, 2001, p. 98). Against this background, education is a crucial element for modernization and development in China.

In the early 1980s, TV program schedules placed much emphasis on formal education programs, especially featuring engineering, science and technology education. Since 1978, China's modernization drive has needed a large number of talented people to make contributions to the country's modernization and industrialization. However, only a small number of people were able to pursue their higher education at regular universities in China in the 1980s due to the country's limited financial resources. Thus, television has been considered the most effective instrument for mass education. It is reported that Television University is extremely successful in China, which has provided millions of trained technical and engineer personnel into the country's work-force pool (Lull, 1991).

If the economic reform has fundamentally transformed China, the Open Door policy, which encouraged foreign trade and investment in China, has directly brought about China's tremendous economic growth in the past a few decades. English language learning programs have become more popular as China has been increasingly integrated to global economy since the early 1980s. For example, the language education program *Follow Me*, produced by British Broadcasting Corporation, was the most watched foreign programming in China in the early 1980s (Hong, 1998). Table 1 shows foreign programming from the top 10 countries and the percentages of total foreign programming between 1981 and 1990 on CQTV.

Table 1. Foreign Programming from Top 10 Countries on CQTV, 1981-1990



Source: Chongqing TV Guide, 1981-1990

The program change in the mid of 1980s was consistent with the general political and socioeconomic developments in China during that time. Since the adoption of Deng's economic reform policy, China has transformed itself from an extremist communist country which had been isolated from the international community for decades to a country actively engaged in international trade and cultural exchanges. Toward the mid of 1980s, Deng's economic reform started to yield fruits: China had experienced dramatic economic development between 1980 and 1986, which led to improved living standards, and a rapid increase in consumers' disposable income. During this time period, ownership of TV sets in China increased phenomenally. As a result, television challenged the popularity of traditional print media and radio, becoming the chief source of information and entertainment for ordinary Chinese.

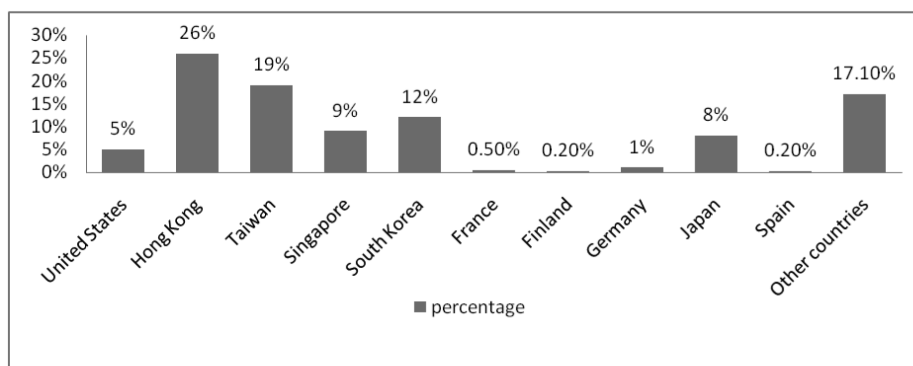
Accompanying the deepening process of economic reform and openness was a strong presence of Western TV programs during this time. The Open Door policy brought not only foreign trade and investment into China, but also the rapid influx of foreign cultural products in the form of film, television, music, magazines, and etc. In the mid 1980s the Western style modernization and liberal democracy were pursued as the ideal type for many Chinese intellectuals, who were excited about the possibilities that had opened up for political liberalization and deepening economic reform. The 1987 college student demonstrations in China were a striking example of how exposure to Western political democracy had triggered Chinese intellectuals' democratic movement. According to Kwong (1988), students held banners and their wall posters read: "Down with bureaucraticism, return to us democracy;" "Long live democracy, down with autocracy" (p. 973).

If the early 1980s witnessed the initial influx of foreign TV programming in China, foreign TV content became ubiquitous on Chinese screens in the mid 1980s. When Lull (1991) conducted his field study on Chinese television between 1986 and 1987, he observed that foreign soap operas from the United States, Japanese, Hong Kong, and telenovelas from Latin America held overwhelming audience appeal at that time. For example, the American TV serials *Hunter*, *Dynasty*, *Falcon Crest*, the situation comedy *Growing Pains*, the animation program *Micky Mouse and Donald Duck*, the Japanese soap opera *Oshin*, *Women Volleyball Player*, the Brazilian soap opera *Escrava Isaura* and numerous Hong Kong Kungfu dramas gained enormous popularity in China in the mid 1980s.

#### 4.2. Foreign TV Program Pattern in the 1990s

Economic reforms and political/social transitions in China have fundamentally changed the role, function and practices of the Chinese media. The 1990s have been officially interpreted as a new stage for China's economic reform. During this time, China converted into a market-based economy, generating new momentum for media reform. Although the Party did not give up its editorial control, the Chinese media became more autonomous. The media's growing autonomy was reflected in increasingly diversified media content, which was characterized by an increasing number of imported TV programs (Hong, 1998; Wang & Chang, 1996; Chan, 1996), the emergence of entertainment television (Bai, 2004), and the launch of investigative journalism-style news programs (Zhao, 2000; Burgh, 2003). Table 2 indicates the top 10 countries that exported TV programming to CQTV and their percentages of total foreign programming during 1991-2000.

Table 2. Foreign Programming from Top 10 Countries on CQTV, 1991-2000



Source: Chongqing TV Guide, 1991-2000

The year 1992 has been generally recognized as a banner year in China as its top leader, Deng Xiaoping, decided to accelerate the pace of the country's economic reform after China suffered an economic recession and political turmoil between 1989 and 1991. This year was also a landmark in that China set out on the road to a market economy by abandoning the central command economic system.

The effect of China's further economic reform was immediate in the media arena. The de-emphasis of ideology opened the door for media to directly respond to consumer needs. Market competition resulted in increasing commercial pressure among television stations as the state gradually withdrew its financial support. Subsequently there was a growing need to restructure China's television as an industry (Wei, 2000). One such indicator was the proliferation of TV channels and increasing entertainment TV content. In 1989, Chongqing TV-2 was launched and operated as a commercial channel featuring financial information and service programming. In 1992, CQTV expanded its total broadcasting time over two channels from 5 hours to 10 hours each day. Self-produced programs of CQTV were not only limited to local news, a new

program type called “special subject program” emerged in CQTV’s prime time schedule. The program was created for improving media reception by providing programs that were more relevant to audiences’ daily life. Topics ranged from introduction of the latest fashion trend around the world to home decoration, travel, shopping, gardening, childcare, health, and fitness. This program genre in fact represented the birth of consumer-oriented programming in Chinese television. It was an effort to get closer to audiences and their demands in response to China’s flourishing consumer culture.

In the late 1990s, CQTV began to take a great leap forward. 1998 is an important year in the history of CQTV. New employees were hired, new programs launched and new technical equipment installed. The TV station’s advertising revenues increased from 34 million Yuan in 1992 to 120 million in 1998. The daily broadcasting hours expanded dramatically, increasing from three hours in 1981 to 148 hours over eight channels in 1998, a 49-fold increase in seventeen years that equalled an additional 145 hours per day in 1998 and resulted in a sharp demand for program supply.

The phenomenal development of CQTV in the late 1990s was in part attributed to the advancement of CQTV from a city-level TV station to a provincial-level station, which resulted in a major change in terms of resource allocation to upgrade its broadcasting facilities to match its provincial-level status. The one-week programming schedule from CQTV Satellite Channel demonstrated two significant improvements in Chinese television in the late 1990s.

*English News*, one of the earliest English news programs among China’s provincial televisions, launched in February 1998. Although the audience rating for this daily 10-minute program was almost zero, it aimed to show off the degree of internationalization and openness of Chongqing.

In studying foreign programming patterns in Chinese TV stations between 1979 and 1990, Wang & Chang (1996) identified the sudden absence of U.S. programs on CCTV in 1990 as a consequence of the *Tiananmen Incident*, which resulted in hostile relations of the two countries. The removal of U.S. programs from Chinese TV screens was a symbolic sign to display the anger of the Chinese government. In 1992, two years after the *Tiananmen Incident*, with China’s accelerated economic reforms and sustained economic growth, the economic interests of both countries evolved as a new rationale for their bilateral relationship (Harding, 1992). American TV programming resumed its normal supply to Chinese TV in 1992.

The late 1990s also experienced the exponential growth of the domestic advertising industry. In the TV market, fierce competition for advertising revenues has driven all levels of TV stations to expand TV channels or increase airing hours for more available advertising time. For example, in 1998, Chongqing had four TV stations with eight channels, including CQTV, CQTV-2, Chongqing Education TV and Chongqing Cable TV. The aggregated daily broadcasting time was 148 hours.

However, the demand for programming to fill the gaps far exceeded the country’s program-producing capability as there were so many televisions and channels at that time. Holding the comparative advantage in media production, Western countries, especially the U.S., dump TV programs in international markets to reap the benefits of economy of scale. Therefore, more and more Chinese television stations turn to the international TV market to fill time slots. The late 1990s was another golden age for foreign programming. Although the State Administration of

Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) limited the amount and time of foreign programming on Chinese TV stations, in an effort to seek commercial interests, some TV stations would rather venture to disregard state restriction. However, this study finds that most of imported Western programs were seldom scheduled for the prime time. In fact, foreign programming held a major share of the Chinese TV schedule, mostly due to a huge gap between supply and demand in TV programming.

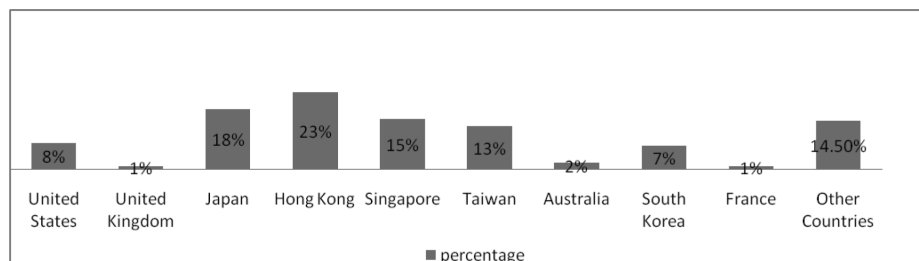
#### 4.3. Foreign TV Program Pattern in the 2000s

In December 2001, after more than a decade of negotiation, China finally was awarded membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO), marking China's further integration into the global capitalist system. The period between 2002 and 2010, was a time when agreements being established with the WTO in 2001 would be implemented in a gradual process within a certain time frame. The effects of WTO accession gradually appeared.

One interesting phenomenon of TV programming during this time frame was the increasing local content against the backdrop of an increasing globalization process. In 2003, CQTV launched a daily situation comedy called *Hot and Spicy Life*. This program, using local dialect and amateur actors, featured low-cost in-house production and reflected the hopes and concerns of ordinary people. Stories were told in sarcastic tones and dramatic performances. The show has achieved great commercial success since its launch, and has dominated the ratings in the Chongqing TV market for many years. Later, three more programs imitating the format of *Hot and Spicy Life* and addressing the daily life issues of local people were also shown on CQTV.

An overall look at CQTV programming in the early 2000s shows that approximately 5% of programming was imported material. Entertainment programming had the majority share, while the smallest program categories were domestic cultural and educational programming. Prime time programming hours were dominated by TV dramas. Since the 2000s, popular culture from South Korea, including soap opera, film, music, and fashion trend, has swept across East Asia, which is being called "Korean Weave". In China, some South Korean soap operas, such as *Jewel in the Palace*, *Winter Sonata*, *First Love*, have not only been placed on peak hour schedule, but also been replayed several times by numerous TV stations. The Korean weave's impact is so intensive that the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) has issued a series of regulations to limit the quantity and airtime given to Korean dramas since 2000. Table 3 shows foreign programming patterns on CQTV between 2001 and 2010.

Table 3. Foreign Programs from Top 10 Countries on CQTV, 2001-2010



Source: Chongqing TV Guide, 2001-2010

In comparison to previous years, in 2010, the proportion of foreign programs declined significantly compared to that of 1987. The reduction of foreign programming was likely caused by increasing domestic production capability and strict quota policy to reduce imports. In response to global media challenges, the Chinese government has adopted sophisticated strategies to guard its national broadcasting sovereignty, including promotion of domestic production since the late 1990s, which has profound impact in boosting domestic production. Since then, the production industry for Chinese TV programming has developed to a considerable scale and has become an important factor for the promotion of TV industry development. The result is that there have been more local/domestic programs than global programs shown on CQTV since the 2000s.

Another finding of CQTV's programming pattern between 2000 and 2010 is an increase in variation of program formats. CQTV's programming has been much more sophisticated than in the 1980s with a variety of new program formats, such as reality show, talk show, and investigative news. This change seems to have reflected the increasing competition that CQTV faced in its local market. In the name of "building bigger and stronger media conglomerates," CQTV completed its consolidation by taking over TV channels from Chongqing Education TV and Chongqing Cable TV in 2004, forming key parts of the newly established Chongqing Broadcasting Group (CBG). CBG now owns 12 TV channels, including two from CQTV, one from CQTV-2, one from Chongqing Education TV and eight from Chongqing Cable TV. It could be said that by this time, the situation of domestic competition has reached its peak. Top administrators of CBG decided to reshuffle these channel resources based on a "specialization" strategy. "Channel specialization" is a widely used strategy among Chinese TV stations in response to the increasingly competitive and fragmented TV market. The original intention was to model TV after U.S. cable TV and develop channels with different themes such as news, animals, women, fashion, shopping, etc., to seek specific audience segments. But the desired results have not been achieved. First, the themes of different channels are not "specialized" enough to reach a precise niche audience. For example, differentiation among channels specialized as life, fashion, city and entertainment is confusing. It is difficult to design a programming schedule for each channel that is able to target a precisely defined audience. Second, from national TV to local TV, themes of specialized channels are similar. According to recent surveys by Zhao (2003) and CSM China Media Research Center, as cited in Bai (2004), 88% of provincial TV stations have TV dramas and movie channels, and 60% of them own lifestyle channels.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper studied three research questions: 1. What is the overall foreign programming pattern on CQTV from 1981 to 2010? 2. What are the major changes of foreign programming content on CQTV over the past 30 years? 3. What are the major changes of foreign programming attribution on CQTV over the past 30 years? The study suggests that China's deepening economic reform process and opening to the world affects TV content and program format change in a smaller Chinese TV station. The growth of China's imported programming over time is in concert with the openness and scale of economic reform. Over the past three decades,

an overall climate of economic reform and openness to the world has been fully reflected in media content.

China's leader of first generation, Mao Zedong, was more interested in political revolution than industrialization. During the heyday of Mao's class struggle, China's foreign programming was limited both in terms of quality and quantity. From 1970 to 1975, only three Communist countries, namely the former Soviet Union, North Korea and Albania, exported a total of nine TV programs to China (Wang & Chang, 1996).

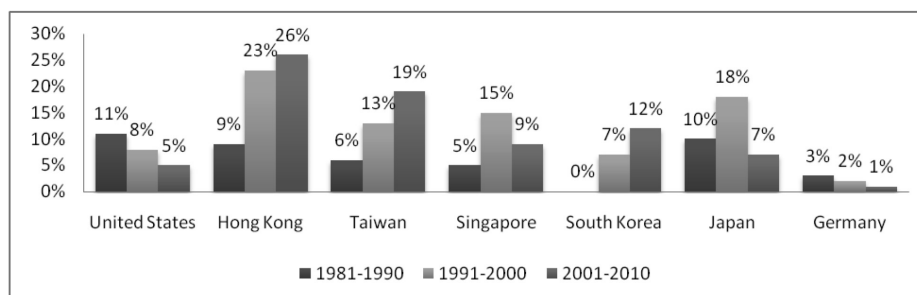
Before the reform era, Beijing TV, the former CCTV, was the only authorized foreign TV importer in China. The decentralization policy in the 1980s made TV program importation a local decision-making process. Regional TV stations or even some large city TV stations were able to import foreign programming individually. The increasing autonomy of local TV stations to import foreign programming challenged state control over television content and regulatory policies. Decentralization policies and a pragmatic approach to the uses of mass media have created a less rigid media environment (Wang & Chang, 1996). In addition, decentralization policy relaxed central control in local programming, thus bringing about increasing international flow of TV programs to provincial and local TV stations in China (Hong, 1998). Western programming had a strong presence in the early stage of China's economic reform; at that time the Chinese audience, once living in one of the most culturally-isolated lands of the world, was first exposed to Western culture and avidly hungry for it. The increasing contact with the West, combining with the rapid growth of domestic TV industry, resulted in a growing traffic of international TV programming flow in the late 1980s.

In the early 1990s, as Moser observed (2007), foreign TV and film became an "integral part" of the Chinese media. The introduction of the market mechanism has produced an increasingly commercialized media environment, which is reflected in the predominance of entertainment content. However, the domestic production capability, especially in producing entertainment programs could not compete with international broadcasters during that time. In addition to price advantages, Western television programs enjoy higher ratings because of their entertainment-oriented content, advanced post-production capabilities and superiority in technology. Thus, most Chinese TV stations were still heavily dependent on imported programming, but with more diversified content and varieties of program types, from TV drama, science and education to sports programming. Programs from *National Geographic*, *Discovery*, *History*, and ESPN were popular among college students and urban citizens. Some viewers are even proud of their interests in watching these programs because their viewing preferences have become a symbol of status and wealth.

In the 2000s, after two decades of reform and Open Door policy, Chinese audience preference for imported TV programs represents striking demographic differences: the urban middle class usually consume American products, whereas housewives are a loyal audience of Hong Kong and Korean soap operas. Local or culturally proximate programming is the preferred choice for most Chinese. If the initial foreign programming flow in China was random with strong Western media influences, in recent years, the flow has reflected a trend toward regional interaction: the imported programming mostly comes from Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore. During this time, when foreign media products are easily and immediately available to the Chinese audience through television, Internet, film, and

pirated CDs and DVDs, the ordinary Chinese are able to consume media products according to their own tastes and become sophisticated and savvy media consumers. Therefore, they tend to prefer programming which is close to their cultures. Table 4 shows the top 7 countries that exported their programming to CQTV in different time periods and their percentages of total imported programming. Regions that share similar cultural and philosophical roots with China, namely Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, dominate the majority share of foreign programming on CQTV during three decades.

Table 4. Foreign TV Programming on CQTV, 1981-1990, 1991-2000, 2001-2010



Source: Chongqing TV Guide (1981-2010)

The Western-style programming production has influenced many countries, and as reflected in Chinese television, the imported programming is sought not only for the purpose of filling in schedules; it also provides the format for Chinese program makers to adaptation. According to Keane (2002), format appropriation is rampant in Chinese television content production. This is directly related to the urgent demand for innovative programming to deal with increasingly sophisticated audience tastes.

Straubhaar (1997) critiques the idea of “globalization of television as worldwide homogenization” (p. 285). He believes countries sharing similar geo-linguistic and cultural backgrounds are formed into “geo-cultural” markets. According to Straubhaar (1997), the world is divided into several geo-cultural markets, such as Western Europe, Latin America, the Arabic world, the Chinese market, etc. Audiences in these regions prefer TV programs which are close to their cultures. This study confirms Straubhaar’s finding that regionalization in terms of media and media flow is more significant than the phenomenon of globalization in current international trade of television programs. However, this study has its limitations. One limitation of this research is that this is a case study of a regional TV station in Southwest China. It does not directly examine other regional TV stations in other parts of China, thus potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings.

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