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An overview of the development of microblogging in China

Ruhan Zhao, Guiquan Xu

Microblogging plays an important role in the daily lives of the Chinese people. Microblogs provide a 'microphone' for ordinary citizens, are used as news sources by journalists, and also function as a fairly open channel for political discussions, etc. This article attempts to provide a brief review of the development of microblogging in China and above all delineate its social implications.

The first microblog in China was Fanfou (www.fanfou.com), a clone of Twitter, which was launched in May 2007. After the Urumqi riots in July 2009 the Chinese government shut down most of the domestic microblogging services including Fanfou; Sina Corporation seized this opportunity to launch, on August 14, 2009, its version of the microblog 'Sina Weibo' and reaped great success, attracting an increasing number of users in the last two and half years (it adopted a new domain name, www.weibo.com, on 7 April 2011).¹ The major commercial portals, Sohu, Netease and Tencent, and the official sites People.com.cn, launched their microblogging services one after another, leading the way for 'microblogging for all. By January 2012 the number of Chinese micro-blog users had reached 250 million, registering a rate of growth of 296.0% in just one year.² Although Chinese microblogs are usually considered 'twitter-like social media', we argue here that they cannot be treated simply as clones of Twitter but that their specific characteristics have to be analyzed, above all bearing in mind China's evolving social reality.

Straddling the Political and the Nonpolitical

As sociologist Guobing Yang says, Twitter and Chinese microblogs embody different social characteristics. Twitter is banned in China but still has tens of thousands of active users who have managed to circumvent this ban; indeed, many Chinese human rights activists are connected to an advocacy network on Twitter. It can be said that microblogs in China are prevalently nonpolitical. Sina intentionally promotes its micro-blog as a platform for sharing personal feelings and emotions; hence the name 'weibo' which literally means 'scarf', implying an atmosphere of warmth and intimacy.³ Moreover, based on its experience as a blogging service, Sina continues to adopt a celebrity endorsement strategy. For example, the film star Yao Chen, 'queen' of Sina's microblog, had 15 million followers at the end of 2011. With this strategy Sina aims to promote 'weibo' as a site mainly for entertainment purposes.

However, political discourse still plays an important role in the microblog space. First of all, the real-time news function of microblogging empowers users to rapidly spread information and express their concerns and opinions. This real-time technology provides users with an opportunity to take part in the political scene. Even although the users may remain silent, the huge amount of forwarding (re-tweeting) demonstrates the attention the people pay to certain topics. Secondly, due to the increasing number of social problems such as corruption, social injustice etc. in contemporary China, many social issues are discussed every day; even some popular stars occasionally express their concern over the social problems, not to mention scholars, media professionals, lawyers, etc. Take, for example, the Wenzhou high-speed train crash⁴ which was the top 'microblogging event' in 2011.⁵ Many users cried out for the truth about the accident, called to account the ministry of railways and even reflected on the country's development policies.⁶ The continuous reporting of media events on microblogs has definitely shown (at least in part) the people's opinion and put pressure on the government.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sina_Weibo, last visit 10th January, 2012.

² CNNIC : "The 29th report on Internet Development in China", January 2012
http://www.cnnic.cn/research/bqxz/tjbg/201107/t20110719_22120.html last visit 10th January, 2012.

³ Guobing Yang (2011). *The Power of the Internet in China*. Columbia University Press, pp. 230-233.

⁴ On 23 July 2011, two high-speed trains travelling on the Yongtaiwen railway line collided on a viaduct in the suburbs of Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, China. Both trains derailed and four carriages fell off the viaduct. 40 people were killed and at least 192 were injured, 12 seriously.

⁵ "Top ten events on microblogs in 2011", *Financial Digest*

<http://finance.sina.com.cn/g/20111207/181610952482.shtml> last visit 10th January, 2012.

⁶ Shen Yang (eds): 'Report on public opinion in the third quarter of 2011' <http://hb.sina.com.cn/news/s/2011-10-27/13558.html> last visit 10th January, 2012

Since the Chinese government could not ignore the opinions expressed on microblogs, it began to use this service to release information and communicate with users. In 2011, official microblogging grew rapidly. According to statistics provided by Sina, by the end of 2011 more than 10 thousand microblog accounts had been opened by official departments and almost 9 thousand microblog accounts had been opened on Weibo by individual staff members, covering 34 provinces and regions.⁷ Although official microblogging alone cannot change political communication in China, the advent of new media like microblogs have provided a new platform for communication between citizens and the government.

On the other hand, the government is tightening its control over microblogging. Since microblogging became popular in 2009, microblog websites have implemented a sort of self-censorship, including filtering out sensitive words for Chinese politics. However, the government is still trying to put in place stricter controls over influential microblogs. On 16th December 2011, the Beijing municipal government announced *the Rules on Microblogging in Beijing*, requiring users to register with their real names. The rules also explicitly ban the tweeting of appeals to join unauthorized gatherings and force companies that run social networks to apply for government approval.⁸ The cities of Shanghai, Tianjin, Guangzhou and Shenzhen followed suit, adopting rules which require microblog users to use their real names. The authorities explain that the aim of the new rules is to protect web users' interests, raise the credibility of the websites and 'foster a healthy Internet culture'. However, a handful of people are still skeptical about this.⁹ Professor Zhan Jiang at Beijing Foreign Studies University argues that this rule has no legal grounding and threatens people's right to the freedom of speech.¹⁰

Social Marketing via Microblogging

Although microblogs have attracted a great deal attention due to their social and political influence, we should not forget that platform providers such as Sina and Tencent are commercial enterprises. However, the profit-making models adopted by these microblogging websites are debatable. In April 2011 the Goldman Sachs Group evaluated Sina Weibo saying: 'Although we believe Sina has maintained Weibo's solid user-growth momentum and encouraged its ecosystem development through apps and improved functionality, thereby also improving Sina's portal properties, we see limited upside to Weibo's valuation because monetization remains in an early, more exploratory stage'¹¹. Some researchers claim that Tencent's microblog, which is more similar to Facebook, could have a better future.¹² However, the new functions recently introduced by Sina Weibo show that this company is also attempting to transform its website to something more like Facebook.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that microblogging has already had a deep impact on the media industries, passing from one-to-many to many-to-many communication. As a new form of social network services (SNS), microblogs have reinforced their socialization characteristics, such as grouping and segmenting the consumers, and their focus topics are more concentrated. Moreover, microblogs provide precise target markets for enterprise advertising, with greater effectiveness of 'hidden advertising' and 'virus marketing'. For example, the marketing of the Chinese film 'High Fidelity 33 days' was a great success on the microblogs in 2011, with a strategy which included short videos, photos, messages on the microblogs, building an interactive relationship with a large audience.

⁷ Sina: 'The development of official microblogs in seven provinces, 10th January, 2012

<http://news.sina.com.cn/m/news/roll/2012-01-10/192923777903.shtml> See also another report on official microblogs by Fudan University <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1026/14464122.html> last visit 10th January, 2012

⁸ Xi Lijia: 'China tightens controls on microblogs', Financial Times, 19 December, 2011

<http://www.ftchinese.com/story/001042291/ce> last visit 10th January, 2012

⁹ Gu, Jujia: 'Major Chinese Cities to Require Real-name Weibo Registration', December 27, 2011 by 2point6billion.com <http://www.2point6billion.com/news/2011/12/27/major-chinese-cities-to-require-real-name-weibo-registration-10612.html> last visit 10th January, 2012

¹⁰ Ai Mi: 'Zhan Jiang Suggests the government withdrawing the rule of microblogging in real name', *IT Business News* 19 December, 2011 <http://www.021beian.cn/Article/TypeArticle.asp?ModeID=1&ID=5513> last visit 10th January, 2012

¹¹ Trader Mark: 'Why Does Goldman Sachs See Limited Upside for Sina?' February 16 2011 *Wall St. Cheat Sheet* <http://wallstcheatsheet.com/stocks/why-does-goldman-sachs-see-limited-upside-for-sina.html/> last visit 10th January, 2012 See also

¹² 'Goldman Sachs see the future of Tencent will be better than Sina', 25 April 2011, *Caijing Magazine*.

<http://www.caijing.com.cn/2011-04-25/110701557.html> last visit 10th January, 2012 See also Report of Sina Weibo <http://www.techweb.com.cn/data/2011-02-25/916941.shtml> last visit 10th January, 2012

'Micro-society' on the Micro-blog Space

Sociologist Manuel Castells argues that the diffusion of the Internet, wireless communication, digital media and a variety of open source social software applications has promoted the development of horizontal networks of interactive communication and the rise of a new form of mass self-communication: self-directed in emission, and self-selected in reception by many that communicate with many.¹³ Although China is not yet an entirely open society, the microblog space has some of the characteristics of the network society.

Nowadays, many public events in China are emerging and thriving in the microblog space due to the diversity of the news sources and the blurred boundary between professional and non-professional journalism. The information mechanisms of microblogging greatly expand the discursive power of ordinary citizens since they are no longer restricted by the news value or the news selection process like traditional media.¹⁴ Therefore, these 'producers' are able to generate and mass self-communicate content with unprecedented autonomy.

Moreover, these 'producers' in the microblog space form a 'micro society' which is 'entrusted' with complicated social power relationships.¹⁵ For instance, the followees/followers mechanism has reconfigured the role of 'opinion leaders'. Using simple operations, activists in the microblog space are able to select and distribute information to 'fans', playing the role of 'opinion leaders'. However, the notion of 'opinion leader' in the microblog space is quite different from the concept proposed by Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld in the 1940s. Due to the multi-modal model of networking, the opinion leaders in the microblog space can take part in different occupational groups and different social domains, expressing multiple voices on different questions. On the other hand, a survey of microblogging activists reveals that the microblog space network is almost the same as the power relationship in real society; therefore, the expectations of citizen's journalism or civic participation in the microblog space would be an 'imagination of equal power' to some extent.¹⁶

To sum up, from 2009 to 2011, microblogging rose rapidly and had a real influence in various social contexts. As regards 2012, some researchers believe its growth will slow down; microblogging will enter a stable stage, but will continue to play an important role in the Chinese public's lives.¹⁷

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¹³ Manuel Castells (2010) 'Communication power: mass communication, mass self-communication, and power relationship in the network society. In James Curran (eds) *Media and Society*. Bloomsbury Academic, p.8-9.

¹⁴ Chen Weixing (2011). The Media Circle in the Ear of Microblogging, *Media Today* (2). <http://www.doc88.com/p-27145367956.html> Last visit 10th January, 2012

¹⁵ Yu Guoming et al (2011) *Microblog: A New Communication Model*. People Daily Press.

¹⁶ Shen Yang (eds) Reports of microblogging activists, 28 August, <http://wenku.baidu.com/view/7589b21455270722192ef795.html> Last visit 10th January, 2012

¹⁷ Shanghai Jiatong University: Annual Report of microblogging. 20 December, 2011 <http://news.sjtu.edu.cn/info/news/content/110347.htm> Last visit 10th January, 2012

The current situation of the China 3G business

Chao Naipeng, Yan Tingting

Since the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) issued the standard for third generation mobile communication (hereinafter referred to as 3G) in May 2000, 3G has developed rapidly around the world. The market penetration of 3G has now reached 80% or more in Korea and Japan, 70% in Australia, 58% in the United States and more than 40% in France and Great Britain¹⁸.

On 1st January 2009, China's Ministry of Industry and Information granted a 3G license to China Mobile, China Telecom and China Unicom. China Mobile was granted the TD-SCDMA license, of which the Chinese government owns the intellectual property rights, while China Telecom and China Unicom were granted the Europe WCDMA license and the United States CDMA2000 license respectively. China thus ushered in "3G" at the end of 2009. With the assignment of 3G numbers to many users, China Telecom fully entered the 3G era and since then the 3G market in China has recorded a relatively fast rate of growth.

The statistics released by China Telecom show that, at the end of 2009, the number of 3G users in China stood at only 9.77 million¹⁹; at the end of August 2010, the number increased to 31.11 million²⁰ while by September 2011 the total number exceeded one hundred million. Moreover, 3G had a market share of more than 10% in August 2011. According to international market rules, a 10% market share is a turning point because when popularity reaches 10% there can be a blowout growth. Meanwhile, in the last three quarters of 2011, the percentage of domestic 3G users exceeded 60%²¹. The main difference compared to 2G is that 3G is able to provide mobile broadband multimedia business. It can better cover wireless roaming in the global scope, and offers many media forms such as image, audio, video and so on, and provide diverse services such as broadband Internet access, video calling, e-commerce, mobile online etc.

The development and popularization of 3G technology not only promotes the user's experience of the traditional mobile communication business but also gradually turns the mobile device into a new carrier of content distribution and creation. A high-speed mobile network radically changes the simple 2G information flow, creates a new style of working, of being entertained and of living. We could say that 3G is not only a new technology and a new communication tool but is also a new media which can change people's lifestyle.

In the initial development stage China's three leading mobile network operators China Mobile, China Unicom and China Telecom focused on resources for network infrastructure and the device supply system in order to expand network coverage. The 3G network now covers all the cities and provinces and some towns: this network construction has achieved its initial goal. According to China's ministry of industry and information, by the end of May 2011 the total number of 3G base stations was 714,000: China Mobile, China Telecom and China Unicom's 3G base stations numbered 226,000, 214,000 and 274,000 respectively.

The deployment of the infrastructure supporting the 3G network creates a real-time online, high-speed access data environment for users, and the 3G business gradually permeates people's daily lives. More and more essential day-to-day functions such as e-commerce and other activities can be carried out using a mobile phone, greatly facilitating the user's life. It also highlights the media-oriented nature of the mobile business, and makes mobile services more functional thanks to important services such as LBS (location-based service), mobile reading, mobile media advertising and mobile video.

¹⁸ Xinhua : Experts say: China's 3G development will show speed trend, October 23, 2011
http://news.xinhuanet.com/tech/2011-10/23/c_122187717.htm

¹⁹ Chinabyte: Regarding the fact that China's 3G users reached nearly ten million from the global 3G development rules, May 18, 2010 <http://sec.chinabyte.com/149/11333149.shtml>

²⁰ Ibidem

⁴ Xinhua : Experts say: China's 3G development will show speed trend, October 23, 2011
http://news.xinhuanet.com/tech/2011-10/23/c_122187717.htm

The mobile positioning business, based on the user's location (LBS, Location Based Service), is a characteristic of 3G which is developing rapidly in China. Indeed, mobile phone positioning has already been implemented in the GSM network but is unable to function effectively because of the lack of data. Thanks to 3G a large amount of data has been introduced and the location service can more efficiently play its role in combination with the data business. For example, LBS can be integrated with short message services and provide users with location inquiry, orientation and other location related information. At present many electronic map services can not only determine the user's position but also provide them with other information about entertainment, living, services, transportation, public facilities related to his current position as well as some location-based recreational games and so on. For example, Public Comment on Nets (China's largest local search and urban consumption web portal and one of the most popular web2.0 sites in China) has launched its application for Android and iPhone clients, with which users can search for nearby hotels and restaurants using their mobile phone.

One of the most popular activities offered by 3G services is mobile reading, an activity which sees the mobile phone as the device to use to access, accept and download information through the mobile communication network, allowing users to browse the Internet and view it on the phone's screen. Classified by content form, mobile reading mainly comprises mobile newspapers, mobile novels, mobile magazines, mobile phone animes, information (such as the weather forecast, catering information, travel information, etc.), blogs, online communities and so forth. In the second quarter of 2011 China Mobile's reading platform subscribers had 280,000 publications to choose from on its mobile-phone platform which attracts 60 million visitors a month.²² After entering the 3G era, two major technology bottlenecks restricting the development of mobile reading — capacity and speed — have been solved. In May 2010, the mobile reading business officially became commercial in China, then, by the second quarter of that year the total market revenue of mobile reading amounted to 617 million RMB (74.5 million Euro) and the number of active users reached 230 million²³. Behind these numbers there are many levels of innovation and development: people's reading habits and reading patterns have changed, mobile reading content reaches users directly through mobile devices thus developing a low cost content distribution channel for existing books. Meanwhile, interactive reading can suit readers' real-time requests, reducing publishing risks and improving the performance of publishing companies. Furthermore, the mobile phone itself has a relatively mature payment method, thus relieving worries for traditional publishing digitization.

In China the mobile newspaper application launched by telecom operators represented the first mobile reading business and has three major forms: mobile newspaper text messages, mobile newspaper MMS (multimedia messaging service) and mobile newspaper WAP (Wireless application protocol), all of which provide users with all sorts of information including news, sports, entertainment and culture, lifestyle, finance and so on. Mobile newspaper MMS and the WAP version are the most popular in the 3G era. Mobile newspaper MMS is based on the mobile platform for multimedia messaging service standards in which the news not only means simple text news, but a multimedia packet containing pictures, texts, sounds, animations, etc. At this point mobile newspapers contain more content than traditional newspapers. The WAP version refers to mobile newspapers based on WAP browsing where subscribers can gain news information on-line by visiting its website with a mobile phone, like Internet browsing.

Mobile newspapers have several advantages over traditional newspapers because they can be spread quickly, can be received anytime and anywhere and they have comprehensive functions such as text, images, sounds, animations and so on. However, there are still some restrictions to the development of mobile newspapers such as content homogeneity, lack of personalized services, limited profit patterns and vulnerable position of content providers in the mobile newspaper industry. Only by breaking through this technical bottleneck, integrating various resources and providing more personalized content, will the mobile newspaper industry really be able to develop on a large scale.

On the other hand, the success of 3G also enriches mobile advertising forms. Video advertising and interactive mobile advertising are possible in the 3G era. Unlike SMS marketing, advertising systems such

²² Chen Shan, Liu Jinjing (2011), The arrival of nationwide mobile reading era, China's new communication,13

²³Zhao Chen, Dong Ling(2010),The development of mobile reading and its Opportunities and challenges to telecommunications operators, Telecommunications Science,11

as WAP site advertising and plugin advertising are all-round forms of performance. It is excellent for integration and is able to combine the dynamic and static images of multimedia, animation, flash, etc. thus making the content rich and vivid.

All the advantages and characteristics referred to above rely on the mobile media platform. It can be argued that when 3G reaches a wider audience mobile phones will become the most commonly used media in China also because it is the most convenient for its functions of incorporating TV, computer and mobile phone features. From an advertising point of view it is possible to imagine that the interactivity of mobile media can be fully developed with the promotion and application of 3G technology, so that mobile advertising will acquire favorable interactivity . With the promotion and application of 3G technology, mobile communications will consolidate real-time interaction through online community, blogs, voice calls, text messages, etc.

Moreover, 3G mobile devices are an interactive platform between advertisers and consumers, enhancing the consumer experience. The effect of mobile advertising can also be evaluated by quantitatively analyzing the interaction statistics. Furthermore, advertisers can also provide targeted and personalized advertisements aimed at specific consumers and based on specific geographic locations. Nowadays the domestic mobile advertising business has started to explore its possibilities. In addition to mobile operators, some leading independent WAP sites and advertising companies have also engaged in the mobile advertising market. In fact according to the agency iResearch, the overall size of China's mobile advertising will reach 10.1 billion RMB (1.2 billion Euro) in 2014.²⁴

As an important part of the 3G business, mobile video can best create a more colorful business environment, hence enhancing its attraction. Mobile video is the most popular application among young users, with its rich content and forms of expression suitable for cell phone screens. It also provides information sharing services with which users can comment on the content and give their opinions. It is therefore the main differentiated service of 3G operators both at home and overseas with video calls, mobile TV and mobile monitoring as its major forms. At present all kinds of market entities have become involved in the competition for the mobile video market share, ranging from the radio and television department, professional video websites, mobile operators, web portals to non-traditional video providers such as Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily. For example, Tudou, Youku, Joy net, 56 net, cool 6 net, Letv net have all launched mobile clients for a variety of intelligent 3G phones. These mobile clients not only keep the mobile phone TV content updated synchronously with video websites, but also have various functions such as video uploading channels, personal blog pages, search functions, and so on.

Another important application is mobile monitoring. In February 2009, China Mobile launched a new 3G business application: mobile security business (i.e. TD video monitoring). This application implements real-time remote monitoring of specific areas through the mobile operator's TD network, informing the police by a text message and taking photographs. China Telecom has a monitoring business too called "global eyes", although most business use fixed monitoring equipment; however, 3G-based mobile video applications are now gradually being integrated.²⁵

In addition, 3G phones support a wide range of functions such as mobile payment, stock buying etc. The 3G service is moving towards a higher level of humanity and professionalism. Although the Chinese 3G business has good prospects, to develop further some problems and restrictions, mainly the lack of mobile devices, expensive costs and lack of content, have to be overcome. At the same time the author is optimistic about the future of the 3G market, convinced that 3G applications will penetrate all social fields and will drive the development of social questions.

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²⁴ Liu Fei(2011),The domestic mobile advertising development analysis ,Youth Journalist,9

²⁵ Xu Cuiping (2009),Explore new business of 3G mobile video: the seeding waiting for nurture, Telecom World,3

Overview of the Media Industry in China in 2011

Film and radio / TV Industry Overview

Film Industry: In 2010 there were 526 Chinese fiction productions, 15% up on 2009 with its 456 productions. Besides film production it is also important to note that 16 animation films, 16 documentary films, 54 educational films, 9 special films and 100 digital films were also produced by CCTV6 (China Central TV Station Film Channel). The Box Office (B.O.) of the Chinese film market in 2010 for the first time exceeded 10 billion for a total of 10.172 billion RMB (1.27 billion Euro), 63.9% more than 2009 (2009 was already 42.96% up on 2008). 260 Chinese films were screened in 2010 and contributed 5.734 billion RMB (695.64 billion Euro) to the B.O. (56.4%) while imported foreign films contributed 4.438 billion RMB (538.41 billion Euro). During the 8 years of the industrial reform in the film industry which began in 2002, the B.O. of city cinemas across China has increased 10 fold. 313 new cinemas were built in 2010 for a total of 1533 new screens, meaning the 4.2 screens and 450 cinema seats were built per day in 2010. At the end of 2010 there were 2000 cinemas across the country with a total of 6256 screens, of which 1100 were 3D digital screens, ranking no.2 in the world after the US. At present there are 240 cinemas being built in the countryside with 42000 sets of digital film screening equipment.

Radio Industry: There were 234 Radio stations in China in 2010 for a radio population coverage rate of 96.31%. The radio-touching rate of citizens in China was 59.7% in 2010, and the radio audience amounted to around 660 million. More and more young people and middle-class are listening to the radio because of the rising ownership of private cars.

TV Industry: There were 247 TV stations in China at the end of 2010 for a TV population coverage rate of 97.62%; 187 million families had cable TV and 87 million cable digital TV. The revenue of the TV industry in 2010 was 223.8 billion RMB (28 billion Euro), 20.78% up on 2009. Advertising contributed 97 billion RMB (12 billion Euro) and this was the first year that industry revenue exceeded 200 billion RMB (24,17 billion Euro). Since 2006 production has amounted to around 156 million Tv programme minutes per year; 436 TV series (14.685 episodes) were produced in 2010, of which animation productions contributed 221.456 minutes. The 3-Network-Convergence project was put into practice in 2010²⁶, including experimental work in 12 cities throughout China.

Source:

Bluebook on China's Media- Report on the Development of China's Media Industry (2011)

Led by the Tsinghua University School of Journalism and Communication, and Center of Media Economy and Management Studies.

Chief Editor: Cui Baoguo

Publisher: Social Sciences Academic Press (China) April 2011

²⁶ For further information, CMO Newsletter N. 11/11 2011 pag. 10
http://www.chinamediaobs.org/pag/cmo_newsletter_nov_2011.pdf

Press

Newspaper web portal IPO under scrutiny

A proposed initial public offering by the People's Daily's online news portal came under the scrutiny of the China Securities Regulatory Commission on Friday 13th January. If the offering is approved, the portal, People.cn Co, is likely to become the first publicly listed state-level news medium. People.cn plans to raise about 527 million RMB (Euro 65 million) on the Shanghai Stock Exchange, according to a preliminary prospectus posted on the regulatory commission's website. The People's Daily, one of the country's biggest newspapers in terms of circulation, is the largest shareholder in People.cn with 66.01% of the portal's equity, according to the prospectus. In the event of a successful IPO, People.cn plans to invest more in its Internet services, improve its infrastructure and strengthen its news reporting team, Beijing News reported on on Friday 13th January. The company is faced with "serious challenges" from sina.com.cn, sohu.com, qq.com and other commercial news websites, the prospectus said.

Source: China Daily, January 14th 2012 http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2012-01/14/content_14444769.htm

Broadcasting

In 2012 Chinese TV news programmes will increase by one third while entertainment programmes will decrease by two thirds

According to SARFT, on 3rd January 2012 there were one third more news programmes and two thirds fewer entertainment programmes on the Chinese television screens: on the 34 provincial TV channels a total of 193 news programmes broadcast 89 hours per day, up 33% compared to 2011; only 38 entertainment programmes per week remain now, a huge decline compared to 126 programmes per week last year. Each Channel broadcasts no less than 2 hours of news programmes per day and no more than 2 hours of entertainment programmes per week.

Source: Beijing Youth Weekly, 4th January 2012 http://ent.ifeng.com/zz/detail_2012_01/04/11740248_0.shtml

3D TV trial broadcasting day

The First 3D TV channel started its experiment on 1st January 2012 in China. This channel is co-organized by 6 TV stations including CCTV, Beijing TV, Shanghai TV, Tianjin TV, Jiangsu TV and Shenzhen TV, all 6 of which produce content for broadcasting on CCTV. This channel currently broadcasts 13.5 hours per day from 10:30 to 24:00, including specially produced 3D animation, sports, TV series and entertainment programmes. A SARFT news spokesman said that the 3G TV channel would be officially launched around Spring Festival time.

Source: Beijing Times – 29th December 2011 http://epaper.jinghua.cn/html/2011-12/29/content_746923.htm

SARFT Drives Documentary Industry Forward

Nearly ten years ago China implemented a centrally controlled plan to totally transform the animation sector. In 2010 the State Administration of Radio, Film and TV (SARFT) embarked on a smaller, but similar, process for the documentary sector. On December 26th 2011 SARFT reported just how closely its factual development strategy will follow the animation model with the issue of its notification, *Invitation of Recommendation of Excellent Domestic-Made Documentaries*. According to the notification, provincial broadcasting regulators are obliged to recommend China-made documentaries to SARFT on a quarterly basis. Each provincial bureau may recommend no more than five films each time. CCTV, China Film Group, CND Film Group and China Education TV are invited to directly recommend documentaries to SARFT. Meanwhile, China's flagship documentary TV channel, CCTV Doc, celebrated its first anniversary on December 31, 2011 with a live event on CNTV featuring channel staff and netizens. According to CCTV, by the end of October 2011, the CCTV Doc Channel (Chinese language) reached a network connection among China's provincial level TV networks of 92.3%. Meanwhile, CCTV Doc (English language) had 9.6m total household users in 51 countries and regions.

Sources: Sohu.com, 6th December 2011 <http://news.sohu.com/20111206/n328100982.shtml>

Film industry

The Box Office of China's film market generated 13.115 billion RMB (1.64 billion Euro) in 2011

The Box Office of China's film market generated 13.115 billion RMB (1.64 billion Euro) in 2011, an increase of 28.93% over 2010. The top 3 films are all imported productions; Transformer 3 was no.1 with a B.O. of 1.11 billion RMB (13.9 million Euro). More than 800 cinemas and 3,000 new screens were opened in 2011 for a total number number of screens in China of more than 9,200 at the end of 2011.

Source: Entgroup Report - 9th January 2012 <http://www.entgroup.cn/views/a/12584.shtm>

SARFT guidelines on the development of film distribution

SARFT issued an introduction on "how to promote the development of film distribution" on 29th November 2011 specifying that the Box Office share for cinemas shouldn't be more than 50% (at present the cinema share is 57% of the B.O. while the producer and distributor share is 43%); the annual rent of the cinema shouldn't be more than 15% of the annual B.O. of the cinema; advertising management should gradually return to the cinema and film producers should no longer run pre-movie advertising. Industry observers suggested the this "introduction" could increase the profit of film producers, including the income of directors and actor/actress, while it could "calm down" the frenzied cinema construction activities in China.

Source The Beijing news, 2nd December 2011 <http://www.bjnews.com.cn/news/2011/12/02/168743.html>

The fast growth in the animation industry is maintained

The animation output in China remained constant, stable and rapid in 2000-2010. China produced 4,689 minutes of animation in 2000 and 21,819 minutes of animation in 2004, 4.6 fold that of 2000. On April 20, 2004, SARFT introduced a new policy to support the animation industry. As a result, the production of domestic animation grew exponentially. Output quickly soared from 20,000 min in 2004 to 40,000 min in 2005, and 80,000 min in 2006. Output reached 101,900min in 2007, maintained a momentum of high growth in 2008 and 2009, set a record of 171,816min in 2009 and broke the record to reach 220,529min in 2010. In 2009 the government implemented the Plan on the Reinvigoration of the Cultural Industry as well as supporting policies and measures. The Plan on Reinvigoration the Cultural Industry clearly specifies that support shall be given to the rapid development of the cultural industry, including the animation industry. Chinese animation products will continue to maintain a trend of fast growth.

Sources EntGroup Report 11th January 2012 <http://www.chinesefilms.cn/1/2012/01/11/122s6794.htm>

Internet

Microblogging exceeds online news in monthly viewing duration

Monthly viewing figures (from January to September 2011) provided by iUserTracker (a database investigating over 200 thousand Chinese netizens' online behavior, owned by the Chinese consulting group iResearch) indicate that in March 2011 monthly microblog viewing exceeded that of the homepage of news websites for the first time; in August, the monthly viewing of microblogs increased by around 30%, while that of online news decreased by 7.1% making it the first month that microblogs surpassed news websites. In September, both microblogs and news website dropped slightly but microblogs still lead the way.

The above analysis regarding the monthly viewing of microblogs and online news websites indicates the strong media features of microblogs and the pressure they put on online news media. There were many public events and emergencies in July 2011, including the Wenzhou high-speed train collision. In the form of We-media, microblogs enabled the public to follow and discuss the whole affair and eliminate information asymmetry when promoting the openness of public affairs. Compared to traditional online news, it is more timely and more widely spread, with more and more people becoming involved. Microblogs' integration with social networking shows great power and they have already become a major platform for Internet users looking for news and information.

Source iResearch 13th December 2011 <http://www.iresearchchina.com/view.aspx?id=9269>

China Internet users reaches 513 million users

On 16th January China Internet Information Center (CNNIC) published its 29th Statistical Report on Internet Development.

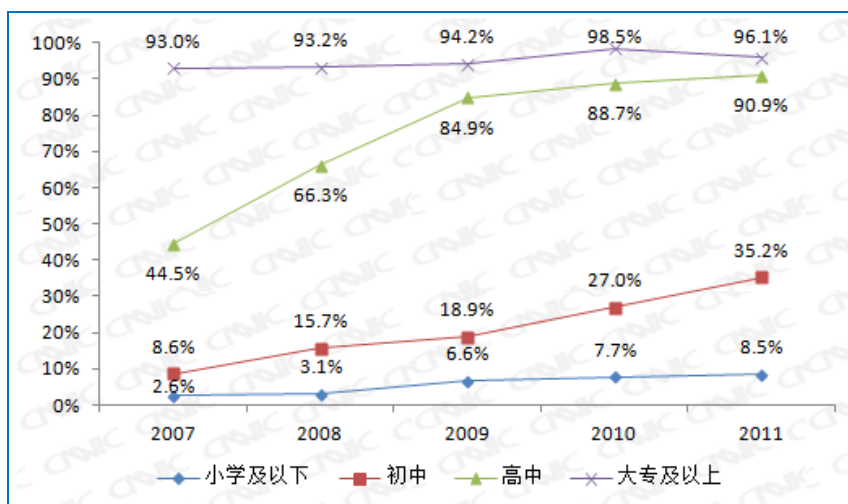
At the end of December 2011 China had more than 513 million Internet users, recording an increase of 55.8 million over the previous year. There are 356 million mobile internet users, 52.85 million acquired in 2011 alone. The penetration index has reached 38.3% (+4.0% compared to 2010).

PC desktops are still the most popular way of surfing the Internet with a preference of 73.4%, followed by mobile devices (69.4%). It is also important to note that 392 million Chinese access the Internet at home and that 98.9% of families who have a PC at home also have an Internet connection. Focusing on the penetration index related to age we can see that a prevalent group is represented by young citizens between 10 and 19 (69.4%), but that the main group is that of people between 20 and 29 years old (72,9%). The presence of people aged between 40-49 years (24.6%) and over 50 (7.0%) is less relevant.



Source CNNIC 29th Statistical Report on Internet Development

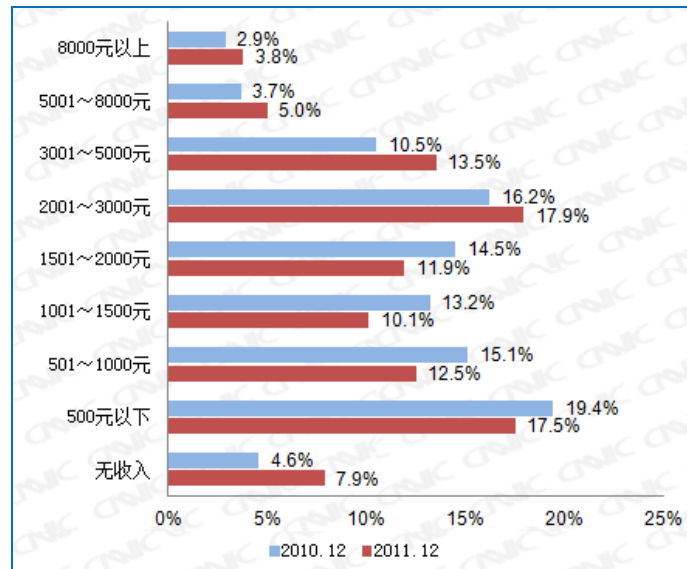
As regards the Internet penetration index, it can be noted that of people with higher education 96.1% have access to the Net, of citizens with a middle-high educational qualifications 90.9% have access to the Internet while the groups with middle educational qualifications (35.2%) and elementary instruction (8.5%) lag behind.



Source CNNIC 29th Statistical Report on Internet Development

The most connected cities are Beijing (70.3%), Shanghai (66.2%) and Guangzhou (60.4%), while the Chinese provinces with the lowest Internet penetration index are Yunnan, Jiangsu and Guizhou, all with an index of 24%.

As concerns spending power, since the majority of Chinese users are students (30.2%), freelancers (16.0%), and office workers (9.9%), the spending power is between 2001 – 3000 RMB a month (243 – 364 Euro), 17.9%, and less than 500 RMB a month RMB (60.8 Euro), 17.5% of the entire Chinese Internet community.



Source CNNIC 29th Statistical Report on Internet Development

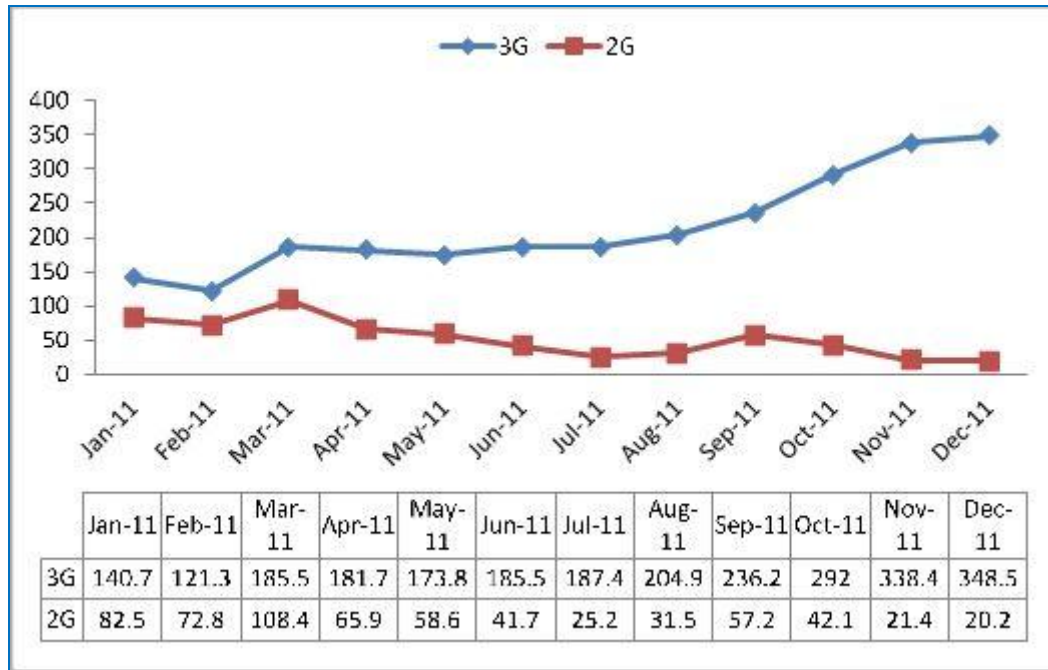
The biggest increase was recorded by the microblogging service which now has 48.7% of Chinese netizens (up 296.0% on the same period in 2010) while entertainment applications recorded a drop but online video continued to rise steadily with a base of 352 million users and a usage rate of 63.4%. E-commerce also continues to grow, online shopping increased by 20.8%, important trends were also recorded by online payment (+ 32.5%), and online banking (+32.4)%.

Application	Million users	Use rate	Annual growth
Instant messaging	415	80.9%	17.7%
Search engines	407	79.4%	8.8%
Music	385	75.2%	6.5%
News	366	71.5%	3.9%
Video	325	63.4%	14.6%
Gaming	324	63.2%	6.6%
Blog	318	62.1%	8.2%
Microblogging	349	48.7%	296.0%
Email	245	47.9%	3.9%
SNS	244	47.6%	20.8%

Sources: China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) 15th January 2012
http://www.cnnic.cn/dtygg/dtgg/201201/t20120116_23667.html

New Media

China Unicom 3G subscribers top 40 million in December 2011



On 19th January 2012 China Unicom Ltd, the country's second-largest mobile operator, said that it had met its 3G goal by adding another 3.48 million subscribers in December, bringing the total to 40.02 million at the end of 2011.

The company aimed to increase its 3G subscribers by 25 million last year and had 14.06 million 3G subscribers by the end of 2010.

The carrier's 2G subscribers rose to 159.64 million by the end of last year, the company said in a statement filed with the Shanghai Stock Exchange.

The operator's Internet users with broadband access increased by 118,000 to reach 55.65 million at the end of 2011 while its fixed-line telephone users fell by 853,000 to 92.85 million, according to the statement. The company's shares edged up 0.2 percent to close at 5.09 RMB (0,62 Euro).

Source: Cnwnews 20th January 2012 http://www.cnwnews.com/html/tech/cn_tx/3qsd/20120121/403501.html

Chinese mobile users sent 10 billion messages on New Year's Eve

Chinese mobile phone users sent more than 10 billion messages on Sunday, making China Mobile, the country's largest mobile operator, the most profitable company on 22nd January 2012, New Year's Eve. Kuang Jie, senior partner of ProKing Management Consulting, made the estimate based on the number of text messages sent by phone users in the same period of the past two years.

Subscribers of China Mobile's Beijing branch sent 680 million messages on Lunar New Year's Eve of 2010, while subscribers of the carrier's Shanghai branch sent more than 900 million messages on Lunar New Year's Eve of 2011, Kuang said.

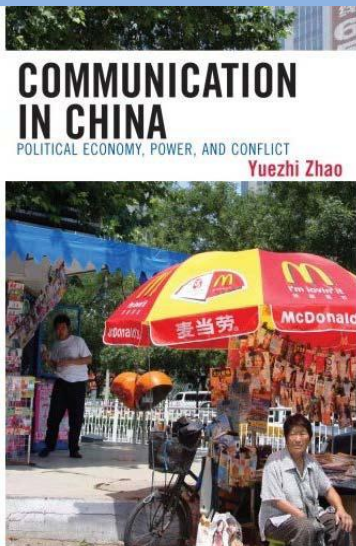
Source: Xinhua 24th January 2012 http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-01/24/c_131375248.htm

A Socialist Critique on the Neoliberalization of Chinese Media and Communication

Already a leading scholar in the political economy of Chinese media and communication, Yuezhi Zhao's publication *Communication in China* further extends her influence beyond the field of communication. Readers of this outstanding volume will definitely be impressed by her tireless critical energy and the integrative framework she brilliantly adopts. She situates the practices of communication in the broader social structures and processes which enables her to establish analysis related to social inequality, the legitimacy of the neoliberal strategies and the multifaceted conflicts and resistance. This framework advances her arguments to address the even more fundamental issue of "China's new order" (p. 60).

It is to the critique of the neoliberal strategies adopted by China's rapid economic transformation which create new forms of social exclusion and inequality that Zhao's contribution offers a hefty challenge. Prof. Zhao persistently seeks to build a historicized socialist perspective in which she does not "simply equate the Chinese state with neoliberal market authoritarian states elsewhere in the world". Instead, she argues that "the socialist legacies and promises of the Chinese state must be taken seriously" (p. 6). This unique approach sets her apart from a group of liberal media scholars who see what is a complex situation in China as a simplistic antagonism between the authoritarian party-state dictatorship and the media. While the prevailing liberal account concerns the ways in which the party-state uses media as the instrument for propaganda and thought work to maintain political stability and continued hold on power, Zhao poignantly points out that "not all measures of repression are similar" as the party-state have found the leftist discourses most threatening and the regime's power of control has been deeply class biased (p. 63). Zhao exemplifies the party-state's uneven terrain of contestation and asymmetrical ideological parameters in a discussion making a contrast between the temporarily suspending of the liberal-leaning publication *Freezing Point* and the forced closure of two left-leaning grassroots websites, China Workers Net and Communist Net. This contrast unfolds a paradoxical truth that although the leftism as a ruling ideology has become marginalized in China, socialist legacies have been kept as lived experiences among workers, peasants, and social disenfranchised classes alike. Zhao reminds us that the autonomous grassroots socialist agencies not only exist but are still active against the backdrop of the neoliberalization of the media outlets and this leads to my next point.

For the author, the relentless class conflicts which are engendered by the rapid restoration of the capitalist class relations are embedded in the neoliberal media practices. By juxtaposing the treatment of Sun Zhigang and Wang Binyu's death in the *Nanfang Metropolitan News*, Zhao "reveals the Nanfang Metropolitan news role as an agent of social control and class containment" (P. 273). This means that the market-oriented urban based liberal media outlets are more interested in maintaining the existing social chasm (especially between urban and rural) than crusading for disenfranchised classes. The 'mass incident' in Wukan village of last December over land seizures confirms Zhao's salient observation on the class containment nature of China's liberal-



	<p>leaning media outlets. Instead of focusing on the colluded local officials and developers on illegal land grabs in Wukan, the <i>Nanfang Daily</i>, the provincial party organ which subsidizes the <i>Nanfang Metropolitan News</i>, describes the protested villagers as “rioters” and frames the incident as being manipulated by the involvement of the foreign media. It is an attempt to gloss over the class conflict between the profit seeking developers and the landless villagers by fostering a nationalist account blaming foreign interventions.</p> <p><i>Communication in China</i> is a touchstone work for future research not only on the media and communication in China but also on the ideological, social and political contentions implicated in China’s developmental path. Students and scholars who are interested in media and communication in China or simply anyone who wishes to gain insights into China’s “neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics” should definitely read this book.</p> <p>Reviewed by Ying-Fen Huang Simon Fraser University</p>
	<p>About the author</p> <p>Yuezhi Zhao is Canada Research Chair in the Political Economy of Global Communication and an Associate Professor of Communication at Simon Fraser University. Her interests include political economy of international communication; relationship between communication, development, and democracy in transitional societies; media and information industries in China. Zhao is the author of "Communications in China: Political Economy, Power and Conflict;" "Media, Market, and Democracy in China: Between the Party Line and the Bottom Line, Sustaining Democracy? Journalism and the Politics of Objectivity" (co-authored with Robert A. Hackett), co-editor of "Global Communications: Toward a Transcultural Political Economy" (with Paula Chakravartty) and "Democratizing Global Media? One World, Many Struggles" (with Robert A. Hackett), as well as of numerous articles and essays.</p>

CIRC10: Social Media, Digital Entertainment, Governance and Social Movements

Hosted by the **University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism**, the 10th China Internet Research Conference – CIRC10 – will be held on **May 22-23, 2012**, in **Los Angeles**, the world's entertainment capital.

CIRC10 will examine trends and themes as we explore the ways in which the Internet and other technologies interact with Chinese cultural and social life.

Contributions from any discipline that can address the critical questions are welcomed. This interdisciplinary conference brings together scholars, analysts, industry leaders, journalists and legal practitioners from around the world to examine the impact of the Internet on Chinese societies, its social, cultural, political and economic aspects, as well as how China is changing the Internet.

Submissions may come from all disciplines. Specific topics of interest include but are not limited to:

- Industry involvement – gaming, youth, social media; consumption patterns, online popular culture; China as original developer in gaming products;
- Governance issues – state regulation and content controls; e-government and m-government; civil society and Internet governance; China and global Internet governance;
- Online social movements – social media and grassroots activism; microblogging and its impact across traditional Internet portals and start-ups over the new generation of Chinese “digital natives”;
- Ten year in retrospect – review and prognoses for the future of the internet in light of developments in digital/social media

Three categories of English-language submissions will be accepted:

- Full papers – these should be 20-25 pages long with a maximum of 10,000 words.
- Extended abstracts – these should be 750-1,000 words.
- Panel submissions – these should have a maximum of 2,000 words.

All proposals will be peer reviewed. Submissions should be sent via e-mail to chinainternet10@gmail.com by **March 10, 2012**. Please include your affiliation and contact information, and if you are a graduate student or professor. If you are proposing a panel, please include that information for all panelists. Authors will be notified of acceptance latest by **March 31, 2012**. It will make every effort to give earlier notification.

Selected papers from the conference may be published in a conference volume or a special symposium issue of an academic journal. Participation in the conference neither guarantees nor compels publication of a paper.

A limited amount of travel funding will be available for promising young scholars. To indicate interest in the travel scholarship, please attach your CV when you send your abstract.

For further information please visit the follow [link](#)

TOChina Summer School : training world-class experts on contemporary China

History happens faster these days, and does not seem inclined to wait for latecomers.

TOChina exists to provide promising students and budding professionals with a forum where to access top-quality training and information on the politics, economics and foreign policy of contemporary China, the actor whose rise is impacting the most on today's international system.

To do this, TOChina organizes a variety of activities all year round, ranging from seminar series (like the forthcoming [TOChina Guest Lectures Series 2012 on Italy-China business relations](#)), to the internationally renowned **TOChina Summer School**, whose 6th edition is scheduled between June 25th and July 6th 2012.

Operating at the intersection of the [Global Studies program](#) of the Faculty of Political Science, [University of Torino](#) and the Emerging Actors research area of T.wai, the [Torino World Affairs Institute](#), TOChina draws upon some of the most advanced resources available in Europe and globally.

In July 2011 some 35 **graduate students, PhD candidates, and emerging young scholars and professionals** from all over the world gathered in Torino for an **intensive course on China's politics, political economy and foreign policy**. Four continents and 13 countries were represented, including Australia, Belgium, Britain, China, Finland, Germany, India, and Italy.

Participants encountered a city still in post-Olympic swing and were briefed by world-class **academics, diplomats, and practitioners**. This Summer a sixth edition of the School will run from **June 25th to July 6th**. The working language will be English. Although professionals, graduate students and PhD candidates usually make up the bulk of the class, outstanding undergraduate students with a strong China focus are encouraged to apply too. Selection will be based on academic merit, professional achievements and individual potential.

Training runs from **Monday to Friday from 9.30 am to 5pm**. It features **lectures, role-plays** and **extensive Q&A sessions** with some of the world's best academics sharing cutting-edge insights on their specific fields of expertise.

The program is suitable for both those wishing to study the domestic aspects of China's politics and for participants intending to explore the rapidly evolving dynamics of Asian and global geopolitics and economics. For those looking for insight into **future career options** TOChina offers a unique opportunity to inquire with senior scholars who are often in charge of PhD programs in their country, and affiliated to a variety of organizations. The cherished informal sessions that TOChina instructors accept to have with students after class are a trademark of TOChina's hands-on approach.

The program is available [online](#), with details being added weekly. **Applications will be accepted as of Monday 6th February**. To apply, please click on the "[How to apply](#)" submenu on the left. **Several scholarships are available, covering anything from tuition fees to accommodation and meals**. Please do check whether you may be eligible for either a *Zerotasse* or a *Freetorino* scholarship.

For further information please visit the follow [link](#)

The 21st Asian Media Information and Communication Annual Conference

The Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC), Singapore, is proud to announce its 21st Annual Conference, in conjunction with its 40th anniversary, to be held in partnership with the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). The conference will be held from July 11-14, 2012, at Hotel Concorde, Shah Alam, Malaysia. The theme of the conference is "Forty Years of Media and Communication in Asia: Retrospect, Introspect and Prospects". The conference invites abstracts, papers, panel proposals and media presentations for consideration. There will be a separate local track, specific to Malaysia, on the conference theme. Pre-conference capacity building workshops will also be held on July 10, 2012, and proposals are also invited for topics and themes for these workshops.

Against the background of the 40th anniversary of AMIC, as well as that of UiTM, the conference proposes to take stock of Asian media and communication studies, keeping in mind the challenges and opportunities arising out of globalization, new media and the resurgence of Asia. The conference seeks to address the problems and prospects that emerge from these new global developments for media practitioners, media owners and operators, and communication scholars, especially in terms of examining and analyzing present theory and practice. During the four-day conference, delegates will be exposed to thought-provoking presentations and papers from media experts, industry practitioners and academics who will provide retrospective and introspective views on Asian media and communication, besides looking at the prospects for the media scene in this part of the world. They will be able to reexamine, reinterpret and take stock of 20th century perspectives and propose contemporary paradigms that are more relevant to the present.

The original call for papers can be downloaded from [this](#) link.

For further information please contact Dr Sundeep R. Muppidi, Secretary General, AMIC at sundeepmuppidi@amic.org.sg

The China Media Observatory is committed to developing a solid academic network of professors, researchers and PhD candidates from Europe, China and other countries, specialized in China Media studies, with interdisciplinary approaches. All academic contributions and suggestions are welcomed.

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