

Applying an Evaluation Model for Media Performance On Taiwanese Cinema

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Abstract

The rise of huge Chinese markets leads many movie entrepreneurs and professionals in Taiwan and Hong Kong to transfer their stages to Mainland China. To satisfy the Chinese Cinema market, Taiwan's movie industries and their local audience have been encountering social phenomena such as local audience's maladjustment to movie text produced by China, local movie directors' resistance to change movie plots which leads them to give up Chinese funding, Taiwanese movie consumers' low support for movies co-produced with China. There is a strong, professional assertion that Taiwanese movie industries have to develop Chinese movie market for their survival. This article proposes an evaluation model for media performance amended from Cuilenburg's and McQuail's to balance a dilemma of Taiwan's governmental policy which has to meet different needs between its local cultural sovereignty and bigger regional market. This paper identifies the concept of consumer identity in different levels to cope with that dilemma. In addition, how this model could be applied to a context filled with ideological conflict is also discussed by exploring three concepts liberty, equality, and order in the age of globalization.

Keywords: collective consumer identity, norms for media performance, film policy, Taiwan film, cultural economics

I. Introduction

Taiwan's movie industries and their local audience have been encountering social phenomena such as local audience's maladjustment to movie text produced by China (林立明, 2008 ; 邱智賢, 2008), local movie directors' resistance to change movie plots which leads them to give up Chinese funding (滕淑芬, 2009), Taiwanese movie consumers' low support for movies co-produced with China (光影隨想, 2012). There is a strong, professional assertion that Taiwanese movie industries have to develop Chinese movie market for their survival (王雅蘭, 2013). In contrast, the concept of consumer rights of cultural sovereignty has been discussed by different disciplines by asserting that the public and nationals in a state have the need for consolidating their collective identity through consuming popular mass media as vehicles for their cultural practices of everyday life (Chen, 2013). Chen argues that in the process of the globalization, the public as consumers through local film industries can pursue their resistance and create their special interpretation of their experience of modernization by building up momentum of local culture. By comparing film industries of the Republic of Korea, Japan with that of Taiwan, Chen found that the Republic of Korea and Japan persist in their local cultural practices and connect them to globalization is the key for their success. She proposes a possible result that a nation's domestic film markets dominated by Hollywood movies now may change in the future if the locals can shape their nation's collective imagination through their own film industry. This article is to follow Chen's idea to develop a possible evaluation model for movie performance of Taiwanese governmental policy for the purpose of boosting its cinema market from cultural economical perspectives. The rise of huge Chinese markets leads to many movie entrepreneurs and professionals in Taiwan and Hong Kong transferring their stages to Mainland China. To satisfy the Chinese Cinema market, Taiwan like many other nations might possibly lose their cultural sovereignty. It is necessary to explore why Taiwanese government should focus on enlarging the local market of its local film industry rather than focus majorly on Chinese film market.

II. Consumers' different levels of identity

Through the context of globalization and glocalization, consumers can seek their different levels of identity such as identities of personal, social groups, communities, and nations. Under the influence of cultural discount or cultural relevance (Straubhaa, 2000), consumers may choose the domestic products they like as their first choice but choose the foreign products if those domestic products could not meet their needs. Through the experience of film markets in Japan and Korea we can find that the two domestic markets have significant changes when their film makers target their local audiences' preference and their local film distributors regain top 3 titles in their local movie markets (Chen, 2013). This implies that consumers might create a momentum to pursue their national identity as the need to pursue their collective memories and production of their collective cultural symbols. In fact, several scholars have promoted the ideas that modern culture or art should connect people with their daily life in terms of the public's cultural rationality (Habermas, 1985) and their historical memories in terms of immigration characteristics (沈清松, 2002) or collectively develop their own national identity through cultural creative industries to connect their culture with economic development (Throsby, 2003). Therefore, developing

local cinema market and aiming to connect it to global market could be a nation's priority policy from cultural economical perspective.

Consumers become an important source to bring the economies, culture and competitiveness into the same concept as consumption rights of cultural sovereignty which emphasizes the idea that a government not only should use laws and protection to promote their own culture content but also create their domestic communication content for their solidarity and economic goals. However, Taiwanese government has been claiming that it tries to develop film industry but fails to apply an approach of consumer rights of cultural sovereignty mentioned above. In contrast, without developing its fundamental infrastructures of its local markets, Taiwanese government focuses on targeting its cinema revenues majorly from Chinese movie markets (Chen, 2013). This article argues that a normative evaluation model for cinema industries should be built to balance the needs of bigger regional or international film markets and that of local film markets.

III. Redefining the concept of media policy

Cuilenburg & McQuail (2003) identified three paradigmatic phases of communications based on the practice of media policy applied by the US and Western Europe: Phase I as communications industry policy (from mid-19th century until the Second World War); Phase II as the paradigm of public service media policy (1945–1980/90); and Phase III (from 1980/90 onwards) where a new policy paradigm proposed because of the significant changes of information society and globalization. In Phase I, the communications policy in that era was mainly pursued for reasons of state interest and financial corporate benefits. Communications and media policy then primarily referred to the emerging technologies of telegraph, telephony and wireless based on their observation. This model of government-regulated private monopoly was the core of US policy accompanied by general anti-trust sentiment and support for competition (p.187, Cuilenburg & McQuail 2003). On the contrary, The European policy was to make major communication services then as a public monopoly and as a public utility. In Phase II, media policy was dominated by sociopolitical concerns in terms of public interest and the ideal of public service broadcasting was at its height, notably in Western Europe (Cuilenburg & McQuail 2003). In Phase III, technological and economic convergence in media and communication sectors merge, regulation of mass media became increasingly connected to telecommunications regulations (p.197-198, Cuilenburg & McQuail 2003). They explain that the 'public interest' is being significantly redefined to encompass the economic and consumerist values and less policy emphasis on equality. The emerging new communications policy paradigm in Phase III is presented in Figure 1. Their idea is that depending on national circumstances, a nation should define the scope and aims of public sector in the media, the choice of policy instruments, and its coherent set of principles and a framework of regulation (p.201-202) to define their choice of media policy to fit their national goal. To develop an evaluation model for Taiwanese film policy in the context of globalization and local needs of collective identity, this article uses the concepts of Cuilenburg & McQuail specifying more about social and economic welfare (See Figure 1) and Mcquail's model in 1990 focusing more on needs of democratic society and solidarity by considering three redefining concepts together: freedom, equity, and order (See Figure 2).

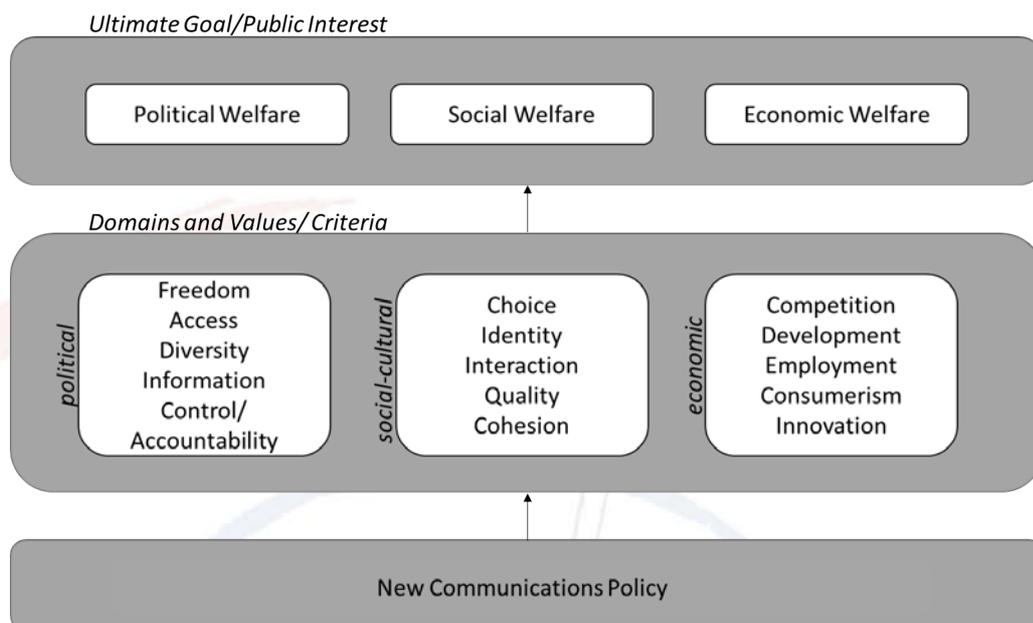


Figure 1 Phase III (1980/90–): an emerging new communications policy Paradigm

Figure 1 remade by the author is from *Media Policy Paradigm Shifts: Towards a New Communications Policy*, by Jan van Cuilenburg and Denis McQuail, 2003.

McQuail's model (1996) explains three definitions of public interest which are majority interest, common interest, and unitary. This article emphasizes them because cultural sovereignty is considered as an object with the nature of collectiveness from the concept of globalization. Through this perspective, this article redefines freedom, equity, and order through the collectiveness that asserts the idea that citizen consumers may work together to achieve a goal for the public good when facing global competition. Through the behavior of consumer, government policy, and civil society, they may keep the local film market prosperous to produce the cultural symbols they wish to represent themselves and their ideas about the world.

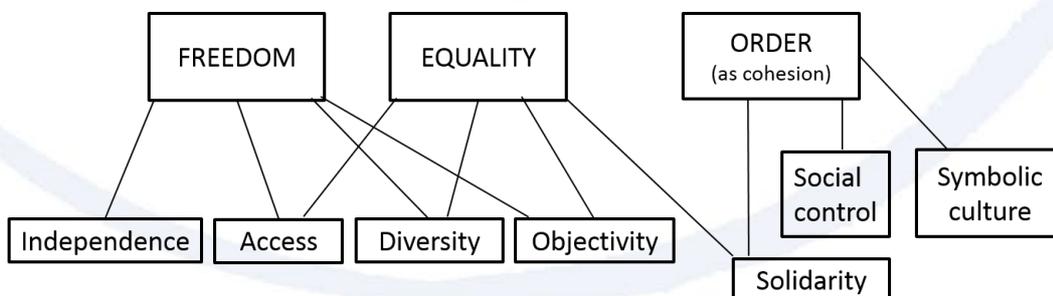


Figure 2 Summary framework of principles of media performance

Figure 2 remade by the author is from *Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest* by Denis McQuail, 1992.

McQuail explains freedom by referring it primarily to the rights of free expression and the free formation of opinion. He considers that for these rights to be realized, there must also be access to channels and opportunities to receive diverse kinds of information. However, in the context of globalization, access to Taiwanese local movies through movie theaters is not controllable by local theater owners since they are more likely to cooperate with MPAA members which offer Hollywood blockbusters as sources of main profits of theater owners. In addition, when the Taiwanese government focuses more on mainland China's movie markets, the production personnel lose their independence to produce local content let alone to discuss the existing political disputes of cross strait in local movies. In terms of diversity, in Taiwan local consumers can see many Hollywood, Japanese, Korean or Chinese movies which explore their histories and national conflicts among their social groups; however, not enough Taiwanese movies for local consumers can touch their historical, moral or factual disputes in Taiwan. When considering the ideas of independence, access, diversity, we can find the film policy lack of collective momentum to pursue its local or national identity.

As for equality, McQuail emphasizes that equality calls for an absence of discrimination or bias in the amount and kind of access available to senders or receivers. In Taiwan's condition, senders as movie production teams need to face the challenges of a smaller local film market of Taiwan. To make this local market larger, government needs to explore its infrastructure such as more researches about demographic analysis about local audiences, their needs and favorite movie genres, and instant box office systems to enlarge the number of times for locals to watch local movies. As McQuail explains, the real chances of equality are likely to depend on the level of social and economic development of a society and the extent of its media system. It is important to explore how a media system fails to develop because of issues of Taiwan as a political sensitive topic. That this island fails to create its cultural symbols and explores ideological conflicts of social groups could not strengthen its social cohesion.

IV. Redefining the concept of order to evaluate media performance

McQuail emphasizes that the differentiation of media provision (content) should approximately correspond to the differences at source or to those at the receiving end. However, in the process of globalization, local markets might not have a chance if the government pays more attention on regional markets which are served as the target. From his views of individuals and the component sub-groups of society, mass communication can also have both positive and negative tendencies; therefore, it may help in forming and maintaining personal identity and group cohesion or leading to an opposite result as centrifugal or differentiating (Carey, 1969; McQuail, 1987). In Taiwan's condition, there is a trend that more popular local movies are presented as local stories, local themes, and local languages. It seems that the problem of Taiwan local cinema is not about movie content that leads to centrifugal society but lacks more delicate production of local movies because of its lower budgets of production and a history of local audiences' lack of interests in watching local movies. In fact, there is a long history that local Taiwanese movie production teams did not pay attention to what local audience wants and needs. From this perspective, McQuail also emphasizes cultural autonomy for language groups, regions and national cultures. This article emphasizes this views to treat order from the following perspective: a

sharing of common meanings and definitions of experience as well as much divergence of identity and actual experience. McQuail not only cited Wright (1964) functionalist theory attributes to mass media as a latent purpose of securing the continuity and integration of a social order by promoting cooperation and a consensus of social and cultural values but also explains that shared culture and solidaristic experience tend to be mutually reinforcing. However, in the trend of globalization, if a nation loses its local film market, its nationals may fail to maintain its cultural autonomy. There is a distinction between the *social* and the *cultural* domains and this article emphasizes a more solidaristic aspect of order – mutuality, cooperation, voluntarism, balance, etc. It is the cultural side of order that is explored in this article which explains positive support. In the global markets of film, several nations have reclaimed their rights of consumer citizens (Chen, 2013).

This article advocates that the media system should reflect the demands of would-be receivers, especially in the local audience market (theaters, DVD rentals, related creative products, MOD) or indirectly through the advertising market (TV, the Internet). This article agrees with his idea that social-cultural variation in terms of life-style, fashion, music and similar consumption-based identifications is also likely to be well served on the basis of the media market if more social groups' life style can be presented in mainstream local movies. In a collective pursuit of cultural sovereignty based on the model discussed here, local film markets should be constructed in a greater efforts rather than given up or paid less attention by the government.

V. Redefining cultural economics as its influences on media performance

From the concept of cultural economics, Throsby explains how cultural economics is different from economic perspective while the latter contains strong individual characteristics.

... such behavior reflects collective as distinct from individualistic goals, and derives from the nature of culture as expressing the beliefs, aspirations and identification of a group as defined above. Thus the cultural impulse can be seen as a desire for group experience of collective production or consumption that cannot be fully factored out to the individuals comprising the group. These desires range over many types of activities, but we might use the arts as illustration. On the production side, many artistic goods and services are produced by group activity where the outcome is a collective effort acknowledged by the participants as having a value or meaning...

THROSBY, D. 2001. *Economics and Culture*, P.13

This article uses both social and cultural perspectives to argue how order are formed by solidarity/attachment from a social perspective and by autonomy/authenticity from a cultural perspective (p.75, McQuail, 1992). From McQuail, both cultural and social perspectives are from below to explain how social and cultural domains can maintain relations and create symbolic world. However, it is not enough to only have these two perspectives “from below” (the people) as nationals to develop order since we still need good quality of movie production and control from high-ranking officials to develop media system to regulate and control agents in the field of movie industries. That is we also need an official or social elites' perspective as “from above” (the elites) to maintain order and build media system (See Figure 3). Based on McQuail model, concepts related to order include public order, consensus, national/subgroup identity, empathy, quality (improved by education and science, aesthetics) and bad

taste (facing the uncultural facts by exploring social reality). Through these concepts mentioned above, Taiwan can develop its national brand by producing movie products through collective national consumers as needs of national identity rise. Globalization contains both homogeneous and heterogeneous characteristics. Global industries produce cultural products that makes nations worried about their cultural invasion. In contrast, several nations such as Japan and South Korea have shown that emphasizing their national cultural characteristics help develop their national brand and national pride which increase the heterogeneous characteristics of globalization.

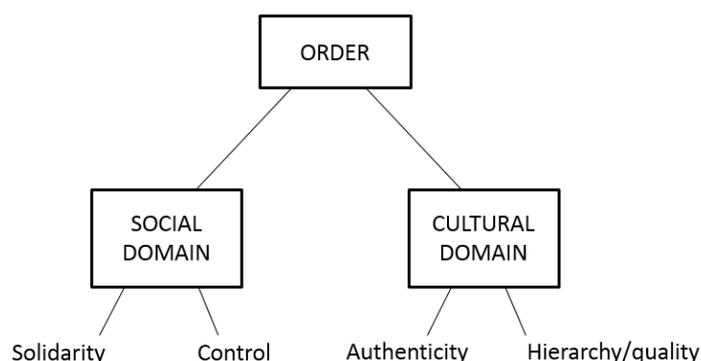


Figure 3 Order and its main component principles

Figure 3 remade by the author is from *Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest* by Denis McQuail, 1992.

This article offers an adjusted model based on the discussion of two models presented by both Cuilenburg and McQuail to explain how a society as Taiwan with ideological conflicts across straits can still pursue its local cultural sovereignty despite its smaller local market and highly economic reliance on Mainland China (See Figure 4). The model lists three goals of building national identity, national brand, and national pride as highest priorities for Taiwan now since this country lacks its cultural symbols for its national identity. To serve the Chinese market, Taiwan needs to study Chinese audiences but this purpose should be in goal 3 and this should not sacrifice goal 1 and goal 2. To meet the three goals, values are listed separately in Figure 4.

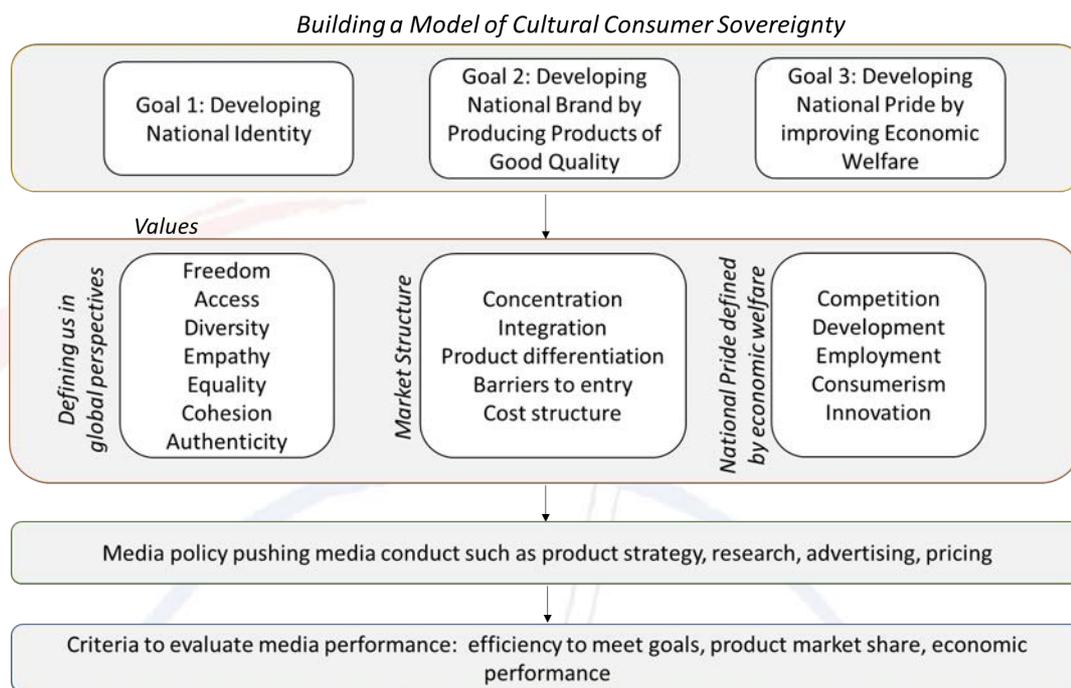


Figure 4. *Building a Model of Cultural Consumer Sovereignty*

Figure 4 produced by the author but some content of cells collected from *Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest* by Denis McQuail, 1992 and from *Media Policy Paradigm Shifts: Towards a New Communications Policy*, by Jan van Cuilenburg and Denis McQuail, 2003.

Three goals in order are defining national identity in global perspectives that explains how we are different from other nations; defining market structure to develop media organizations and systems to produce national brand by producing products of good quality; defining national pride by measuring economic welfare. After national goals and values are clarified, media policy are discussed as policy that should encourage media conduct such as product strategy, research, advertising or pricing. Therefore, criteria to evaluate media performance are clear since efficiency to reach goals, product market shares, and economic performance can help develop a local movie market. With a strong and steady local market with many local film products of good quality which show Taiwan's special social and cultural characteristics are more likely to push national products as national brand to achieve its economic goals.

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