

Multimedia Journalism

A comparative study of six news web sites in China and the UK

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Abstract—China and the United Kingdom are countries which differ greatly, not least in traditional and new media. This paper will consider a number of structural and content issues around the output of mainstream multimedia journalism in these two very different news markets. Through a detailed comparative textual analysis of three major news web sites in each of the two countries, it will examine ways in which contemporary information technology and recently-evolved epistemological, linguistic and aesthetic conventions in communicating news and current affairs narratives affect multimedia reporting on mainstream online news websites. The paper presents the latest results of a detailed content analysis of interactive multimedia reporting in China and the UK on three randomly-chosen days over a period of two months.

The data set was derived from a range of different media organisations exhibiting sufficient commonalities of objective and perspective to allow relevant comparisons to be made between practices in multimedia news journalism in the two countries. In China, *Xinhua Wang* is a state news agency whose main public presence is online, while *Nandu Wang* and *Renming Wang* are newspapers with identifiably left-leaning and right-leaning tendencies respectively in their political outlook. In the UK, the BBC is a public service broadcaster operating nonetheless at some distance from government, but which makes extensive use of its online presence to post journalistic content on domestic and international news web sites, while *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* are both newspapers that are situated on the left and right of UK politics respectively.

Keywords—journalism, news, multimedia, online, China, United Kingdom, content analysis, conventions

I. INTRODUCTION

China and the United Kingdom are countries which contrast markedly in terms of culture, governance, socio-economics and consumer behaviour. In terms of population, the difference is enormous with almost 1.4 billion people in the People's Republic of China and 64 million in the UK, yet the difference in GDP terms is by a ratio of less than 4:1 [1]. Other differences are evident in different ways in both traditional and new media, and China's growing importance as a world power, a developing market and an economic powerhouse [2] means it is increasingly important for the West to understand how the

country works and how its government thinks [3], especially following recent developments in Russian foreign policy and the changing dynamics in international diplomacy. Multimedia news journalism is a particularly appropriate platform to investigate in China, due to the rapid, even disproportionate growth of connectivity in that country [4]. Meanwhile, China is increasingly interested in how it is perceived and reported in the West, although such interest is not new and as long ago as in the early 1920s, Chinese scholars of journalism began to pay much attention to the theory and practice of news reporting in the western world. Some Chinese pioneers studied there and went on to make significant contributions towards the development of modern Chinese journalism [5].

Of interest to a range of stakeholders, from academics through opinion formers and social and economic commentators to practitioners, are the ways in which such differences are reflected in the journalism currently being practised in the two countries. This paper will consider a number of structural and content issues around how journalism in China and the UK has evolved as a result of technological advance and media convergence. Its scope and focus are therefore decidedly international because it will examine the output of mainstream multimedia journalism in these two very different news markets as part of an ongoing investigation into journalism practice in the two countries. Through a detailed comparative textual analysis of three major news web sites in each of them, it will examine the ways in which contemporary information technology and recently-evolved epistemological, linguistic and aesthetic conventions in communicating news and current affairs narratives by different media organisations affect multimedia reporting on mainstream online news websites. The detailed content analysis which follows is of interactive multimedia reporting on three randomly-chosen days over a period of two months in 2014.

The aim of this paper is to identify synergies in multimedia journalism generated in the two contrasting news markets. While there may be few obvious commonalities of geography, values, attitudes and beliefs across the two societies, the detailed comparative textual analysis of the three major news web sites in each country reveals great similarities between them in terms of multimedia journalism practice, as

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well as some striking differences. The data set was derived from a range of media organisations exhibiting sufficient commonalities of objective and perspective to allow relevant comparisons to be made between practices in multimedia news journalism in the two countries. In China, *Xinhua Wang* is a state news agency, while *Nandu Wang* and *Renming Wang* are newspapers with identifiably left-leaning and right-leaning tendencies respectively in their political outlook. In the UK, the BBC is a public service broadcaster operating nonetheless at some distance from government, while *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* are both newspapers that are situated on the left and right of UK politics respectively. All six organisations maintain interactive multimedia news web sites, posting content online and refreshing it regularly.

The main hypothesis for this paper was that despite considerable cultural differences between the two territories, multimedia journalism practice is not greatly dissimilar even in countries as otherwise disparate as China and the UK - and this hypothesis is largely confirmed by the results. Although at the time of data analysis, the project had not yet begun its observational stage, in which the lead researchers plan to investigate actual working practices in the newsrooms of the organisations studied, it has been possible to draw some initial conclusions about the nature of journalism practice in the mainstream media of the two countries. Certainly, the contemporary practices of multimedia journalism which eliminate traditional issues around print deadlines and the relative inflexibility of the printed newspaper format produce broadly similar journalism in the two greatly contrasting territories, at least in terms of presentational approaches, web site structures and style and the longevity of particular items posted online. Initially, though, in introducing our research findings, the paper will situate the content posted on the six sites within the context of the wider news reporting taking place on the three weekdays in 2014 which were chosen randomly at monthly intervals to be the sampling census points for the project. There was no world event on the scale of 9/11 during the sampling period, and in fact in both countries these were all 'ordinary' news days, with relatively little agreement among the news web sites of each country as to what should be the lead story at that time. The detailed results presented in the paper will demonstrate that the volume of material posted on the Chinese sites was much greater than on the UK sites, a significant phenomenon for which we will suggest a likely explanation while recognising that it is at this stage merely an additional hypothesis for further research already planned for a later stage of this project. Furthermore, and most interestingly for non-practitioner stakeholders, the paper will show that the Chinese sites are much less likely *pro rata* to feature international news stories than their counterparts in the UK.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Context

In this now highly mediatised world, the dissemination and presentation of news and current affairs is one of the main underpinning elements of what are commonly termed Western

democracies. In democracies in particular, citizen access to news and current affairs can be a guarantor of rights, freedoms and access [6] [7] [8] to the public sphere identified by Habermas [9] as playing a critical role in underpinning democratic processes, a thesis which remains largely intact a quarter of a century later [10]. Elsewhere, there are other models of state governance, offering greater or lesser levels of participation by citizens, and the importance of a number of Asian states - particularly China - is undeniable in terms of trade, influence and strategic power. In China, Huang proposed an alternative concept of a 'third sphere' which would be clearly distinct from the strongly European paradigm of Habermas. The 'third sphere' refers to a space situated between the traditional Chinese notions of a 'communal sphere' and a 'personal sphere', representing the penetration of state power and the tendency of the individual towards social autonomy. Although in the 'third sphere' these two forces always compete for dominance, in most cases state power wins [11]. In addition, Chinese media strive to occupy different niches or gaps in the system of state governance, where they might have room to operate with some autonomy. Given the limited room for manoeuvre of independent media in China, enabling citizens to participate in wider discussion of public affairs has a crucial role in expanding the tendency towards social autonomy in the third sphere.

In many countries where elements of the media are more closely controlled, such as in China [12], the dissemination and presentation of news is of particular interest because it can provide a useful insight into the thinking of officialdom [13]. In both Europe and Asia, as elsewhere, traditional media organisations no longer enjoy monopolies within the countries and regions they serve, and their often more cumbersome physical platforms - print, television and radio - are facing increasing challenges from what are still commonly termed 'new media' [14] [15] [16] [17]. The internet, together with mobile data technology, provides an easily-accessible platform for the dissemination and presentation of news and current affairs, and in many countries new content providers vie with traditional sources to capture the attention of audiences, and with it a share of 'voice' in an increasingly cacophonous market of information and opinion. The multimedia news web site is a natural focus of such dissemination and presentation of news and current affairs. Frequently, such web sites are owned and operated by traditional media organisations which aim to retain as much share of voice as they can, as a reaction to the increased competition [18] [19]. They may be commercial operators, public sector organisations or - in some countries - powerful organs of the state intended to iterate an official perspective or even manipulate opinion by excluding or marginalising some perspectives [20]. Each one is motivated or even constrained by its own set of objectives and because of their potential for influencing whole populations they are of academic interest to scholars of mediatisation, culture and politics and often of acute concern to a far wider community of politicians, activists, lobbyists, opinion-formers, concerned citizens and social actors of many kinds [21] [22]. Multimedia journalism, using the power of not just text and still image, but

also that of audio and video, appeals to citizens because of its almost instant accessibility, its apparent immediacy and its appeal to a number of senses [23] [24]. It is undoubtedly here to stay, and also an object of study of increasing importance [25].

B. Significance

The significance of multimedia news journalism is well recognised [26], as is the proliferation of such sites [27]. However, little comparative work has been done to investigate and problematise the industrial practices behind them and the output they publish. Surveys show them to be among the least trusted of news sources [28] but also the most consulted [29], suggesting there may be serious implications for citizens, citizenship and notions of trust in the media [30]. Different cultures produce different practices and news values [31], and a range of stakeholders - from practitioners to citizens - may benefit from detailed cross-cultural comparisons, especially as proliferation has great potential for harm [32]. However, there have been relatively few, if any, which systematically compare such news web sites in Europe and Asia - a deficit we plan to address. Comparative academic studies of news journalism in more traditional media in China and the UK do exist. For example, Dong [33] compared Chinese and English news headlines from the perspectives of vocabulary. The results showed that although the linguistic features of headlines in the two *corpora* were similar, some differences still existed in their specific language usage. The large number of Chinese-style vocabulary that appeared in the headlines of the Chinese and English news reports reflected a tendency towards localization of the Chinese and English news reports.

This difference may be due to the different approaches to conceptualising news of Chinese people and westerners, their different attitudes to the timeliness of news, and the different features of the media industries in China and western countries. In another example, Li [34] conducted a comparative study of a number of news programmes in China and Britain, comparing the news channels of China's CCTV, *The 9 O'clock News* on the main UK full-service channel BBC1 and *News at Ten* on its rival ITV, in order to investigate the similarities and differences of television news on these different channels. Willnat, Weaver and Choi [35] examined 'journalistic competencies' across 31 countries, but inevitably sacrificed depth for breadth of coverage, while in their comparative study, Thomson, White & Kitley [36] focused on issues around objectivity and hard news. Then, there have been relatively recent studies of journalism practice in individual countries, such as Xin [37] and Zhang [38], studies relating specifically to practices in multimedia contexts, such as Erdal [39] and Saltzis [40] and more generic, reflective approaches, such as Witschge [41], some of which have contributed to a greater or lesser extent to the methodology adopted in our research design and the paradigms within which we have framed the content analysis of the data set resulting from it.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. The Research Team

This paper is one output from an ongoing collaboration between Shanghai Jiao Tong University in China and Bournemouth University in the UK, which involves lead researchers in both countries working simultaneously on detailed content analyses while 9,000 kilometres apart. As the aim of this paper is to compare relevant examples of multimedia journalism generated in the two countries, with an emphasis on similarities and differences in online content in the two different cultural, economic and socio-political contexts, it will focus on the research objectives, methodology, data, analysis and conclusions drawn which specifically relate to that aim. Other aspects of the extended joint research project will be considered elsewhere.

Because of the inherent flexibility of digital communication, distance - of course - has not been a problem. The lead researchers were in constant contact during the periods of data collection and analysis. The almost universal accessibility of the internet allowed each of the lead researchers to also access the other's studied web sites in order to better identify issues around commonalities and differences between the different news markets and to communicate with each other during data recording and analysis on issues around interpretation and codification, thus reducing the potential for accidental hermeneutic corruption of the results. Because each researcher is a native of one of the two territories studied, each one brought mother-tongue fluency in the language of the web sites of either China or the UK, and so was able to bring a sophisticated understanding of tone, emphasis and nuance to the content studied, providing this comparative research with an unusually international reach which allows it to produce robust cross-cultural conclusions.

B. Established Research Methodologies

Some recent literature on research methodology considers issues around the selection of samples for news content analysis, including Song & Chang [42], which specifically relates to China, while others, such as Benson [43], discuss academic approaches to comparative studies of journalism in different national news markets. The sample design for this stage of the research was, however, very straightforward. In choosing mainstream multimedia news websites for this stage of the research, a deliberate decision was made to analyse the domestic output of those sites which repurpose content elsewhere for overseas markets, (such as the BBC with its *bbc.com* and *Renming Wang* which presents itself to English-speaking international audiences as *People Daily*). The reason for this was to reinforce the element of comparability of objectives and target markets among the different institutions. The multimedia news website content to be analysed was, therefore, in the case of both China and the UK, intended for domestic audiences in each of those countries respectively. In turn, this meant that the content and even the layout of each of the six web sites might reveal something of the organisations

behind them, as well as the practitioners working for them, and the assumptions they make about their own audiences. However, both researchers recognise the second stage of the double hermeneutic articulated by Giddens [44] and others which means individuals within audiences will each interpret in different ways the content they experience, and no assumptions were made that what was posted online would necessarily be read in ways that were intended. At this stage of the research, then, the subsequent content analysis was confined to issues around the structuring of the content, its extent, the nature of its treatment online and whether it could be classified as either national, (that is, from the domestic market,) or international news. Further analyses of the same data will consider the nature of the stories in terms of hard and soft news, the kind of sources used that are evident in the posted content and so on. Subsequent studies using participant observation and interview techniques will investigate professional practice among journalists working at these multimedia news web sites.

C. Practical Considerations

The three sample dates chosen for this initial study were the ninth day of each of the months of May, June and July 2014. This was deliberate, because each of the three dates would fall on a weekday, thus avoiding any unintentional distortion of data collected due to possible changing shift patterns or smaller editorial teams being available at weekends in one or more of the newsrooms producing the online content. Researcher availability was also an issue, due to other professional commitments and the desirability of gathering data for each of the six web sites at the same time and completing the collection while any hyperlinks were still active and subsequent-page content was still accessible in the same form as at the common census point. Consequently, the sample dates were not selected entirely randomly, but the choice of the ninth of each month was arbitrary within the resource constraints of the project, as opposed to having been chosen with regard to anticipated events or the kind of news diary anniversaries which dictate in part the editorial decisions taken in the routine course of journalism practice. A considerable element of randomness does, however, reside in the inability of the researchers to predict at that point what kind of 'news days' would emerge on the 9 May, 9 June and 9 July, with the exception of the football World Cup in July. Another deliberate choice intended to increase the robustness of the data collection and analysis was that the common census point on each day of data sampling would be 10:00 British Summer Time, which is 17:00 in the Asia/Shanghai IANA time zone. Because of the time difference between the two continents, to sample content at the same time and time of day would, of course, have been impossible, so although it would have been pertinent to consider the output of the six newsrooms at the same point in their working day, the compromise adopted did afford sampling in both continents during their primary target audiences' working days, albeit at different ends of the day, the morning in the UK and the afternoon in China. It is worth noting here, though, that online journalism is far more of a continuous activity than its counterpart in newspaper

publishing, but it is intended that the work routines of the practitioners behind the content sampled in this study will be investigated in a further phase of the research.

At each census point, what was termed the 'news front page' of each of the six web sites was saved to two hard drives - one as a backup - and an immediate real-time analysis of each page was begun by the researchers in tandem, recording data on a bespoke data collection sheet, using a number of criteria agreed in advance. Because of the potentially infinite extent of web content accessible by following multiple hyperlink clicks, the data collection and analysis in this research were restricted to the news front pages and supplementary content accessible just one click away from those front pages. A selection of the data recorded appears below, together with a detailed analysis and some conclusions.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

A. The Six Multimedia News Web Sites

The URLs of the six sites were as follows:

- <http://www.xinhuanet.com/>
- <http://www.nandu.com>
- <http://www.people.com.cn>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>
- <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/>
- and <http://www.theguardian.com/uk>

The Chinese sites were written almost entirely in Chinese characters, branded as 新华网 (*Xinhua Wang*), 南都网 (*Nandu Wang*) and 人民网 (*Renming Wang*), but for the purposes of this paper, any content cited from them has been translated into English. Five of the six news front pages bore date and time references that identified them as having been updated very recently, as shown in table I. Without further investigation, it is not possible to say whether these updates had been performed actively or as the result of an autosave, but this is an issue to be investigated in the next phase of the research. The apparent randomness of the different most recent page saves on each date does suggest active site management, as opposed to timed autosaves, and most of the page saves had been performed very soon before the common census point, which accords with widespread perceptions of multimedia news journalism as being very current and less rigid than both newspaper and broadcast journalism with their fixed deadlines for print runs and broadcast schedules.

At each of the three census points, a number of structural or content characteristics remained constant on all six of the news front pages, including the page design of each one, which was unchanged throughout the sampling period. Only three of the six news front pages displayed news tickers of any kind: *Xinhua Wang* had a scrolling ticker of latest news headlines, while *BBC News* and the *Guardian* displayed static tickers refreshing every six seconds and five seconds respectively. The

TABLE I. TIME OF MOST RECENT NEWS FRONT PAGE UPDATES

Web site	Date and time of sample ^a		
	9 May	9 June	9 July
<i>Xinhua Wang</i>	16:48	16:43	16:53
<i>Nandu Wang</i>	16:46	16:48	16:58
<i>Renming Wang</i>	16:41	16:39	16:56
<i>BBC News</i>	09:48	09:35	09:58
<i>The Guardian</i>	09:50	10:00	09:59

a. As showing on five of the six sites at the census point of 10:00 BST/17:00 Shanghai

news ticker was first developed in the television genre of rolling news channels, so it was interesting to note that such a convention had been adopted in both countries, but only patchily, and - in the case of two of the UK sites - in a derivative form perhaps better suited to a web page than the bottom of a television screen. That is, as static headline text that is updated by regularly refreshing, rather than by scrolling from right to left.

B. Content Analysis

Expectations that the two privately-owned UK newspapers would bear prominent display advertising were confirmed, and it had seemed inevitable that the BBC site would not feature any display advertising, due to its particular mode of funding, through the television receiving licence, of which the BBC is the principal recipient. All three Chinese sites bore display advertising for third parties or third-party products. None of the six news front pages deployed pop-ups. At each census point *Xinhua Wang* had given prominent top-of-page links to live streaming from the nine channels of Xinhua TV, and *Renming Wang* featured links to 14 live streaming channels of Renming TV, a number which reduced to 12 in July. *BBC News* linked to single live streams of the BBC 5 Live news and sport radio network and the rolling television news service BBC News Channel. The commonality of approach in China and the UK was interesting here. In China the one site, and in the UK the two sites operated by organisations with their own parallel broadcasting services took the opportunity to prominently offer them as live streams, whereas none of those newspapers without a broadcasting service of their own had done carriage deals with third party organisations.

Each of the six sites provided prominent links from its news front page to a large number of sub-sections, beginning with news and then straying into areas of feature coverage, in much the same way that newspapers commonly position hard news on the front pages and then provide additional feature sections and even detached supplements to extend their offer to their audiences. Table II lists the sections found at the three census points. There was a significant difference in approach here between China and the UK in terms of quantity, a phenomenon that was to be found elsewhere in the study. Two of the three Chinese sites offered more than twice as many sub-sections as the sites already identified as their rough comparators in the sample. Only between *Nandu Wang* and the *Guardian* was the

difference in the number of sub-sections significantly less marked. However, there is a clear similarity in *approach*, in terms of the subject areas into which content is grouped thematically, which bridges whatever other cultural divides might lie between China and the UK.

This issue of quantity, with its inevitable consequences for volume and extent, was also immediately apparent in the number of news stories given space on the news front pages in the sample at each of the three census points. In determining the total number of stories directly accessible from each news front page, the count on each of the Chinese sites was far greater than on the UK sites, with the difference being less pronounced only in the case of *Nandu Wang* and the *Guardian*.

TABLE II. SUB-SECTION HYPERLINKS

Web site	List of sub-sections accessible from news front page
<i>Xinhua Wang</i>	Politics, International, Finance, Interaction, Entertainment, News, High-level, Personnel, Legal, Military Affairs, Taiwan, Reading, Forum, Images, Video, Car, Technology, Education, Food, Painting and Calligraphy, Information Technology, Material, Energy, Furnishings, Going Abroad, Comments Online, Locality, Chinese, Talents, Disciplinary Inspection, Sports, World Cup (only 9 June & 9 July), Hong Kong and Macao, Communication, Thinker, Live, Tourism, Health, Vogue, Shoot, Industrial Park, Public Welfares, Public Sentiment, Culture, City.
<i>Nandu Wang</i>	News, Political situation, International, Society, In-depth, Media, Culture, Digital Newspaper, Comments, Images, Video, Entertainments, Sports, Public Welfares, Science, Economics, Motoring, Consumer, Tourism, Property, Space, Photo Sensibility, Mall, Mipu (Blog), New Media, Comics, Guangdong, Guangzhou, Foshan, Shunde, Shenzhen, Dongguan, Huizhou, Zhuhai
<i>Renming Wang</i>	Rolling News, Politics, Society, Legality, TV, Local, Leaders, Tourism, Figure, Economics, Finance, Stocks, Energy, Central Enterprises, Environment, Public Welfare, Lottery, Education, Science, Literature & History, Collection, Images, Opinion, Theory, Communication, Public Sentiment, Interviewing, International, Taiwan, HK & Macao, Military, Motoring, IT, Media, Appliances, Property, Food, Health, Vogue, Culture, Sports, World Cup (only 9 June), Entertainment, Games, Comics
<i>BBC News</i>	World, UK, England, N Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Business, Politics, Health, Education, Science & Environment, Technology, Entertainment & Arts, Video & Audio, Magazine, Editor's Blog (only 9 May), In Pictures, Also in the News, Have Your Say, Special Reports
<i>The Guardian</i>	News, Sport, Comment, Culture, Business, Money, Life & Style, Travel, Environment, Tech, TV, Video, Dating, Offers, Jobs, UK, World, Development, US, Politics, Media, Education, Society, Science, Women, Law, Data, Football, Observer
<i>The Telegraph</i>	Home, News, World, Sport, World Cup (only 9 June & 9 July), Finance, Comment, Culture, Travel, Life, Women, Fashion, Luxury, Tech, Cars, Politics, Investigations, Obits, Education, Earth, Science, Defence, Health, Scotland, Royal, Celebrities, Weird

TABLE III. TOTAL NUMBER OF STORIES FEATURED

Web site (China)	Number of stories ^a			Web site (UK)	Number of stories ^a			χ^2 ^b
	International	Domestic	Total		International	Domestic	Total	
<i>Xinhua Wang</i>	5, 2, 4	100, 82, 92	105, 84, 96	<i>BBC News</i>	9, 12, 12	27, 26, 37	36, 38, 49	47.12**
<i>Nandu Wang</i>	3, 2, 1	63, 61, 61	66, 63, 62	<i>The Guardian</i>	12, 7, 11	11, 18, 15	23, 25, 26	63.55**
<i>Renming Wang</i>	6, 2, 3	59, 68, 51	65, 70, 54	<i>The Telegraph</i>	8, 7, 7	22, 24, 24	30, 31, 31	19.54**

a. (9 May, 9 June, 9 July)

b. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

One possible reason for this obvious difference in the amount of stories between Chinese and British web sites is that although news aggregation has been troubled by copyright lawsuits since it began, it has nonetheless become a trend in new media journalism in China for sites to ignore copyright issues. Besides publishing their original content, many Chinese websites have aggregated with it content from other traditional or new media outlets, unlike British websites, which confine themselves to original content or third-party content licensed to them. Despite this contrasting approach to quantity, in both China and the UK the clear preference of editors was for domestic stories, as opposed to stories that could be deemed to be international in nature, or, to be more precise, which reported events in third party countries. The number of stories, and their subsequent classification as domestic or international, can be seen in table 3. In determining the proportion of international and domestic stories on each news front page over the period of data collection, compared to their British counterparts Chinese sites are far more likely to report domestic news. The cultural difference between two countries is significant, as shown by the chi-square calculations for each pairing, in the far right column ($\chi^2=47.12$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.01$, $\chi^2=63.55$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.01$, $\chi^2=13.94$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.01$).

C. Framing

Differing approaches to presenting news front page content were easily apparent across both the three Chinese sites and the three UK sites. On 9 May *Xinhua Wang* had a section for its lead stories, consisting of a photo gallery (six images) and main headlines (19). Each image was anchored by a headline below it, and the image was also an active hyperlink to the detailed report. Beside some headlines were small icons indicating that those stories linked to images or video. *Xinhua Wang* also posted headlines within 36 sub-sections on the front page, amounting to a total of 105 stories. *Renming Wang* also used a photo gallery to present its most important stories, with five images in a prominent photo gallery and 60 stories represented by just a headline. *Nandu Wang* used a single large headline and two still images to present the most important news, with 63 further stories displayed as a headline and story text combination. The majority of the stories on all three Chinese sites had been published within the past 24 hours, a finding which was to be repeated in June and July. The BBC used a headline and story text combination for only its top five stories, whereas *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* used the

format for their top 23 and 26 stories respectively. In total, 19 BBC stories used only a headline, and a further 12 used a headline and still image format. The BBC was similarly sparing in its display of special feature items, of which there were 15, whereas *The Guardian* had a total of 65. Surprisingly, the *Telegraph* news front page featured only four photo galleries which could be coded in this category. The proliferation of feature items on *The Guardian* news front page was, however, misleading, as it seemed to suggest a large amount of relatively new feature content was available on the site. Of its 52 feature items, though, *The Guardian* had posted only 13 on the same day, with the remainder having been posted over the previous few days - one of them as many as five days ago. Only one had obviously been posted during the previous hour, although four of the most prominently displayed feature item postings had no date or time reference.

At the second sampling point, 9 June, the main quantitative difference on the Chinese sites was at *Xinhua Wang*, which reduced the total number of stories from 105 on 9 May to 84, as shown in table III. The BBC again highlighted five main stories with a headline and text combination at the top of the page, with a further 19 headline-only and this time 14 instead of 12 headline and still image-only combinations. The BBC was even more sparing with feature items than before, with only 14. The number of *Guardian* links to feature pages was also slightly reduced, from 65 to 61, but *The Telegraph* had increased its feature page links from only four to 10. Again, many of *The Guardian*'s proliferating links to feature pages were relatively old, although most were more up to date than at the previous sampling point - several being posted the previous day, a Sunday, with four of the five being credited to its sister publication, *The Observer*. Only 17 of their 61 feature stories had been posted that day, with the majority originating from the day before and again four bearing no date or time stamp at all.

At the third sampling point, 9 July, on the UK sites the introduction of the World Cup stories to *BBC News* and *The Guardian* was the only substantial departure from the practice we had observed one and two months before. The BBC highlighted three stories - one of them on Brazil's defeat - above a World Cup panel with four different angles on the previous day's match. The number of headline-only stories on *BBC News* had increased dramatically from 19 to 30, but otherwise the number of stories and the ratios between international and national stories varied little from the previous

month. *The Guardian* ran only 45 feature stories this time, providing a sharper focus than on the two previous occasions sampled. All the BBC feature items had been posted within the previous 24 hours, only one of which was newer than eight hours. *The Guardian* features included 13 posted within the previous three hours, although the majority had been posted the previous afternoon or earlier. *The Telegraph* page had only seven feature items. On the same day, both *Renming Wang* and *Xinhua Wang* ran similar lead stories, about President Xi Jinping discussing Sino-American relations, while the lead story on *Nandu Wang* was a domestic arson attack on a bus. All three Chinese sites agreed on their top international stories, featuring Japanese war criminals in World War II. The reason for this consensus among the three sites was the publication by the national archive website of the written confessions of seven of them. This was the morning after the spectacular FIFA World Cup football defeat of host nation Brazil by Germany 7-1, and both *Renming Wang* and *Xinhua Wang* had placed boxes in prominent positions in World Cup sections in the middle of the page, each containing multiple reports on the story. *Nandu Wang* relegated the story to the Entertainment/Sports section at the bottom of the front page. The preference of the Chinese sites for domestic stories was clearly apparent. Prominent images featuring missile exchanges between Israel and Hamas did appear in picture galleries in *Xinhua Wang* and *Renming Wang*, with hyperlinks to the reports, although they were the last and third pictures, respectively.

D. Quantitative Difference

The month-by-month variations in the quantity of stories featured, which are noted above, were relatively minor, and not always statistically significant when considered against the total number of stories. What was more interesting was the difference in approach between the Chinese sites and the UK sites, with journalists in China tending to post more than twice as many stories as their counterparts in the UK. Paradoxically, there were fewer quantitative differences in approach between China and the UK regarding the use of multimedia elements on the news front pages, and the research revealed a common paucity of content across the two cultures that exploited the interactive and audio-visual potential of a web site as opposed to merely reproducing online the standard print journalism format of a headline, still image and explanatory text. The promise that multimedia journalism can offer richer content than print, as well as greater immediacy, seemed not to have been fulfilled to any great extent by either the Chinese or the UK sites. This is demonstrated by table IV, which reveals that of the relatively large numbers of stories featured on each news front page, very few included any interactive or multimedia content in addition to text alone or text and still image combinations.

E. Multimedia Content

Surprisingly, the three UK sites tended at each census point to post relatively more multimedia content than the Chinese sites with their greater overall volume of stories. However, this greater multimedia activity in the UK was still

TABLE IV. VISIBLE LINKS TO MULTIMEDIA CONTENT

Web site	Number of links to multimedia content ^a		
	To any multimedia	To video	To audio
<i>Xinhua Wang</i>	4, 4, 2	4, 4, 2	0, 0, 0
<i>Nandu Wang</i>	0, 0, 0	0, 0, 0	0, 0, 0
<i>Renming Wang</i>	0, 0, 0	0, 0, 0	0, 0, 0
<i>BBC News</i>	11, 9, 9	10, 9, 9	1, 0, 0
<i>The Guardian</i>	0, 1, 1	0, 1, 1	0, 0, 0
<i>The Telegraph</i>	5, 3, 3	5, 3, 3	0, 0, 0

a. (9 May, 9 June, 9 July)

relatively modest. Even the BBC site tended strongly towards covering the bulk of its stories with either a text and still image format or text alone, when, as a broadcaster with several radio and television news outlets including two rolling television news channels, it might have been expected to draw more extensively upon its vast reservoir of current video and audio content being broadcast on parallel services. As shown in table IV, on 9 May the BBC's news front page featured 10 videos and one audio report, each attached to a different story, while *The Telegraph* had five videos but no audio-only content and *The Guardian* had no directly accessible multimedia content at all. There was even less multimedia content available on the news front pages of the three Chinese sites at each of the three census points, including *Renming Wang* with its own multimedia outlet, the People Television Channel. As shown in table IV, *Xinhua Wang*'s news front page featured four videos, each attached to a different story, but no audio reports at all. Neither *Renming Wang* nor *Nandu Wang* had any directly accessible multimedia content at all.

At the second census point on 9 June, the relative lack of multimedia content compared to text and still image content observed on all three UK sites the previous month was once again evident. The BBC's news front page had one fewer visible link to video content than the previous month, nine instead of ten, and this time no visible link to any audio content. *The Guardian* had one link to a video whereas previously it had had none, while *The Telegraph* had three instead of five. None of the newspaper news front pages had any link to audio-only content. As before, each link was attached to a different story, rather than there being multiple multimedia content for any single story. The relative lack of multimedia content compared to text and still image content observed on all three Chinese sites the previous month was once again evident. Exceptionally, *Xinhua Wang* had posted four videos, the same number as the previous month. There was little change in approach by the UK sites at the third census point, 9 July, although some minor differences did emerge on the Chinese sites. The *Xinhua Wang* news front page had two fewer visible links to video content than the

previous month, that is two instead of four, but a separate video gallery did feature nine video reports. *Renming Wang* featured a separate video galley with 14 videos, but *Nandu Wang* had no multi-media content at all.

An essential characteristic of most web sites is the presence of multiple layers of content, so although the analysis had so far been only of the news front pages, a final stage in this phase of the research was to investigate the availability of multimedia content a single click away from each front page. The proliferation of hyperlinks to internal and external content is such that any content research which does not set and observe parameters relating to the depth of the investigation could potentially continue *ad infinitum*. At each census point, therefore, each front page story was followed by a single click of the computer mouse to discover what interactive or other multimedia elements lay one level beyond its presence on the news front page. None of the Chinese sites featured any audio-only reports, and in the UK neither did *The Telegraph*. The

Guardian featured one, of 7'36" duration on 9 July, while the BBC posted three on 9 May (3'32", 2'04" and 4'40" in duration), one on 9 June (1'45") and two on 9 July (2'22" and 0'27"). The provision of interactive public forum or comment facilities was more common than audio reports, but still relatively scarce. *Xinhua Wang* had one on 9 May, three on 9 June and two on 9 July. *Nandu Wang* had four, four and three respectively, while *Renming Wang* had none at all. *BBC News* featured three, three and two respectively, *The Guardian* 21, 21 and 22, and *The Telegraph* 11, 8 and 10.

The number and durations of the overwhelmingly most popular multimedia format, video, are shown in table V, which also shows that the Chinese video content tends to be significantly longer than that on the UK sites. On all the Chinese and UK sites, the vast majority of these story pages used the simplest online format of text and one or more still images. The ratio between text and still image treatment and multimedia treatment of one-click-away stories used on the UK sites on 9

TABLE V. VIDEO CONTENT *ONE CLICK AWAY*

Web site (China)	Number of stories ^a			Web site (UK)	Number of stories ^a		
	9 May	9 June	9 July		9 May	9 June	9 July
<i>Xinhua Wang</i>	4'09" (CCTV13) 2'47" (CCTV13) 2'09" (CCTV13) 1'23" (CCTV13) In video gallery 3'33" (Anhui ST) 4'21" (CCTV13) 1'09" (CCTV13) 4'01" (ShenZhen ST) 1'50" (No-Show) 0'56" (Hunan) 3'11" (Dongfang ST) 1'34" (CCTV13) 2'01" (Xinhua Wang)	2'37" (CCTV13) 0'49" (CCTV13) 5'00" (CCTV13) 1'35" (CCTV13) In video gallery 1'56" (Xinhua Wang) 2'22" (Donfang ST) 1'37" (CCTV13) 2'02" (CCTV13) 0'56" (CCTV13) 3'25" (CCTV13) 1'33" (Dongfang ST) 2'33" (BTv) 1'22" (Guangdong ST)	1'32" (CCTV13) 0'34" (CCTV13) In video gallery 4'52" (Xinhua Wang) 1'56" (XinHua Wang) 3'13 (CCTV13) 1'45 (TengXun Video) 1'12" (Dongfang ST) 2'01" (Souhu) 2'44" (CCTV13) 1'30" (Dongfang ST) 3'20" (CCTV13)	<i>BBC News</i>	(1'47" + 0'36") (0'55" + 1'32") 1'29" 0'50" 0'26" 2'45" 2'58" 2'13" 3'10" 2'26" 2'48" 2'41"	3'04" (2'08" + 1'00") 1'17" 0'51" 2'19" 1'16" 2'40" 1'48" 2'03" 1'06"	(0'49" + 0'57") (1'40" + 3'24" + 0'47") (0'37" + 0'48" + 0'36" + 0'45" + 0'37" + 0'27" + 0'28") (1'19" + 3'24") (3'24" + 2'54") (8'06" + 2'46") 2'53" 3'24" 0'53" 1'35" 1'03" 1'51" 1'19" 2'01" 2'53" 1'45" 0'41" 1'35" 0'55" 1'36" 2'33" 1'31" 0'60"
<i>Nandu Wang</i>	0	0	0	<i>The Guardian</i>	1'18" 3'06"	1'27" 11'45" 3'45" 0'41" (5'01" + 1'04")	1'18" (0'50" + 1'18")
<i>Renming Wang</i>	In RM TV section 4'37" 10'58" 3'34 9'11" 3'09" 6'29" 3'34" 3'09" 11'12" 3'45" 5'23" 2'27" 4'13" 8'19"	In RM TV section 2'06" 4'22" 5'56' 3'54" 2'31" 1'32" 6'09" 5'10" 9'07" 10'01" 6'13" 2'59" 1'08" 4'27"	In RM TV section 9'18" 1'29" 1'54 2'17" 9'01" 7'07" 6'09" 3'1" 4'12" 8'09" 1'39" 2'47" 4'06" 2'54"	<i>The Telegraph</i>	0'21" 0'38" 0'30" 1'31" 1'21"	1'47" 3'11" 0'52" 1'20" 1'08" 2'45" 0'36"	1'22" 2'04" 1'09" 3'32" 3'51" 2'58" 1'10"

a. (Durations in brackets indicate multiple videos for one story)

May was 3:1 (*BBC News*), 11:1 (*The Guardian*) and 6:1 (*The Telegraph*). Of the BBC's 11 feature items, only four featured a video accessible one click away from its news front page. One feature was a quiz using interactive text. *The Guardian* featured video content one click away from the news front page on only nine of its 52 feature items, and the video content of three such features consisted either of promotional music videos or embedded YouTube postings by others. The multimedia content consisted only of one quiz using interactive text, one feature with an interactive map of air pollution levels, the three 'top videos' and two picture galleries, one of which was almost two days old. *The Telegraph* picture galleries were, as expected, found to consist only of still images. The ratio between text and still image treatment and multimedia treatment on the three Chinese sites was 8:1 (*Xinhua Wang*), 4.7:1 (*Renming Wang*) and 66:0 (*Nandu Wang*). In table V the provenance of video content at *Xinhua Wang* is indicated in brackets. On 9 June, of the BBC site's 38 news story pages, 10 had video reports taken from its television news channels and one had an audio recording of an interview from the national youth station Radio 1. One of those stories had two videos, and the majority were of from one to two minutes in duration. The ratio therefore, between text and still image treatment and multimedia treatment of one-click-away stories used on the three sites was 3.8:1 (*BBC News*), 5:1 (*The Guardian*) and 4.2:1 (*The Telegraph*). *Xinhua Wang* had a video gallery of nine stories, *Renming Wang* a video gallery including 14 videos and *Nandu Wang* had no multimedia content at all.

At the third census point, there was little change to the approach of the three Chinese sites, but a greater distinction between the only UK broadcaster and its counterparts in the newspaper industry emerged. The World Cup provided *BBC News* with a wealth of multimedia material to exploit. Both on the front page and one click away, the BBC exploited its television and associated media rights to the game extensively, whereas the other sites were reduced to showing audience reactions to the game and retrospectives devoid of actual match footage. This effect was most apparent one click away from the BBC news front page, although some of the material was used on a number of pages, so the quantity of original football video is actually a little less than the table suggests. This increase in football video content is, however, an aberration, which could be considered a result of sampling error. Nonetheless, it seemed that, aside from the increased football coverage, the output of the three UK and the three Chinese sites had altered little over the two month-long period, and on all other stories the ratios between text and still image treatment and multimedia treatment of one-click-away news stories were similar to those at the first and second sampling points, being 2.1:1, 13:1 and 3.2:1 for *BBC News*, *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* respectively. The *Xinhua Wang* news front page had two fewer visible links to video content than the previous month, two instead of four. *Xinhua Wang* had a video gallery of nine stories and *Renming Wang* a video gallery of 14 videos, while *Nandu Wang* still lacked any multi-media content.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Contemporary information technology and recently-evolved epistemological, linguistic and aesthetic conventions in communicating news and current affairs narratives by different media organisations online mean that a number of working practices in, and essential characteristics of, multimedia news journalism have been adopted in broadly similar ways in both China and the UK. All six sites used similar design and framing elements, presenting site visitors with access to multiple thematic content sections in a manner strongly reminiscent of newspaper formats, highlighting picture galleries and favouring simple text and still image or text-only approaches to communicating stories over developing and exploiting fully 'multimedia' content. There were significant differences, too, though. The quantity of content posted on the Chinese sites was far greater than on the UK sites. The UK sites were much more likely to include interactive elements, such as spaces for comment, than their Chinese counterparts, or to include video or audio on their news front pages or on story pages one click away. However, in both China and the UK there was relatively very little multimedia content in total. Links to streaming of live TV news channel services were only provided by sites belonging to organisations with broadcasting outlets. The quantity of stories and even advertising was far greater in China and their three sites renewed or refreshed news and feature content more regularly. Consequently, the UK sites were all more concise, and their delineation between sections was clearer than on the Chinese news front pages. Finally, domestic stories dominated all six sites, but the UK sites were relatively more international in outlook than those in China, especially in the case of political stories.

The authors plan to publish further research into a number of content issues raised here and working practices in the six multimedia newsrooms in due course.

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