

Managing Digital Platforms in the age of Chinese streaming services in Southeast Asia

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In the era of the fourth industrial revolution, web2.0/web 3.0 services are emerging that are changing how media content are packaged, curated, delivered to, and engage with audiences. As television audiences in China and Southeast Asia engage in multi-screen use and time-shifting behaviour, they are moving away from traditional one-way broadcast services delivered in China and Southeast Asia. How do Chinese online media streaming platforms such as iQiyi (Baidu), Youku, Tudou (Alibaba) and Tencent Video (Tencent), known as BAT in China, use information-based technologies to customise and manage their media services to audiences across different markets? How do they compete with others such as Netflix, Viki (USA), iFlix (Malaysia), Viu (Hong Kong) among others, operating in Southeast Asia to deliver engaging TV content online to audiences?

Using the recent case study of iQiyi and Tencent Video streaming popular Chinese palace dramas in 2018 (such as “Yanxi Palace” and “Ruyi’s Royal Love in the Palace”, respectively), the paper describes how Chinese digital platforms are redefining the use of a global “Internet platform” in Asia. This global platform is then a complex network of virtual and infrastructural organizations – shaped by both a frenzy of online traffic and user-generated content, video sharing and instant messaging, as well as new online and mobile systems that are distributing products and services, while also facilitating the use of Artificial Intelligence in data tracking and curating content online for users.

Secondly, this paper examines how the different virtual and infrastructural layers of these digital media internet platforms that characterise online streaming media services, combine with the decision-making variable of the “8Ps” of “integrated service management” (Lovelock and Wright, 2002); and marketing power of digital platforms (Lin and Wang, 2018) to deliver and engage with their audiences, users and participants, as customers. Thirdly, it will also discuss how “platformization”, “platform capitalism” (Srnicsek, 2017) and “digital capitalism” (Hong, 2017) are “positioning strategies” (Trout, 1997) used by Chinese digital platforms to create new “competitive advantage” where internet is an enabling technology (Porter, 2001) and adopt new rules of engagement with customers as “value creators” (Wladawsky-Berger, 2016) within China, and to expand their global reach beyond China, into Southeast Asia (Steinberg and Li, 2017).

Finally, the paper will also reflect on how these Chinese platforms’ on-going delivery of products and services are now facing service delivery issues and challenges (such as uneven physical distribution infrastructure, excessive government regulation, and poor quality of service). However, the rise of such online media services is contributing to the transformation of the global Internet media, and we will discuss its implications for managing digital media services in future (Xu et al, 2017).