

Yi Chen

Associate Professor at Communication School, Soochow University, China

**"In and Out of the Media System:
A point of view on China's TV Documentary"**

Abstract

Some foreign researchers tend to disregard the documentaries produced by the state-run TV stations because they thought those are just mouthpieces and propagandas of the government. In this research, I find there were a lot of efforts that the documentary producers from state-run media paid to keep reforming the old fashioned TV documentary. Also, during the past 30 years, interactions and mutual benefits between the documentary producers both inside and outside of the state-run TV system have promoted the official TV documentary. But from the late 1990s, with the rapid commercialization and high industrialization of the China's TV system, the booming of TV documentary came to the end because they couldn't gain the audience-rating comparing to the docu-dramas and other soap operas. The full market-oriented TV system prefer some genres of documentary, such as the National Geography and Discovery. I believe that China's TV system will have the channel like Discovery, but I do hope to see a Chinese documentary channel like BBC which can focus on the public service function of the documentary and give more space to the independent documentary directors to construct the public sphere. Furthermore, documentary and mass media, as well as social realities in China are more complex and contradictory than researchers may at first realize. It is superficial to essentialised some topics into monolithic meanings or labels like "rebellious" and "totalitarian", or to be contained in fixed dichotomies like official versus unofficial or resistance versus compliance. Neither the state-run media nor media persons can be pigeonholed that easily.