

THE EFFECT OF MEDIA SYSTEM DIVERSITY ON INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

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Abstract: this article describes the process by which media products are exported from developed countries to developing countries but seldom the other way around. One possible outcome from this unbalanced trend is the difference in media diversity of countries on two ends exporting countries will result in a more homogenized media environment consisting of similar messages from the dominant culture while importing countries will result in a more heterogeneous media environment comprised of messages from various cultural backgrounds. Using cultivation theory and the transportation-imagery model as foundations, this study posits that individuals cultivated in importing countries will be able to become transported into a wider range of narratives, leading to differences in intercultural communication competence due to long-term media exposure.

Key words: *one-way media flow, media diversity, intercultural communication competence, cultivation theory, transportation-imagery model*

Introduction

One-way media flow describes a process where media products are exported from developed countries to developing countries but seldom the other way around. After four decades of research into one-way media flow, it would be useful to examine how this long-term and global process shapes individual audiences from both the exporting and importing countries. From the audiences' experience, one possible impact of one-way media flow is in the diversity of content an audience is likely to experience within their media system and any effects of those differences in diversity. Countries that mostly import media are often developing countries without stable or economically powerful native media systems. Audiences from an importing country may be exposed to media products

from a greater range of origins, including local media and imported media from other exporting countries, which reflect different cultures and worldviews. These audiences may therefore be more comfortable consuming and interpreting media products from different cultures. In contrast, countries that mostly export media are often developed countries with stable and economically strong native media systems, many of which profit greatly from exporting media to foreign markets. Audiences of these exporting countries may be exposed to a much more homogeneous system consisting primarily of their own content and reflecting their own culture.

Materials and methods

To explore these hypotheses and research questions, this study combined a 2x3 online experiment and media use survey. 370 participants were recruited. For Uzbekistan sample, 227 participants were recruited from undergraduate courses at National University. The average age was 19.78 ($SD = 1.79$) and 67.4% were female. When asked about the area they were raised, 29.5% reported urban areas, 51.1% suburban and 19.4% rural. For the Russian sample, 143 participants were recruited from undergraduate students at Central University of Finance and Economics in Russia. The average age was 21.15 ($SD = 3.64$) and 63.41% were female. When asked about the area they were raised, 54.0% reported themselves urban areas, 23.4% suburban and 22.6% rural. The participants were informed they were participating in a study about media use. Uzbek participants received extra credit for their participation of their classes while Russian participants volunteered. The experiment portion of the study was administered before the media use survey to avoid priming the participants about the purpose of the study. Beyond media use, three questions were asked about participant's daily interaction with people from other cultures. Participants were asked to recall within the last week, how many days they met at least one person from another culture, how many days they had at least one personal conversation with someone from another culture and how many days they had at least one work or school related activity with someone from

another culture. These three were combined into one measure of interpersonal interaction.

Discussion

This study explored if the exposure to different media systems shaped by one-way media flow influenced the intercultural communication competence through more or less transportability into a range of narratives media products. As part of this study, a media-use survey was conducted to ensure the countries chosen to represent primarily importing or exporting countries, specifically Russia and the Uzbekistan, respectively, were valid. Results confirm that the Russian participants consumed significantly more foreign content in both entertainment and news media than Uzbek participants, affirming that Russia represents more of an importing country than the Uzbekistan. More so, the main source of foreign content in Russia came from the Uzbekistan, again suggesting that Russian audiences are familiar with Uzbek media and affirming Uzbekistan as more of an exporting country with regard to one-way media flow. Of the foreign media consumed in the Uzbek, Russian media were within the top three sources of origin for both entertainment and news media, suggesting that for the smaller percentage of Uzbek audiences who do consume foreign media, Russian content is likely to be somewhat familiar.

Results

The first hypothesis predicted that Russian audiences will report greater consumption of foreign media products than Uzbek audiences. In the survey, Uzbek participants reported a mean of 15.66% ($SD=15.99$) of foreign entertainment they consume, which is significantly lower than the 49.70% ($SD=23.33$) of foreign entertainment Russian participants reported to consume ($t(206) = -14.79, p < .01$) Therefore, H1 was supported.

Percentage of Foreign Entertainment

	Equality of Variances	Sig.	T	DF	Sig 2(tailed)
Percentage of	33.789	.000	-15.456	312	.000

foreign entertainment	-14.256	198.303	.000
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To answer RQ1 asking what countries produce the majority of foreign content consumed by Russian and Uzbek audiences, participants were asked to list the origin of foreign entertainment and news that they consume. Regarding entertainment, American participants listed 26 categories. Five answers that were mentioned most frequently were NA, meaning I don't consume foreign entertainment (34.8%), the U.K. (14.4%), Russia (9.4%), Japan (6.6%) and European countries (6.6%)

Therefore, in response to RQ1, foreign media in Russia is dominated by Uzbekistan content, which supports the assumption that Chinese media users would be familiar with exported Uzbek media products. While Russian media does not dominate the foreign content in the Uzbek media environment, it nevertheless represents one of the top three sources of foreign content in both entertainment and news media, suggesting that for those Uzbeks who do consume foreign content, Russia would represent a common source. RQ2 asked how Uzbek and Russian participants compare on amount of media they consume. Uzbek participants reported consuming 27.76 hours ($SD=21.50$) of entertainment per week, which was significantly greater than the 21.35 hours per week ($SD=14.72$) reported by Russian participants ($t(337)=3.28, p=.001$)

Time on Entertainment

	Equality of Variances	Sig.	T	DF	Sig 2(tailed)
Time on entertainment 8.254	33.789	.003	2566	354	.003
			3.654	321.503	.001

Therefore, in response to RQ2, American audiences consume more entertainment content than Chinese audiences while Chinese audiences consume more news than American audiences. Yet, because the source of foreign content for each countries were similar for both entertainment and news media, this

difference may be of little consequence within a similar cultivating media environment.

Conclusion

One-way media flow has been studied from variety of perspectives and this research extends the potential effects of this uneven flow of media down to the individual level of cultivation and transportation into different media products. While the results did not confirm any of these impacts, they do show how the media system of importing and exporting countries differ in terms of diversity and opened a door to learn more about how audiences are really influenced by such globalization. To investigate why, future research should explore the stereotypes of different countries and perceived cultural distance to understand the context of each interaction. Qualitative interviews may help to better understand audiences' thoughts and behaviors. Also, linguistic factors could be investigated as language similarity might also influence willingness and confidence in intercultural communication. A final limitation of both the media use survey and experiment is that the research is based on self-reported measures and might be biased compared to the validity of the real situation in question. Especially when examining variables like intercultural communication and media use, participants may hide their real feeling because of the social pressure or moral and political pressures. Based on this research, more work can be done to investigate the specific process of consuming foreign media and following consequences on audiences.

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