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The University of Hong Kong

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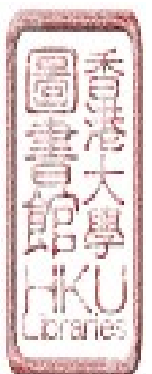
Final Report

Title of thesis

**“RTHK TV Programming and Scheduling under nowadays TV Markets”**

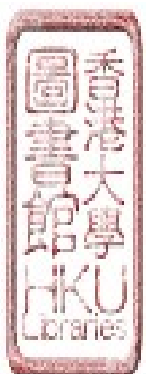
By Chu Chi Fung, Cliff

August 3, 2015



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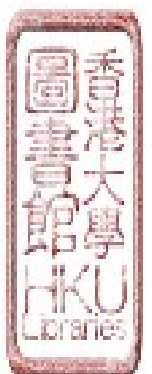


## Abstract

Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) is iconic to Hong Kong Broadcasting history. The status of RTHK is special and unique. It has the longest broadcasting history in Hong Kong, and is now the only Public Service Broadcaster in Hong Kong. Its services can be divided into three parts, radio and television service broadcasting, and the ever growing importance of the new media.

This essay would focus on the development of the Television Service Broadcasting of RTHK, including its programming and scheduling under nowadays TV market situation. The trial transmission of RTHK TV starts in January 2014. It actually faces quite a number of challenges in its development. Firstly, it faces intense competition between two models of television broadcasting – Public Service Broadcasting and Commercial Service Broadcasting. As a public service broadcaster, it has the mission to develop its own broadcasting model as stated in the Charter of Radio Television Hong Kong. It would eventually face heavy competition with commercial service broadcasting model, which is the dominant model of broadcasting in Hong Kong. Examples would be Television Broadcast Limited (TVB) and Asian Television Limited (ATV, until April, 2016).

On the other hand, while facing immense competition from the Commercial Broadcasting sector, RTHK TV is struggling with limited funding allocated by the Hong

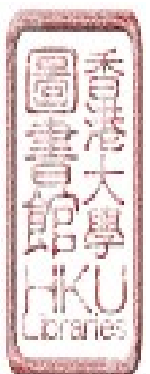


Kong Government. RTHK is a department of Hong Kong Government. It is editorially independent from the Government, but financially not. Limited funding makes it harder in not only production within the corporation, but also in competition with the outside television broadcasting services. This research would thus focus on how RTHK TV, as a Public Service Broadcaster, reacts and positions themselves in nowadays TV markets through their daily programming and also scheduling. The first part of this report would be an introduction of RTHK and the concept of Public Service Broadcasting. The second part is about the challenges RTHK is facing in times of the current TV market situation and culture, and the latter part would be about how RTHK reacts by programming as well as scheduling in times of this.

### **Methodology**

In this research, qualitative method is used. In-depth interviews were made for several times meeting with Head of New Media of RTHK, Henry S.W. Doo, Head of General Programme, Chan Man-yee Rita, and the Controller (Television) of RTHK, Chan Man Kuen Kirindi.

Other information is found from articles, journals and archives on the Internet.



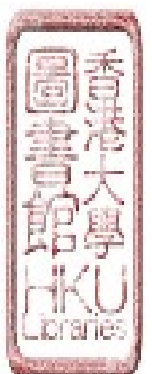
## **Introduction of RTHK: The Hong Kong style of Public Service Broadcasting**

RTHK (Radio Television Hong Kong) was founded in the year 1928. It was not named Radio Hong Kong (香港廣播電台) until 1948, when Hong Kong recovered as the British colony after the Japanese occupation in times of the Second World War (1939-1945). RTHK was the first and foremost broadcaster in Hong Kong. Set up by the British Colonial Government in 1928, RTHK is operated as a department of the Hong Kong SAR Government. Funds are allocated by the Government annually, while RTHK on the other hand enjoyed editorial independence stated in the Charter of Radio Television Hong Kong which would be talked about later in this report.

RTHK is by now the only Public Service Broadcaster in Hong Kong. Before talking about the broadcasting services provision by RTHK, we should first introduce Public Service Broadcasting (PSB). The following section would talk about its definition and characteristics first.

### **Public Service Broadcasting (PSB)**

There are roughly three types of broadcasting models in nowadays world, namely private/Commercial Service Broadcasting, State-owned broadcasting, as well as Public Service Broadcasting. State-owned Broadcaster is undoubtedly operated and



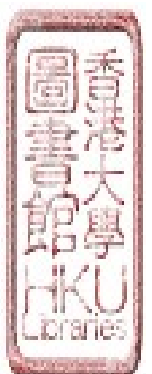
run by the state or the Government. The State controls the content and planning of the broadcasting services. For Commercial Broadcasting, the main concern for the private investors would be for profits. Therefore, they would try to advertise or produce for money.

### Definitions

#### UNESCO & World Radio and Television Council

According to UNESCO & World Radio and Television Council, Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) would be defined as a meeting place where all citizens are welcomed and are considered equals. It would be an information as well as education tool, which would be accessible to and meant for all regardless of the social and economic status of the citizens (UNESCO & World Radio and Television Council, 2001).

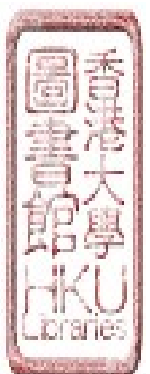
On the other hand, apart from the above definition, according to UNESCO & World Radio and Television Council (2001), there are four principles that distinguish Public Service Broadcasting and Commercial Service Broadcasting, namely Universality, Diversity, Independence and Distinctiveness (2001:11-12).



For Universality, there is an egalitarian and democratic goal behind the concept of Public Service Broadcasting, putting all citizens on the same footing, regardless of the socio-economic status of the people in the society.

Diversity would be the complement of Universality. The service offered by the Public Service Broadcasting should be diversified in three ways, in terms of the genres of programmes offered, the audiences targeted, as well as the subjects discussed (UNESCO & World Radio and Television Council, 2001). Diversity would go hand-in-hand with the concept of universality because the ultimate goal for the former would be to reach and to reflect on different sectors in our society, not only reflecting some mainstream ideas.

Independence would also be important for the Public Service Broadcasting. Editorial independence is one of the key factors contributing to the diversification of once broadcasting, to express freely without the fear of political interference and the concerns over economic interests. Many Public Service Broadcasters would be focusing on the level of independence they gain within their region, and this would be very crucial to the level of diversity the Public Service Broadcasting could offer.



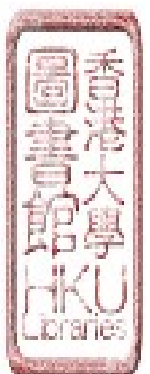


Distinctiveness is the overall comment on Public Service Broadcasting. It requires that the service offered by public broadcasting distinguish itself from that of other broadcasting system (UNESCO & World Radio and Television Council, 2001). This is the key principle amongst the above because it helps situate and position Public Service Broadcasting and clarify oneself with another model of service broadcasting.

### Communications Act 2003 in Britain

According to the Communications Act 2003 in the United Kingdom, similar to the definition of UNESCO & World Radio and Television Council (2001), there are four criteria or principles for Public Service Broadcasting, namely Range and Balance, Diversity, Quality and Social Values.

Range and Balance refers to the programming scheduling of the Public Service Broadcasting, which should cover a range of different types of programming, with a balanced pattern of investment on various genres. Diversity focuses on whether programming targets at different audience types, or represents different viewpoints, while Quality would aim at the pursuit of excellence in programming, which includes high production values, originality and innovation, ambition and risk-taking. The last criteria, social values, would mean to achieve wider benefits of television to society,



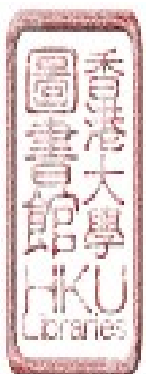
including cultural identity, informed democracy and educated citizens (as cited in Robinson , Raven and Low, 2005, p.106).

### Comparisons

The above shows two definitions from two different parties, UNESCO as well as the Communication Act 2003. Actually, the two definitions on the principles or criteria of Public Service Broadcasting have some commonalities. The two definitions actually share the principle of Diversity, which aim at targeting different audience types so as to represent different viewpoints in society.

On the other hand, the principle of Social Values mentioned in Communication Act 2003 includes the principle of Independence by UNESCO. One of the points mentioned in the principle of Social Values is the “informed democracy”. This actually calls for the impartiality of Public Service Broadcasting on social issues and current affairs, not shaken by or lean to either parties in the society, including the State or the Government.

This essay would use the definition from UNESCO & World Media and Television Council, including four principles of Universality, Diversity, Independence, as well as

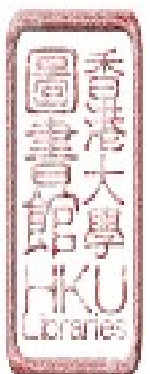


Distinctiveness. In the Report on the Study of Public Service Broadcasting for Hong Kong in October the year 2006, the “core principles” underpinning Public Service Broadcasting are Universality, Diversity, Independence and Distinctiveness (p.73). It actually used the same definition and concept as stated by UNESCO & World Media and Television Council (2001) as stated in the above. However, the principle of “Quality” raised by the Communication Act 2003 is one important factor that should also be included as the driving force of the development of Public Broadcasting Services in Hong Kong. The development of RTHK Television Broadcasting Services is one good example to explain the intention of this Public Service Broadcaster to improve its own quality.

### RTHK as Public Service Broadcaster

#### *Radio Broadcasting Services*

RTHK was first developed with radio service since its foundation in 1928. RTHK has undergone evolution within nearly a century of services. There are seven channels for Radio Broadcasting Services. Channel 1, 2 and 5 would be broadcast in Cantonese, Channel 3 and 6 English, Channel 7 Putonghua, while Channel 4 is broadcast in both English and Cantonese. Apart from the seven AM/FM channels operated by the organization, there are five digital audio broadcasting (DAB) channels, DAB 31 to DAB



35. DAB 31 and 32 was operated in Putonghua, 33 and 34 in English, and the remaining DAB 35 was broadcast with Cantonese.

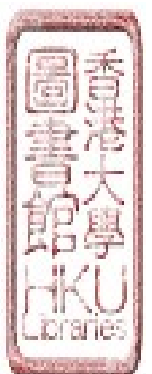
Generally, RTHK Radio programmes would be operated in the following genre or content:

1. News, information and general programming
2. Youth, entertainment and popular music; promotion of family and community projects
3. Overseas and Mainland production – BBC World Service relay and China National Radio Hong Kong edition relay
4. Music and fine arts
5. Elderly, cultural and education

(RTHK Controlling Officer's Report 2015/2016, p.809)

### *The New Media Unit*

The New Media Unit was set up in October 2000. Before its foundation, the RTHK ON INTERNET service started in the year 1994 to provide 24-hour live simulcast except DAB-32, DAB-34 and Channel 6. In June 2010, the first RTHK application “RTHK On the Go” was launched in iPhone, and later the social TV iPhone application “RTHK Thumb” in 2011. “RTHK Screen” (Figure 1) application was also set up to provide



online services for smartphone users in times of the prevailing of the use of smartphones.



(Figure 1)



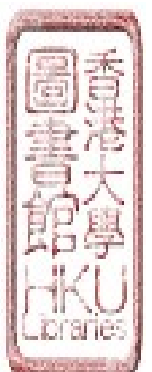
(Figure 2)

Nowadays in RTHK, there would be increasing linkage between television broadcasting services / Radio broadcasting services, and the new media services.

This is one of the ways to help in the development of RTHK TV services which would be talking about later in the report.

### Television Broadcasting Services

Since the late 1960s, the discovery of Television Broadcasting in Hong Kong, the foundation of Television Broadcast Limited in 1967, as well as of the Commercial Television in 1975 brought RTHK into the next phase in its broadcasting services provision in Hong Kong. Broadcasting services drastically changed from radio broadcasting to both radio and television broadcasting services.



In the year 1970, Public Affairs Television United was set up in RTHK to provide general and public current affairs. However, at that time, due to the fact that RTHK did not own television transmission, the programmes made by the corporation would be bought and shown on TVB or ATV.

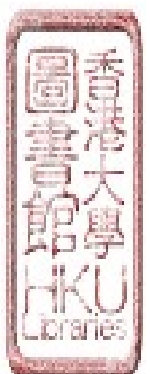
In the year 2009, the Television Broadcasting Services of RTHK has undergone a breakthrough. The Government decided to expand the service scope of RTHK and introduced the Free-to-air Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) Broadcasting Service.

RTHK Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting Service started to conduct trial transmission since January 13, 2014.

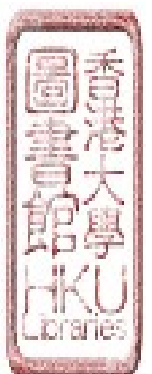
There are currently three channels for RTHK TV, namely Channel 31, 32 and 33.

Channel 31 provides entertaining, informational programmes like current affairs, and dramas. The Broadcasting period from Monday to Friday is from 5 p.m. to 1:30 mid-night, Saturday and Sunday from noon 12:00 to 1:30 mid-night.

Channel 32 provides live feed programmes of Legislative Council meeting every Wednesday. It also provides live feed for other important meetings and press conferences. Channel 33 provides relay of CCTV Channel 9, Documentary Channel. It is a 24-hour broadcasting channel.



The trial transmission of the Free-to-air DTT Broadcasting Service marked a new era in the development of RTHK, but due to the shortage in funding, RTHK TV services have undergone certain uncertainties. Adding that RTHK TV would have to face intense competition from other commercial service broadcasters especially Television Broadcast Limited (TVB), RTHK TV would have to adjust their programming as well as scheduling under the regulation laid down by the Charter of Radio Television Hong Kong. The sections below would focus more on the development of RTHK Television Broadcasting Services.



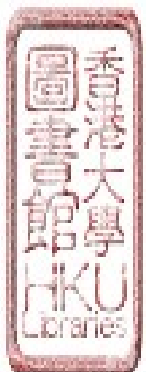
## **Challenges to RTHK TV in the provision of Public Broadcasting Services**

### *The Charter of Radio Television Hong Kong*

Before talking about the challenges faced by RTHK Television Broadcasting Services, it is important to first understand the aim of RTHK in its provision of broadcasting services. As a Public Service Broadcaster, it has to fulfill the mission and public purposes marked in the Charter of Radio Television Hong Kong (Charter of RTHK in short) as published in August 2010. In the Charter, it stated that the mission of RTHK is:

1. to inform, educate and entertain members of the public through multi-media programming
2. to provide timely, impartial coverage of local, national and global events and issues;
3. to deliver programming that contributes to the openness and cultural diversity of Hong Kong;
4. to provide a platform for the Government and the community to discuss public policies and express views thereon without fear or favour, and
5. to serve a broad spectrum of audiences and cater to the needs of minority interest groups (2010:3).

On the other hand, the Charter specifies the public purposes of the RTHK as a Public



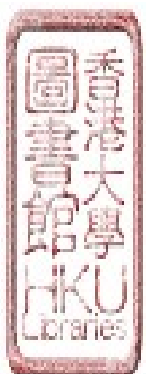


Service Broadcaster:

1. To sustain citizenship and civil society, including the promotion of the understanding of our community, our nation as well as the world through accurate and impartial news, information, perspectives and analyses; promotion of the understanding of the concept of “One Country, Two Systems” and its implementation in Hong Kong, to help engendering a sense of citizenship and national identity through programmes that contribute to the understanding of our community and nation.
2. To provide an open platform for the free exchange of views without fear or favour
3. To encourage social inclusion and pluralism
4. To promote education and learning
5. To stimulate creativity and excellence to enrich the multi-cultural life of Hong Kong people

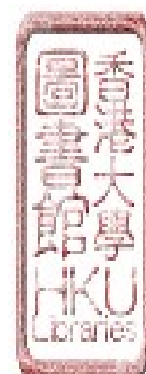
(Charter of Radio Television Hong Kong, 2010)

The mission and public purposes stated in the Charter are actually based on the “core principles” stated in the Report on the Study of Public Service Broadcasting for Hong Kong – Universality, Diversity, Independence and Distinctiveness (2006). Below (Table 1 and Table 2) would show the relationship between these core principles and the mission and public purposes.



Mission	Related Principles
To inform, educate and entertain members of the public through multi-media programming	Universality
To provide timely, impartial coverage of local, national and global events and issues	Independence
To deliver programming that contributes to the openness and cultural diversity of Hong Kong	Diversity Universality
To provide a platform for the Government and the community to discuss public policies and express views thereon without fear or favour	Independence Universality
To serve a broad spectrum of audiences and cater to the needs of minority interest groups	Diversity

(Table 1)

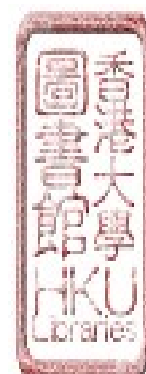


Purposes	Related Core Principle(s)
Sustain citizenship and civil society	Universality
Providing an open platform for the free exchange of views without fear or favour	Diversity Independence
Encouraging social inclusion and pluralism	Diversity Universality
Promoting education and learning	Universality
Stimulating creativity and excellence to enrich the multi-cultural life of Hong Kong People	Distinctiveness

(Table 2)

*Aim of RTHK as Public Service Broadcaster*

As a public service broadcaster, RTHK was obligated the public purposes and mission stated in the Charter to serve the public interests, to provide programmes under the principles of universality and diversity in order to reach the largest amount of audiences, to include not only a majority but also the voices and the public needs of minorities. The aim to distinguish itself with the commercial services broadcasting would be one of the challenges stated in the followings.

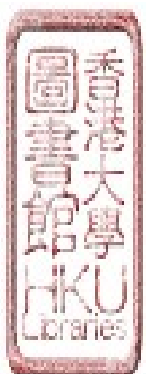


On the other hand, RTHK mentioned the editorial independence in the charter. This is the principle of "independence" stated again in the charter. But there is actually a dilemma. RTHK is actually a Government department, and its resources and budget is allocated by the HKSAR Government. With the special role and relationship between RTHK and the Government, it actually challenges the editorial independence of this public service broadcaster.

#### Challenge 1: Limited funding from the Hong Kong SAR Government

As mentioned in the above, RTHK TV started trial transmission of Channel 31, 32 and 33 on January 13, 2014. Since trial transmission, it leads to drastic increase in the number of programmes produced and also hours of output.

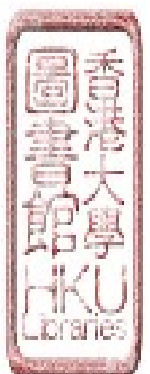
The financial report of RTHK (2014) shows that, the total number of output in 2013-2014, before the trial transmission of RTHK TV channels is 764.4 hours. It is estimated to rise to 1345 hours in the year 2014-2015, and 1303 hours in the year 2015-2016. The total hours of output has doubled within the year 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 (2014:809). This is particularly true for Channel 31, which is the main channel providing entertaining (e.g. dramas) and informational (e.g. public and current affairs programmes, Headline News 頭條新聞) programmes among the three channels operated.



However, while it is estimated that the hours of output would increase in the coming years, the financial provision from the Government has gone down from \$392.2 million to \$372.2 million from the year 2013-2014 to 2014-2015 (Controller's Report, p.807). In this case, RTHK TV has to cut its cost in their programming. The cost went from \$472,900 per hour to some \$276,900 per hour within two years (ibid, p.809). This would be a great challenge to RTHK TV as they would have limited budget to support their weekly scheduled broadcasting.

The reason behind the limited funding of RTHK TV is because of the unique position of RTHK and the Government. RTHK is a typical and special Hong Kong style of Public Service Broadcaster and thus the relationship between itself and the Government is quite ambiguous. RTHK is one of the Government departments. While it does enjoy editorial independence, the Government actually controls the budget allocation and thus the funding of RTHK.

Comparing with the input of financial resources, RTHK has different culture with the Public Service Broadcasters in other parts of the world. Take British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Association of Public Broadcasting Corporations in the Federal Republic of Germany (ARD) as examples. The funding of BBC is mainly from license fee charged per household, company and organization. The license fee is £145.5 per household in the year 2015. The total license fee income in 2015 is some £3,735

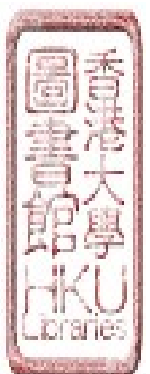


million, which comprises of nearly 77% of the total income of BBC in that year. Other income and revenue would be from Commercial, mainly from BBC Worldwide, and Grant-in-Aid for World Service (BBC Full Financial Statements 2014/15, p.7).

ARD was another example of Public Service Broadcaster funded by license fee collection. License fee is the main source of income for the corporation. The fee in 2015 is 17.50 euros per month collected within sixteen states of the Federal Republic of Germany, which equals to about \$170. Advertising does account for some of the total income, but it consists of only a small portion which would not guarantee the independence from commercial and other interests (ARD Brochure 2014/2015, p.5).

The difference between Public Service Broadcasters in Europe and Hong Kong is that, while the funding of RTHK is allocated annual from the Government finance, those of BBC as well as ARD in Europe would lie in the licensing fees collected from the public for their own use.

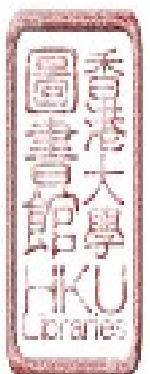
Menon (1999) in the book *Public Service Broadcasting in Asia, Surviving in the New Information Age* published by Asian Media Information and Communication Centre, mentioned several problems faced by Public Service Broadcasters in Asian countries. One of the problems is the issue of Independence of the public service broadcaster. This is the core issue that should be concerned in Asian Public Service Broadcasters,



including the RTHK, because most of the Asian public service broadcasters are previously state-owned. The Government or the State are having substantial amount of influence in the corporation (1999: ii). This is the Asian culture or style of public service broadcaster.

The case of RTHK is somewhat similar to the Asian culture of Public Service Broadcasting. Set up by the British colonial Government in Hong Kong nearly 90 years ago, it actually gave RTHK its history as an important broadcaster in Hong Kong colonial history. Since the year of 1938, though RTHK was handed over to different departments, from Post Office to Government Public Relations Department, and became an independent department headed by the Director of Broadcasting in the year 1954, RTHK, till now, is still part of the Government and one of the Government departments.

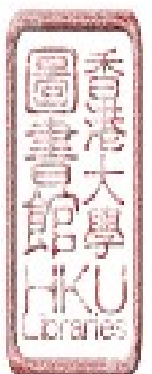
It is the history of RTHK that leads to the different style and culture of management of this corporation. The funding of RTHK is still controlled and allocated by the Hong Kong SAR Government nowadays. This would be a huge problem because the development and the financial status would be easily influenced by the financial situation of the Government (Menon, 1999). This eventually affects and lowers the quality of output of the public broadcasting services, which may downgrade the influence of the public broadcasting services among the society.



## Challenge 2: The issue of Independence of RTHK

The above paragraphs on the limited funding of RTHK actually touched on a part of the issue of independence presented by Menon (1999). However, the issue of independence discussed in this paragraph is more on political aspect rather than merely economic one.

The aforementioned issue of independence is quite a core and fundamental issue – National Identity – viewed by the PRC Central Government. It is the difference between the political culture in Hong Kong and the PRC Government. The situation is getting ambiguous after the handover of Hong Kong in 1997 to transform from once a British colony to part of China again as it did before the year 1842. The expectation of the Central Government towards RTHK is a state broadcaster, like China Central Television (CCTV) in Mainland China, rather than a Public Service Broadcaster to serve public needs and interests as stated in the Charter of RTHK. That leads to serious conflicts between the two. Early in 1998, *Xu Simin* (徐四民), a member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, a Hong Kong committee that advised China’s congress, openly alleged that RTHK was “particularly focusing on criticizing the Hong Kong SAR Government and *Tung Chee-wah* (董建華), the Chief Executive from the year 1997-2003”. Later, People’s Daily (人民日報), a pro-Beijing Mainland Newspaper, also criticized RTHK as “eating



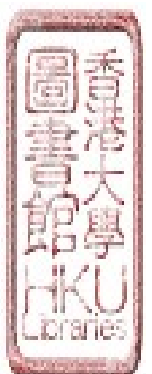


the expense” (吃裡扒外) of the Hong Kong Government, leading to the constant conflicts between RTHK and the Pro-Central Government parties.

Alex Chan, Wo-shun (2009) mentioned the ambiguity of the term “public service”, and the struggle between the ideas of “patriotism” (愛國) and “democracy” (民主).

This is particularly ambiguous after the handover of Hong Kong to China, and become part of China. Certain issues like the independence of Taiwan or other ethnic minorities in China would be sensitive to the Central Government. The spread of the idea of independence would also be so dangerous to Central Government rule. In this case, there would be a dilemma by RTHK on the concept of editorial independence, and the term “public service”, to weigh between “democracy” and “patriotic”.

Actually, this would not be the only case happens towards Hong Kong Public Service Broadcaster, but also the case of the overseas Public Service Broadcaster. For example, BBC has once invited *Nick Griffin*, the leader of the British National Party, far-right British nationalist political party, to their programme “Question Time” (現場問答). British National Party was actually promoting the idea of Fascism. This led to the discontent and protest from anti-Fascists, and they attempted to block Nick Griffin from participation in the programme. While BBC stated again, as a public service broadcaster, they should open up the platform, to welcome diversification of

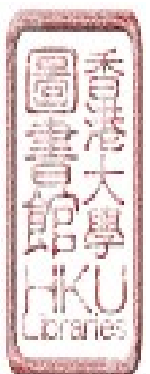


culture, many protested that BBC should not open to the public on Fascist ideas, which would lead to danger to the state if the idea spread out among the community.

While dilemma arose in public service broadcasters all around the globe, this would be about how the public service broadcaster stand firm on their objectives and mission in the society. RTHK seems to be more lenient towards the intervention of the Hong Kong SAR Government as well as the Central Government of PRC, which could be seen in the cancellation of the interview with *Annette Lu* (呂秀蓮) in 2002 because of the intervention of the Hong Kong SAR Government on the fear of touching on the issue of national sovereignty.

This would be a challenge to the development of RTHK TV as a public service broadcaster, to fulfil the mission and public purpose stated in the Charter of RTHK.

The above examples actually shows that, there would be a great challenge to the independence of RTHK TV programming. Political interference is only one aspect of challenges from Hong Kong society. There may include more on the principle of diversity of the RTHK on different social issues, like Homophobia. To provide diversified broadcasting services to the public, this would be a great challenge to RTHK TV, which would show a large amount of political, social issues and current affair programmes to the public.



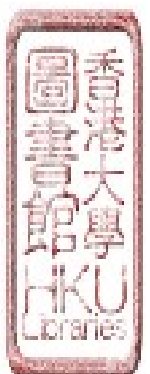
Apart from political or other interference which would endanger the independence of RTHK broadcasting services, including television broadcasting services, the programming of RTHK is not actually independent from Government. Chan Man-kuen (2014) said in an interview that, though they would be allocated budget annually to run the broadcasting services for RTHK TV, they would have to satisfy the needs or the standard of the Government. They are somewhat responsible for the Government. For example, Chan said that they would have to get good ratings for the programmes they produce because they need a good result to bargain for more funding with the Government.

Truly, every broadcasting services, especially commercial services Broadcasters, would have to satisfy the needs and standards of their board. However, as a public service broadcaster to serve public interest, it would be hard for RTHK TV to be on the one hand responsible for Government, while on the other hand serving public interests.

### Challenge 3: Intense Competition with the current dominant culture of Television

#### Broadcasting Services

In nowadays TV market, there are three corporations operating free-to-air television broadcasting services, namely Television Broadcast Limited (TVB), Asia Television

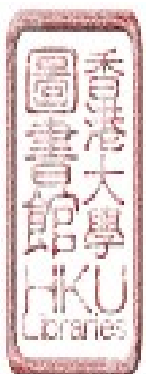


Limited (ATV) and the new-born Radio Television Hong Kong Television Services (RTHK TV). Under the current market situation, TVB is undoubtedly dominated the culture of television broadcasting services. Its domination would go more supreme with the expiration of the terrestrial television license of Asia Television Limited (ATV) in November 2015. The latter would be allowed to continue broadcasting until April 1 next year in 2016.

With the exit of ATV from the competitive TV market, there is only two left in the coming year – TVB and RTHK TV. Chan (2014), as mentioned in the above, said that RTHK TV would still be responsible for the Government although they are somewhat guaranteed allocation of funding. RTHK TV would still have to stay competitive with the commercial service broadcasters.

However, this is not a competition between TVB and RTHK TV. This is actually a competition between different models of television broadcasting services as well as TV cultures. Before talking about how RTHK TV should cope with the dominance of TVB and the Commercial Service Broadcasting culture in nowadays TV market, it would be important for us to first discuss the culture of both Commercial Service Broadcasting with the history of TV culture in the past few decades.

The role of dramas in the history of television broadcasting services is crucial. In the mid-1970s, there were actually three commercial service broadcasters, namely TVB,

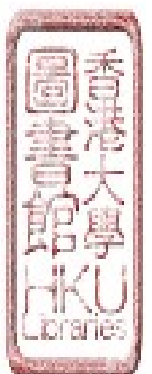


ATV as mentioned in the above, and Commercial Television (佳藝電視). To attract audience, they produced a large amount of dramas and some dramas with different or special genres. According to Ng (2003), the reasons why TV dramas started to overflow in TV Broadcasting services are as follows:

1. People love story-telling.
2. Radio Drama was getting popular before the invention of television and television broadcasting.
3. Chinese people love stories, and they love to chase after the story lines. Dramas are attractive to the Chinese people, and people would easily get addicted.
4. The development of Hong Kong dramas were the earliest amongst East Asian region. There are large demands for Hong Kong dramas.

(Ng, 2003:151)

The year 1976 marked the start of production of Hong Kong dramas. As dramas are so attractive to the mass, these commercial service broadcasters tried to maximize their profits by making more and more dramas. According to Ng (2003), the drama production has undergone several stages, the first is called the Golden Stage (黃金時期) from 1978 to 1984. The second is the stage of “overflowing” (氾濫時期), when there exists an over-production of drama series from the year 1985 to 1990. The third and the last stage would be the time revealing weaknesses from 1991 (Ng,

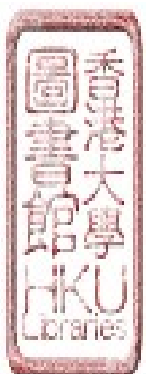


2003: 150). It is apparent that commercial service broadcasters were trying to use the production of drama series to attract audiences.

Let us try to compare the programming and scheduling of these two broadcasting corporations. Use the weekly schedule of TVB on 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> August 2015 as an example to explain (Figure 3). In weekdays (3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> August, Monday to Thursday), TVB would offer three lines of drama series in different period of time. The first drama “Come Home Love” (愛 回家) would be shown from 8 to 8:30 p.m..The second drama “Master of Destiny” (風雲天地) would be shown from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m., while the last line of drama series “Ghost of Relativity” (鬼同你 OT) would be shown at 9:30 to 10:30 p.m..

2015-07-27 (一)	2015-07-28 (二)	2015-07-29 (三)	2015-07-30 (四)	2015-07-31 (五)
約: 6:30PM 六點半新聞報道	約: 6:30PM 六點半新聞報道	約: 6:30PM 六點半新聞報道	約: 6:30PM 六點半新聞報道	約: 6:30PM 六點半新聞報道
6:55PM 天氣報告	6:55PM 天氣報告	6:55PM 天氣報告	6:55PM 天氣報告	6:55PM 天氣報告
7:00PM 靈鏞集 [港台]	7:00PM 銀齡帥靚正 [港台]	7:00PM 那些年·那些歌 [港台]	7:00PM 地下秩序 [港台]	7:00PM 香港歷史系列 III [港台]
7:30PM 東張西望	7:30PM 東張西望	7:30PM 東張西望	7:30PM 東張西望	7:30PM 東張西望
8:00PM 愛·回家	8:00PM 愛·回家	8:00PM 愛·回家	8:00PM 愛·回家	8:00PM 愛·回家
8:30PM 風雲天地	8:30PM 風雲天地	8:30PM 風雲天地	8:30PM 風雲天地	8:30PM 風雲天地
9:30PM 鬼同你OT 及 競爭有道	9:30PM 鬼同你OT 及 競爭有道	9:30PM 鬼同你OT 及 競爭有道	9:30PM 鬼同你OT 及 競爭有道	9:30PM 鬼同你OT 及 競爭有道
10:30PM 超強選擇1分鐘 [直播] 大班 冰皮月餅呈獻	10:30PM 超強選擇1分鐘 [直播] 大班 冰皮月餅呈獻	10:30PM 超強選擇1分鐘 [直播] 大班 冰皮月餅呈獻	10:30PM 超強選擇1分鐘 [直播] 大班 冰皮月餅呈獻	10:30PM 超強選擇1分鐘 [直播] 大班 冰皮月餅呈獻
11:00PM 環球新聞檔案 [英皇金融證券集團特約]	11:00PM 環球新聞檔案 [英皇金融證券集團特約]	11:00PM 環球新聞檔案 [英皇金融證券集團特約]	11:00PM 環球新聞檔案 [英皇金融證券集團特約]	11:00PM 環球新聞檔案 [英皇金融證券集團特約]
11:05PM	11:05PM	11:05PM	11:05PM	11:05PM

(Figure 3)

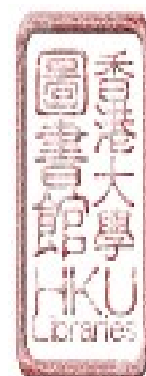


1855-1900	左右紅藍綠					視點	識法保積金2
1900-1930	鏗鏘集	銀齡帥靚正	那些年·那些歌	地下秩序	香港歷史系列III	警訊	8 花齊放
1930-2000	香港故事-音樂·人間					原來錢作怪	童遊香港地
2000-2030	味之天下					香港故事·自遊香港	
2030-2032	天氣報告/預告						健康大道
2032-2100						The Piano Guys : 紅山山頂 花園演奏會	
2100-2101	健康大道	視點31	賭海論迷途	不一樣的傳奇	零距離科學		天氣報告
2101-2130							沒有牆的世界
2130-2200	青春的軌跡					活在牆上	我們都是這樣 唱大的II
2200-2230						藝坊星期天	
2230-2231	天氣預告						
2231-2255	消費新潮(英)	文化長河·山川行(英)	藝坊(英)	中國故事(英)	尋找香港(英)	私隱何價	8 花齊放
2255-2300	左右紅藍綠						
2300-2330	鏗鏘集	銀齡帥靚正	那些年·那些歌	地下秩序	香港歷史系列III	監警有道	童遊香港地
2330-2400	燃眉時刻	臨界點				中國故事	視點31
2400-2430						警訊	
2430-2500	健康大道	視點31	賭海論迷途	北野武 ArtBeat	寰看BBC	原來錢作怪	火速救兵2
2500-2530				心眼遊天下		香港故事·自遊香港	
2530-2531	天氣預告						
2531-翌日 1200	訊號測試						

(Figure 4)

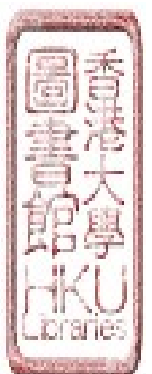
Comparing with TVB, RTHK TV has only one drama “*Our Good Old Days*” ( *青春的軌跡*) shown during weekdays, from 9:30 to 10:30 p.m.. Other programmes are mostly informational, like *RTHK 31 This Week* ( *視點31*) and *Police Magazine* ( *警訊*).

The main issue concerning the programming and scheduling for RTHK is the nowadays culture of television broadcasting service. As mentioned in the above, the overflowing production of dramas in commercial television broadcasting services actually dominated the television broadcasting culture in Hong Kong since the year 1976. For private (commercial) broadcasting services, the main concern for programming and scheduling would be whether or not it would be profitable. This explains why the commercial service broadcasters like ATV and TVB in Hong Kong would try to focus on the production of dramas in order to attract more and more audiences.



Nevertheless, as a public service broadcaster, RTHK TV does not simply deny the attractiveness of dramas in the mass, but it needs to concern for the public purposes and mission of RTHK, that is, to inform, educate and entertain the general public through the provision of high quality television (TV) programmes that are not adequately provided by commercial broadcasters (Controlling Officer's Report 2015/2016, p.807). Therefore, we can see that RTHK TV does put dramas in the weekly schedule of Channel 31. Dramas like "*Below the Lion Rock 2014*" (獅子山下 2014) and the aforementioned "*Our Good Old Days*" (青春的軌跡). "*Below the Lion Rock 2014*" was shown on Channel 31 in June 2014, which includes the classics collected from "*Below the Lion Rock*" series. On the other hand, "*Our Good Old Days*" is a collection of the classics of teenage programmes or dramas 20 years ago in the 1990s.

These two dramas shown in the trial transmission period of RTHK TV are actually the renewed "old" dramas. These two examples of RTHK dramas are trying to show and reveal the reality of Hong Kong society. For instance, "*Our Good Old Days*" is the drama talking about the daily lives of teenagers, including their dreams, families, life-long career as well as relationships. This reveals the teenagers thoughts at that time in the 1990s. Also, the drama "*Below the Lion Rock 2014*" is the collection of different episodes of the series. It reveals the lives of the people living in the

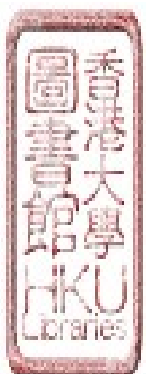




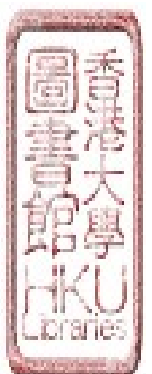
squatter areas under the Lion Rock in the 1960s to 1970s. This shows the reality of the society at that time, including how they strove to survive from their hard times facing their poor living areas together with their neighbors. The song “Below the Lion Rock” in 1979 by Roman Tam actually speaks the core value that “*Of one mind in pursuit of our dream. All discard set aside*” (「放開彼此心中矛盾, 理想一起去追」).

These two dramas actually speak and reveal the reality of the society, which also tries to bring out certain social issues which may arouse certain concern in the society. This is actually meaningful because it shows diversified groups in our society, especially on the minority groups in our society, like those living in the poor squatter areas.

However, one dangerous issue concerning about the programming and scheduling of RTHK TV dramas is that, these are not up-to-date dramas. “*Below the Lion Rock*” reveals the social reality in the 1960s and 1970s while other one “*Our Good Old Days*” is also the production showing the thoughts of teenagers in the 1990s, with different generations. This actually leads to a sense of inferiority of the level of dramas, comparing with that of TVB or other commercial service broadcasting. This “inferiority” does not mean the content or the idea of the dramas, which are actually very good genres indeed, but it is about whether the drama is brand new or fresh or not. People long for something new. It would be more interesting and attractive



when, for example, *“Below the Lion Rock 2014”* was really talking about social issues or lifestyles in that year. This would increase the quality of the production of RTHK, and this would help upgrade the quality of public service broadcasting. The ultimate goal of the public service broadcasting would be to upgrade its service, while it can distinguish itself from commercial service broadcaster, it ensures a high quality service to serve the public.

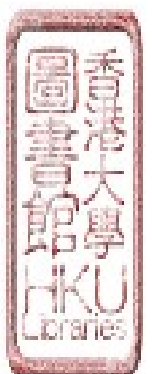


## Reaction to challenges

### Nowadays Hong Kong TV culture in Marxist Perspective

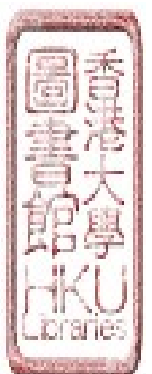
It would not be easy for RTHK TV to start its television broadcasting services in nowadays Hong Kong TV market and culture. With the dominance of TVB, RTHK TV would have to find ways to position itself in nowadays TV markets. Actually, though there appear three different challenges to the development of RTHK TV, the core issue or problem of these challenges is the ambiguity of the mass or the society towards the mission, definition and characteristics of Public Service Broadcasting. Actually, RTHK TV, as a Public Service Broadcaster, is actually competing with the dominant culture in nowadays television broadcasting services, Commercial Service Broadcasting.

Using Marxist concept of “dominant ideology” to explain the nowadays TV market situation, Commercial Service Broadcasting or the mode of production of TVB would be the dominant ideology. The dominant mode of production of TVB would be the overflowing production of dramas and people would regard the consumption of drama series every day and every week is “common” and “normal” in common sense (not sociologically “common” and “normal”). It can be applied to what Marx stated that Capitalists would try to convey certain concepts to the working class to continue serving for them, producing the so-called “false consciousness” (as cited in Ng, 2003,



p.3). The false consciousness in the above TV culture is that, with the dominance of the commercial broadcasting services, people who consume their production would gradually believe the glorification of their own services and think that there would be no better production or mode of production other than the commercial broadcasting services would provide satisfying broadcasting services to the consumers. This is the false consciousness made by the commercial service broadcasters, especially TVB, towards nowadays TV culture in Hong Kong.

Therefore, in response to the “false consciousness” made by TVB, RTHK TV would have to take action to promote their products. Actually, in nowadays TV market of Hong Kong, though TVB is dominating the TV broadcasting services, its influence and the quality is starting to deteriorate, and the viewer ratings of the dramas are getting lower comparing with the previous decade. For example, the average ratings of the drama “*Master of Destiny*” (風雲天地) from June 22 to August 1 in 2015 in the period of 8:30-9:30 p.m. is only 23, that is, the drama attracted about 1.15 million viewers in Hong Kong society. Also, the previous drama “*Wudang Rules*” (潮爆武當) recorded an average viewer rating of 23. Comparing with those dramas at the second line (8:30-9:30 p.m. period) a few years ago, “*Three Kingdoms RPG*” (回到三國) cast by *Kenneth Ma* (馬國明), *Raymond Lam* (林峰) and *Tavia Yeung* (楊怡)

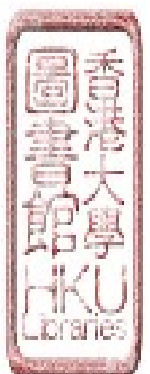


recorded an average viewer ratings of 30, which equals to 1.5 million viewers in Hong Kong society. Others like “*Witness Insecurity*” (護花危情) cast by Bosco Wong (黃宗澤) and Linda Chung (鍾嘉欣) recorded 31% average viewer ratings.

Comparatively, it seems that the support of TVB drama productions decreased through the evidence provided by viewer ratings. This would be a high time for RTHK TV to carry out promotion campaign, to show their programmes and to distinguish themselves from TVB or other commercial service broadcasters in order to position itself in nowadays Hong Kong TV market.

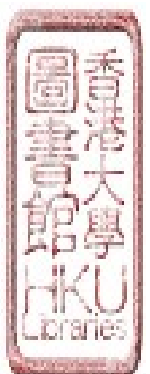
#### *The New Media: The Obstacles? Or an Opportunity for RTHK TV?*

The prevailing of Internet services would be one of the obstacles to the support of nowadays commercial television broadcasting services. While information and entertainment can be found on the Internet, there is actually no way for one simply to entertain themselves with a fixed TV scheduling. The Internet is so convenient for anyone to get information in need online, to entertain themselves with drama series from not only Hong Kong production, but also overseas production. This flexibility would thus really be an obstacle to the future of TV broadcasting service, to both TVB and RTHK TV.

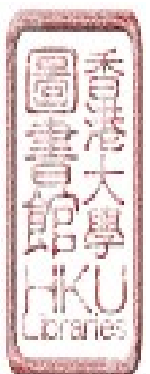


However, technological advancement, especially the prevailing of Internet usage would actually be an opportunity to the development RTHK TV. It helps the programming and scheduling of RTHK TV. As Henry S.W.Doo, Head of New Media, said in an interview in January that, the three broadcasting services, Radio, Television Broadcasting services and the New Media services provided by RTHK, should head to a direction of merging, cooperating and complementing with one another in the development of three different media platforms. He even went further and believed that the New Media have to take the lead in the development among three media platforms because we are in a cyber-society, so did broadcasting services. In this case, Radio or Television Broadcasting Services should follow the footstep of the New Media world.

Henry suggested the increasing flexibility of the programming and scheduling of television broadcasting services in RTHK, with the aid of the Internet. As mentioned in the above, we are now entering a flexible cyber-world. With the use of Internet, flexibility would be the key for information collecting as well as entertaining. What Henry suggested to do is to provide two-way services for the audience. The Television Department of RTHK TV is still doing their job in scheduling their programmes. This would satisfy the needs of certain audiences who would prefer TV Broadcasting with fixed schedule.



On the other hand, the New Media Unit of RTHK would put the archives to the Internet, mostly on Podcast since 2009 according to Henry. As there is no copyright issue for RTHK broadcasting, RTHK would not hesitate to share their productions to a more open platform to attract more audience to view and watch. This actually satisfy those more “flexible” audiences in the society, who would not bound themselves with a fixed TV broadcasting schedule. In this case, while promoting the programmes through different platforms, it actually spreads all over Hong Kong and promote its Public Broadcasting Services to more audiences. Therefore, a more flexible programming and scheduling would be recommended to RTHK TV.

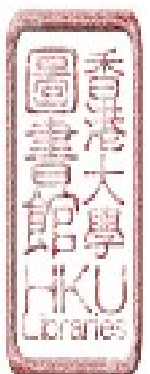


### **Conclusion: A New Way of Broadcasting?**

With technological advancement, every media platform should find ways to cope with this trend. No one single broadcasting services, whether Radio, Television Broadcasting, or even the New Media, should be doing things on their own. RTHK should be well aware of this concept of media convergence. It would be a high time for RTHK TV to expand with not only technically, with digital terrestrial transmission services (DTT Services), but also in scope in its programming and scheduling. This is the time when the three departments of RTHK, Radio, Television and the New Media Unit to sit down and discuss on how a media corporation, facing Government control on funding as well as the dominant TV culture of Commercial Service Broadcasting, to develop and get mutual benefit from it. RTHK TV should be developed not only with a limited scope, but also with a large scope from the overview of the whole media corporation.

### **Limitations**

One crucial limitation of this research report would be the time constraint. As the research started from October 2014 to July, within the period, we can only meet the heads of RTHK department for only three or four times, which would be one of the biggest obstacles to a more thorough research on the topic.





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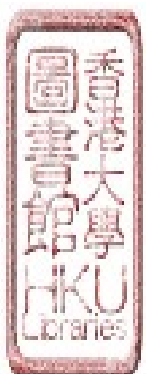
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