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The deterritorialization of China pop: a pilot study on the global presence of Chinese streaming services

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Abstract

Purpose: Through a close examination of various platforms and content offered by the top three Chinese streaming services, iQiyi, Tencent Video and YouKu, this study provides an overview of these services' international operation and starts mapping out the global presence of Chinese pop culture content.

Design/methodology/approach: This study mostly relies on empirical data collected from several sources, including documents and digital artifacts. Documents include BAT's financial results and annual reports in recent years, as well as some analyses of their reports. Digital artifacts include hundreds of screenshots taken from various platforms run by iQiyi, Tencent Video, YouKu, and third-party platforms: Netflix, Rakuten Viki and YouTube. These data are sorted and analyzed to map out their global reach.

Findings: The study finds that the three platforms have wide global reach that can be conceptualized as the first stage of deterritorialization. This stage is carried out with scale, synergy and strings attached, and that private-sector media companies are the main force.

Practical implications: It maps out the global reach of China's pop culture content.

Social implications: The case of global reach of China pop is a significant development in cultural globalization. The deterritorialization of Chinese media content further complicates but also advances cultural globalization.

Originality/value: By conceptualizing the global reach of Chinese streaming services as the first stage cultural deterritorialization, this study makes theoretical contributions to the broader discussion of cultural globalization. This study also makes contributions to the study of Chinese media globalization by providing micro

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level analysis of the global expansion of iQiyi, Tencent Video and YouKu, China's top three video streaming services.

Keywords: cultural globalization; deterritorialization; globalization of Chinese media; streaming services; iQiyi; Tencent Video

1 Introduction

On Aug. 5, 2022, without much fanfare, iQIYI dropped its newest release, “Love between Fairy and Devil” (苍兰诀 *Cang Lan Jue*). The show took off like crazy and quickly became one of the most popular streamed TV series in China that summer (Ai 2022). Soon after iQIYI released the show on its own platforms, foreign platforms started streaming it, including Rakuten Viki (viki.com), a Japanese-owned and US-based streaming platform specializing in Asian content, and Netflix. The ripple effect of the show did not stop there. Posts about Dylan Wang (王鹤棣 *Wang Hedi*), the male lead actor in the show, and Esther Yu (虞书欣 *Yu Shuxin*), the female lead actress, populated Instagram, with fans from all over the world posting photos and clips of these two actors: of them alone or together, leisure or at work, behind the scenes, commercial filming, going to work and going off work, interacting with fans, etc. Also in that August, “Love Like the Galaxy” (星汉灿烂/月升沧海 *Xinghan Canlan/Yuesheng Canghai*), period romance drama produced and distributed by Tencent Video, claimed the No. 1 spot of the Top 10 most popular shows on viki.com. Its stars, Leo Wu (吴磊 *Wu Lei*) and Rosy Zhao (赵露思 *Zhao Lusi*), also became Instagram sensations.

The popularity of these television series on such international platforms are clear indications of the global reach of China-made pop culture content. Rapid increase of global offering of Chinese media content has been going on for some time (Chu 2014). However, the latest wave of content export is mostly driven not by China's state-run media powerhouses like China Central Television (CCTV), but by private-sector streaming services, namely, iQIYI, Tencent Video and YouKu. How big of a scale is their global reach? What are the forces behind their growth? What are the risks and challenges they face? And what does this mean for cultural globalization in general? The purpose of this study is to provide some preliminary answers to these questions.

2 Literature review

Based on relevant literature, this section establishes the conceptual framework for this study and contextualizes the rise of China's streaming services and their global reach.

2.1 Deterritorialization in cultural globalization

Deterritorialization is the weakening of the ties between culture and specific territorial location, the escaping of cultures from the nation-state boundary, and the eventual reconfiguration of cultural experiences. It can be regarded a consequence of cultural globalization, where the connection between everyday lived culture and territorial location is weakened or dissolved (Featherstone 1990; Hannerz 1990; Tomlinson 1999). The far reaching and ever more powerful communication technologies, including the internet, streaming, mobile communication, and social media, have allowed symbolic forms and meanings to travel across national boundaries, therefore opening up “cultural horizons to other practices, values and ways of life” (Tomlinson 1999, p. 170). As a result, “culture is now less confined within territorial boundaries” (Hannerz 1990, p. 239). Pop culture made in one place can be consumed around the world. Streaming services and video websites have played a key role in deterritorializing global pop culture, including China pop.

Tomlinson (1999) discusses deterritorialization mostly in the sense that people’s cultural experiences and cultural identification are increasingly influenced by cultural artifacts, symbolic forms, and cultural meanings not originating from their own location, but from other parts of the world. As such, Tomlinson is mostly concerned with the information receivers. Other scholars touched upon deterritorialization from the sender’s point of view, but didn’t elaborate. This study advances the conceptual framework of deterritorialization by specifying the two stages of its process: foreign cultural content producers sending the content, and local audience consuming it. Cultural artifacts, symbolic forms, and cultural meanings originated from a certain location must be made available around the world in the first place, before the global audience can consume them.

This study argues that streaming services and video websites lift Chinese pop culture products out of their country of origin and make them available around the globe. As a result, the world gets to experience and consume China pop outside China, allowing China pop to be part of the mundane cultural experience of the global population. This is the first stage of deterritorialization, or “the existence of cultures far from their places or origin” (King 1990, p. 399). However, a full examination of cultural deterritorialization should include both the sender and receiver as they are two sides of the same coin. By focusing on the sender, this study only addresses the first stage of the process of cultural deterritorialization rather than assuming the process is complete with just availability of content. To complete the process, audience consumption of this foreign originated content needs to occur, which shall be examined in future studies.

Such a two-stage framework of deterritorialization transcends the classic yet flawed framework of cultural imperialism (Guback 1984; Lee 1979; Schiller 1976, 1989, 1992; Tunstall 1977) and other related models such as the West versus the rest, and the center-periphery framework (Hannerz 1990), which often deny the agency of the peripheries and are not very effective in analysis (Keane 2006; Kraidy and Murphy 2008; Reeves 1993; Straubhaar 1991; Tomlinson 1999; Tracy 1988). The concept of deterritorialization, both in terms of global reach of cultural products (first stage) and lived cultural experience (second stage), pays abundant attention to the capacity and agency of the peripheral players, such as China, which in the old models is more of a receiver of foreign content rather than the sender.

2.2 The “going out” policy

Global outreach of Chinese media is not a new topic. Over the past few decades, scholars have studied the globalization of Chinese movies (Curtin 2007), television (Keane 2010; Zhang 2007; Zhu and Berry 2009), and news (de Burgh 2017). Many of these studies focused on China’s national policy and state-run media, especially China’s “Going Out” strategy.

The motivation behind the “Going Out” initiative is partly nationalism, partly cultural pride, partly ideological control, and partly national strategy. China used to be very weak in cultural exports, with limited global reach and a huge trade deficit in cultural products (Keane 2010; Keane and Wu 2018; Zhang 2007; Zhu 2009). The global success of South Korean hallyu (Jin 2007) and Japanese pop culture (Tsutsui 2010) certainly gave Chinese media a sense of hope as well as urgency. If its East Asian neighbors can export their pop culture to such a great success, why cannot China? China did not want to remain a receiver of cultural products from Japan, Korea and the US, but “aspires to be a sender, an exporter of ideas, images and products” (Keane 2006, p. 851). Meanwhile, with entry into the WTO and the potential of massive influx of foreign cultural content, the Chinese government felt the urgency to strengthen China’s own media and cultural industries, including building their cultural export capacities (Curtin 2012; Keane 2006). Going out also allows China to have some control over global narratives about the country, including support for the Belt and Road initiative, as Western media discourse about China is often biased or stereotypical (de Burgh 2017; Hu and Ji 2012; Thussu et al. 2018).

Below are some key events of the “Going Out” initiative (de Burgh 2017; Hu and Ji 2012; Keane and Wu 2018; Thussu et al. 2018):

- 2000, China launched its first English news network, CCTV-9.
- 2009, Cultural Industry Rejuvenation Plan was released, officially initiating the “Going Out” policy. The Chinese government invested about \$6 billion for the

global expansion of Chinese state media enterprises, including foreign language channels of CCTV, international editions of *China Daily*, as well as more foreign bureaus and an English television network for Xinhua News Agency.

- 2012: CCTV launched an African-specific channel, targeting African audiences with content featuring Africa.
- 2016: China Global Television Network (CGTN) was launched.

The initiative and funding mostly concerned state-run media. The private-sector media outlets, which are the focus of the current study, were not officially part of the “Going Out” policy, but have been going out in reality and served the intent of the government’s initiative to some extent (Keane and Wu 2018; Zhao 2018). This study focuses on the private-sector players rather than state-owned enterprises, filling in several gaps in scholarship on globalization of Chinese media.

Western scholars have traditionally focused their research on censorship and control of media in China (Sparks 2012; Thussu et al. 2018), and not much attention is paid to China’s media overseas. Within the relatively small scholarship that does examine Chinese media’s global presence, so far the attention has been largely on government sponsored media entities, such as CCTV and Xinhua News Agency (de Burgh 2017; Hu and Ji 2012; Keane 2006). Very few scholars have taken a close look at private media companies from China. Too much focus on the state supported “national champions” risks neglecting “China’s abundance of bottom-up productivity” (Keane 2006, p. 849). Given the fast and vast growth of China’s pop culture industry and its global reach, whereby the private sector has been playing an increasingly important role, the global presence of private-sector media outlets is no longer negligible. In addition, most studies on Chinese media’s global reach have been about conventional media (television, radio, newspaper, etc.) and few have looked into a new, fast growing, and increasingly dominant form of media: streaming services. There is an urgent need to take a close look at the latter’s role in transmitting Chinese pop culture globally and its implications for cultural globalization. This study fills in these gaps by examining closely the global reach of three dominant private-sector streaming services, iQIYI, Tencent Video and YouKu.

2.3 Rise of China’s streaming industry

The internet and digital technology have given rise to three tech giants in China, known collectively as the BAT: Baidu, Alibaba and Tencent. All three companies are privately-owned and operated and listed on the global stock market. Each of the three tech giants owns or operates a streaming service: iQIYI (owned by Baidu), YouKu (owned by Alibaba), and Tencent Video (owned by Tencent). They are the

dominant streaming services in China, claiming more than half of the market share by mid-2016 (Zhao 2018).

To contextualize the development of China's streaming services, this study identifies three broader socioeconomic conditions that propelled their rise. But first, it needs to be noted that the growth of China's internet companies have benefited from the Chinese government's blocking of international tech giants, such as Google, Facebook and Netflix, from operating in China. Such geoblocking (Zhao 2018) largely shield Chinese companies from competitions with global powers, allowing the former to reap most of the benefits of China's huge market (Leong 2018).

The first condition that allowed private-sector streaming services to develop is the growth of China's cultural industry as a whole. China did not pay a lot of attention to the cultural industry until the 1990s, when the Chinese government officially declared cultural industries to be part of national development. The Ministry of Culture formally instituted a Cultural Industries Department, aiming to "transform and regulate China's burgeoning but largely inefficient cultural economy in the lead up to the WTO accession" (Keane and Fung 2018, p. 4). Taking cues from the success of Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, and South Korea, China also aspired to grow a robust and internationally influential cultural industry (Kean 2004; Su 2019).

According to Chinese Ministry of Culture (later Ministry of Culture and Tourism), the value of the cultural sector increased from RMB1.21 billion (US\$146 million) in 1990 to RMB8.37 billion (US\$1.01 billion) in 1998 (Kean 2004). From 2015 to 2019, China's cultural and related industries increased its value from RMB2.7 trillion (US\$409 billion) to RMB4.4 trillion (US\$667 billion), with an annual increase rate of nearly 13 %. Cultural industry output accounted for 3.95 % of China's GDP in 2015 and 4.5 % in 2019 (Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism 2021). By comparison, the cultural economy of the U.S. contributes about 7 % to its GDP (Kean 2004). Nonetheless, the 20th congress of the Communist Party of China declared in its report that cultural industry has become a main force and a new growth engine for China's economy (China Economic Times 2022). By 2022, China aims to push cultural consumption to past 6 % of all consumption in some cities (State Council of China 2019).

The second condition is the fast growth of China's information technology, including the internet and mobile technology. The huge number of Chinese people online has afforded the BAT a grand-scale market and consumer base. By December 2023, nearly 98 % of China's 1.09 billion internet users consume online videos, including on video streaming sites and short video platforms; that amounts to 1.07 billion users (CNNIC 2024). China's media and creative industries are increasingly intertwined with the internet industry (Su 2019; Zhao 2018). Digital platforms such as mobile apps and streaming services are changing the way that cultural content is produced, distributed, consumed and shared. As a result, "the digital economy is taking Chinese culture further than ever before" (Keane and Wu 2018, p. 52).

The third condition is China's emphasis on innovation in recent decades. To overcome China's innovation deficit and heavy reliance on foreign technologies, in the early 2000s, China initiated the "Indigenous Innovation" campaign. This campaign mostly focuses on advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, bioengineering, advanced chips, and national defense. The Chinese government poured huge amounts of funding into this initiative, but most of the funding goes to state owned enterprises (SOEs) rather than private-sector tech companies (McGregor 2010). Although the BAT are not among the "national champion" SOEs, they nonetheless jumped on the bandwagon of innovation. Their leaders, Robin Li (Baidu), Jack Ma (Alibaba) and Ma Huateng (Tencent) have been established as exemplary innovators as well as evangelicals for innovation, bringing fervor and zeal for innovation at the grassroots level (Leong 2018).

One of their innovations was streaming service, which changed the way of watching content compared with legacy TV, transforming traditional linear programming to digital non-linear programming, allowing content consumption at anytime, anywhere (Su 2019). "With innovation being the basis for Chinese media, online video platforms have transformed into producers, distributors, advertisers and even ecommerce providers" (Su 2019, p. 2).

With a fast-growing cultural industry establishing the macro environment, a huge internet network providing the infrastructure, and a zeal for innovation supplying the motivation, streaming services have grown substantially in China.

The "going out" policy fits squarely with the first stage of cultural deterritorialization: sending Chinese media content overseas to reach audiences beyond the Chinese national boarder. The rise of streaming services further extended this process by allowing more players (private companies) to provide Chinese media content to the rest of the world on multiple streaming platforms, which will be discussed in detail below.

3 Methods

This study mostly relies on empirical data collected from several sources, including documents and digital artifacts. Documents include BAT's financial reports and analyses of their reports in the past more than two years. The financial reports were read carefully to collect data on sales, profits, services, trends, and other related information, to analyze their business model, business strategy, and risks. Below is a list of the financial reports examined for this study:

- Alibaba annual reports and financial results for fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024, and various quarterly results.

- iQIYI annual reports and financial results for fiscal years 2021, 2022 and 2023, and various quarterly results.
- Tencent annual reports and financial results for fiscal years 2021, 2022 and 2023, and various quarterly results.

Digital artifacts include various platforms run by iQIYI, Tencent Video, YouKu, and overseas third-party platforms: 爱壹帆 (*Ai Yi Fan*), Netflix, Rakuten Viki and YouTube. Platforms of Tencent Video, iQIYI and YouKu were analyzed because they are the top three streaming providers in China (more details on this are provided in the Findings). The foreign third-party platforms are analyzed because they distribute content produced by Tencent Video, iQIYI and YouKu, further extending their reach. All of these platforms play a role in the first stage of deterritorialization by disseminating Chinese pop culture content around the world.

To collect data of these digital artifacts, which are in constant updates and changes, the researcher visited various platforms frequently between August 2022, when “Love between Fairy and Devil” generated some international attention, and March 2024, right before this manuscript was finalized. Hundreds of screenshots were taken from all platforms, which were then closely examined and compared, both within and cross companies, for their content, structure, login options, subscription rates, language options, and so on.

Below is a list of all the digital artifacts examined for this study:

- iQIYI
 - Chinese website
 - International website
 - Chinese desktop app
 - International mobile app (Chinese mobile app is not available in the US)
- Tencent Video
 - Chinese website
 - International website
 - Chinese desktop app
 - International version of the desktop app (not a separate app but different version within the same app)
 - Chinese mobile app
 - International mobile app
- YouKu
 - Chinese website
 - International website
 - Chinese mobile app
 - International mobile app

- YouTube
 - iQIYI channels
 - Tencent Video channels
 - YouKu channels
- Viki (<https://www.viki.com/>)
 - Chinese dramas
 - Tencent Video zone
- Netflix
 - Chinese TV shows
 - Chinese movies
- 爱壹帆 (*Ai Yi Fan*) (<https://www.yfsp.tv/>)
 - Chinese TV shows
 - Chinese movies

4 Findings

Close examination of the financial reports of iQIYI, Tencent Video and YouKu provides business overview of the three companies, including their business model, business strategies, market share, and challenges they are facing. The cross-examination of the digital platforms (see Methods) provides details on what and how content is offered to overseas audiences. These findings are organized and presented below in four aspects: business overview, platforms, content, and challenges, to demonstrate how these Chinese streaming services, with the help of international streaming services, accomplish the first step of cultural deterritorialization: offering content made in one particular country to a global audience.

4.1 Business overview

Baidu is iQIYI's controlling shareholder. YouKu is a subsidiary of Alibaba Group Holding Limited. Tencent Video is a subsidiary of Tencent Holdings Limited. Alibaba and Tencent, the two holding companies, are listed on the global stock exchanges, including Nasdaq, Hong Kong and Europe, not YouKu or Tencent Video. Only iQIYI is listed on the stock market under its own name. All of these companies are privately owned global conglomerates rather than State-owned Enterprises (SOEs).

All three streaming services adopt a mixed-funded business model that combines subscription and advertisement (Tang and Wei 2023). Paid subscribers, named VIP members by the platforms, enjoy early access of new episodes, better image

qualities (high definition of 1,080 pixels vertically, or 4,000 pixels horizontally), and ad-free viewing. Non-subscribers can watch shows for free with commercials, fewer new episodes, and lower image quality (standard definition of 480 pixels vertically). In addition, these streaming platforms generate revenue from in-app sales (merchandise related to shows) and content distribution, where the platforms license their shows to third party platforms overseas, such as Rakuten Viki and Netflix. For example, in the fiscal year of 2023, iQIYI generated content distribution revenue of RMB2.5 billion (US\$346.3 million), and online advertising revenue of RMB6.2 billion (US\$876.6 million) (iQIYI 2024).

Tencent Video is China's largest streaming service provider, with 116 million subscribers by the end of March 2024 (Tencent Holdings 2024). It is one of the Value Added Services (VAS) provided by Tencent Holdings Limited, first founded in 1998 and first listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange in 2004. Tencent did not report revenue from video streaming subscription in its latest financial report. In terms of global expansion, Tencent is counting more on its international gaming business. In the first quarter of 2024, international games revenues increased by about 3 % year-on-year to RMB13.6 billion (US\$1.9 billion) (Tencent Holdings 2024). In comparison, Tencent Video is a relatively small part of its overall business.

Founded in 2009 and first listed on the stock exchanges in 2018, iQIYI is China's second largest streaming service with 101.1 million subscribers at the end of 2023, down from 119.7 million a year ago. Membership services revenue for 2023 was RMB20.3 billion (US\$2.9 billion), increasing 15 % from 2022, mostly driven by increase of subscription rates (iQIYI 2024).

iQIYI began to expand its overseas business in late 2019 through launching the multilingual mobile app outside China. By 2021, international operation was still a small portion of the company's overall business, accounting for about 7 % of its total revenue. But its 2021 annual report specifically notes, "We expand our business overseas through our multilingual iQIYI app, which offer a curated selection of popular imported and local video content titles" (iQIYI 2022, p. 62). The same report indicates that the company will continue to invest in high quality content and overseas expansion, "in order to achieve long-term success" (p. 15). The company also included international business as a new growth area in its Next Generation Business plan (Li 2022).

YouKu, incorporated in 2005, is part of the Digital Media and Entertainment Group of Alibaba Group Holding Limited, serving as the company's "key distribution platforms for digital media and entertainment content" (Alibaba Group 2022, p. 25). With estimated around 90 million subscribers, YouKu is the third largest streaming service in China (Wallach 2021). Alibaba Group doesn't disclose YouKu subscriber numbers in its recent financial reports. In fiscal year 2024 (ending on March 31, 2024),

revenue from the Digital Media and Entertainment Group was about RMB21 billion (US\$2.9 billion). That accounts for 2.2 % of Alibaba's total revenue for fiscal year 2024 (Alibaba Group 2024). In the 2023 fiscal year, total viewing time on YouKu mobile app increased by 13 % year over year. YouKu's total subscription revenue grew over 15 % from the prior fiscal year, primarily due to increase of subscription rate (Alibaba Group 2023). But there is a "modest decline" of revenue from YouKu in the quarter ended on March 1, 2024 (Alibaba Group 2024, p. 4). The reports have no mention of YouKu's global operation.

The limited discussion of global business in their financial reports indicates that all three streaming services are still in the early stage of global expansion. Among the three, iQIYI has expressed clearer global ambition. In the year of 2023, iQIYI provided more than 500 titles and more than 6,000 h of entrainment content to audience in about 200 regions around the world (iQIYI Press 2023a, 2023b). In December 2023, iQIYI hosted an "International iJOY conference: 2024 Grand Reveal" at the Asia TV Forum in Singapore. At the conference, Wang Xiaohui, chief content officer of iQIYI, emphasized the platform's "unwavering commitment to providing premium Chinese and Asian content worldwide" (iQIYI Press 2023a, para. 1).

Yang Xianghua, iQIYI's president of movie and overseas business group, told the conference: "We've verified the popularity and influence of iQIYI original productions outside of China, as well as how China's business model can be adopted for international markets. We also anticipate an annual income growth and profit for our overseas business in 2023" (iQIYI Press 2023b, para. 2). The company accounted the roll out of more than 280 Chinese language movies, drama series, variety shows and kids programs on its international platforms for the next two years (iQIYI Press 2023b). In an interview with *Variety.com*, the American entertainment news site, Mr. Yang said that iQIYI aimed at entering the market in Southeast Asia and East Asia first, and then expand in North America. "North America is already a big market for us in revenue terms," he said (Frater 2023, para. 11).

In fact, global expansion has become a necessary business strategy for these companies, as they are facing market saturation within China (Tang and Wei 2023). Tencent Video and iQIYI both saw decrease in subscription in 2023 from the year before. YouKu and iQIYI are increasing subscription rate to keep revenue growth. They need to expand business internationally to generate more revenue and follow Netflix's example of growth: gain more international users (Hu et al. 2022; Jinyu 2022; Yueshang 2022). Cultural deterritorialization, in the case of streaming platforms, has a strong business motivation and follows market logic. "[Chinese] Fast-moving commercial digital companies are 'going out,' seeking virtual treasures, mostly for their shareholders" (Keane and Wu 2018, p. 61).

4.2 Platforms

Each streaming service offers multiple platforms, tailored for Chinese and overseas markets, as well as for different devices: computers, mobile phones, tablets, etc. IQIYI started offering multilingual international platforms in 2019. Tencent launched its international video streaming platform WeTV in 2019 (Tang and Wei 2023). YouKu launched its international version in 2022. Tencent, iQIYI and YouKu's Chinese websites are accessible in the United States, but some shows are only viewable with a Chinese IP address. IQIYI only offers its international version in the App store in the US; YouKu and Tencent offer both their Chinese and international versions. On their YouTube channels, the companies encourage visitors to download their international apps.

The three companies built platforms specifically for the international market, with overseas IP addresses, apps, subscription rates, payment options, as well as multi-language options (see Table 1). The content offered is also different, which will be discussed in the next section. The login and payment options clearly show the differences between Chinese and overseas technology and payment systems. Login options such as QQ, Taobao and WeChat are only available to users in China, who use a Chinese mobile phone number to receive a verification code. International users need to use email or other login option (see Table 1). Overseas users can make payments with foreign credit cards and Apple ID, while users in China primarily use Zhifubao (Alipay) or Weixin Pay. Such different options are indications of market segmentation, domestic versus overseas. In the future, the companies could further differentiate their offerings in different regions (North America, Europe, Asia, etc.), as has been practiced by Netflix.

4.3 Content

This section examines the availability of Chinese pop culture content on platforms owned by the three streaming services, as well as on third-party platforms.

4.3.1 Content on company's own platforms

Despite overlaps between these streaming services' Chinese and international platforms, there are a few noticeable differences.

First, the international platforms carry much less content than their Chinese counterparts (see Figure 1). The categories on their Chinese platforms encompasses everything from health, history, management, fashion, video games, e-sports, to live streaming of WWE and NBA. In contrast, their international platforms focus on

entertainment, just movies, TV shows, animations, and reality TV shows. Such different content offerings are tailored to different user demand. The domestic platforms of Tencent Video, iQIYI and YouKu have gone way beyond simply streaming services but morphed into some kind of have-it-all super platforms, encompassing entertainment, news, education, e-commerce, and other content that are specific to the Chinese society to meet the needs of Chinese users. Their international platforms have a narrow focus on providing just entertainment, to meet the demand of global audiences who are interested in Chinese pop culture. Compared across companies, international platforms of Tencent Video and YouKu offer less content than iQIYI (see Figure 1), indicating that iQIYI is ahead of the other two in its international operation.

Second, there are titles available on the international but not the Chinese platforms. For example, iQIYI's international app carries a few TV shows starring Zhang Zhehan (张哲瀚 *Zhang Zhehan*), a star canceled in China due to a picture showing him with a “yay” gesture and a smiling face in front of the Yasukuni Shrine. These shows, including “The Blooms at Ruyi Pavilion” (如意芳霏 *Ruyi Fangfei*) and “Everyone Wants to Meet You” (谁都渴望遇见你 *Shui Dou Kewang Yujian Ni*), were removed from streaming platforms within China.

These international platforms also carry shows about homosexual love, which are not available in China. iQIYI has a Pride Collection, featuring homosexual romance dramas, such as “Pit Babe The Series” (Thailand) and “Love for Love’s Sake” (South Korea). Tencent Video has a collection called “More Than Friends,” featuring boy-love dramas from Thailand (“The Promise”; “609 Bedtime Story”), Taiwan (“No. 1 for You”), and China (“Addicted”), among other titles. YouKu has titles like “Unknown” (关于未知的我们 *Guanyu Weizhi de Women*), a Taiwanese production.

In addition, iQIYI international platforms have a fairly big collection of Thai language shows, including Thai productions and Chinese shows dubbed in Thai. iQIYI Chinese platforms don’t have these shows. Tencent Video’s international platform features an Indonesian collection, which includes WeTV originals: “My Lecturer My Husband.” Such shows represent another strategy of these platforms’ global expansion, producing shows in local languages to appeal to a local audience (iQIYI 2023b).

Third, these companies’ international platforms eschew political propaganda seen on their Chinese platforms. On Oct. 20, 2022, for instance, iQIYI’s Chinese website featured on its homepage slider: Celebrating the 20th Party Congress, Showing the Best of Internet Video Audio Content (see Figure 2). Such “best internet video content” included titles like 领航 *Ling Hang* (a documentary series focusing on China’s accomplishments during Xi Jinping’s administration), 特级英雄黄继光 *Teji Yingxiong Huang Jiguang* (an internet movie about Huang Jiguang, a heroic Chinese

soldier during the Korean War), and 人世间 *Ren Shi Jian* (“A Lifelong Journey”). None of these shows are available on iQIYI’s international platforms, which did not feature content celebrating the 20th party congress.

On Nov. 22, 2022, Tencent Video Chinese website displayed a news feature titled “The Happiness of Communist Party Members” and another video showing Chinese astronauts watching the 20th party congress on the space station. One of the content categories on its Chinese mobile app, New Journey (新征程 *Xin Zhengcheng*), features shows celebrating the 20th party congress, and Building the Chinese Dream Together theme shows. None of these collections or videos are shown on their international platforms.

Such differences in content demonstrate that outside the Chinese media system, these international platforms have more freedom in choosing what to include (homosexual content, shows banned in China) and what to exclude (state and party sponsored content). They utilize such liberty to cater to international audiences in order not to propagate certain political or ideological agenda, but to gain market share and make profits. This kind of transnational distribution of cultural content made in one country constitutes the first stage of cultural deterritorialization. At the same time, deterritorialization allows the platforms to operate beyond national boundaries, which sometimes meant fewer restrictions, as discussed above (Figures 3 and 4).

4.3.2 Content on third-party platforms

Chinese streaming services distribute their content on third-party international platforms through content licensing or barter agreements (iQIYI 2022). So far, main destinations of such distribution include Netflix, Rakuten Viki, Ai Yi Fan, and YouTube. For example, one of the biggest hits on iQIYI, a TV drama series called “A Lifelong Journey” (人世间 *Ren Shi Jian*), is available on iQIYI’s Chinese platforms but not its international platforms, as the show is licensed to be shown outside China via third-party platforms, such as Ai Yi Fan, a streaming service based in Lisbon, Portugal, founded by overseas Chinese and reaches more than 60 million overseas Chinese. A recent hit by Tencent Video, “Blossoms Shanghai” (繁花 *Fan Hua*), is also licensed to be shown outside China via Ai Yi Fan.

Foreign third-party platforms provide additional distribution channels worldwide, further expanding the first-stage deterritorialization of Chinese content. Before the Chinese streaming services built their own international platforms, streaming content on Netflix had been their “most successful global adventure” (Su 2019, p. 242). Now with their own international platforms, they rely less on

third-party platforms to distribute their content. Nonetheless, Netflix, Viki and YouTube, given their wide global reach, still play an important role in making Chinese pop content globally available, although there are some nuanced differences in their role. Viki and Netflix did not distribute Chinese content simply to help spread Chinese culture, but to satisfy their own user demand. The fact that they carry hundreds of Chinese titles is an indication of global popularity of Chinese content. Unlike Ai Yi Fan, whose audience is predominantly the Chinese diaspora, Viki and Netflix reach a much diverse global audience. Although it is unclear how many of those watching Chinese titles on Viki and Netflix are outside the Chinese diaspora, at least these platforms have made many Chinese titles available to anyone who is willing to click on them. YouTube offers a huge amount of Chinese pop culture videos, but they are uploaded by the Chinese companies rather than through content licensing as with Viki and Netflix, because YouTube is an open platform with little gatekeeping. Through different distribution modes, these foreign platforms effectively facilitate the first-stage deterritorialization of Chinese content, as detailed below.

As of March 2024, Netflix listed about 80 Chinese documentaries, TV dramas and movies (including Hong Kong productions), including latest hits “Amidst a Snowstorm of Love” (在暴雪时分 *Zai Baoxue Shifen*) and “Judge Dee’s Mystery” (大唐狄公案 *Datang Digong An*). These shows can be found under “Chinese TV Shows and movies,” “Romantic Asian TV Shows” and other categories. Many of the TV dramas are productions by one of the three Chinese streaming services, for example:

- Love between Fairy and Devil (iQIYI)
- Word of Honor (YouKu)
- The King’s Avatar (Tencent)
- The Untamed (Tencent)
- Amidst a Snowstorm of Love (Tencent)

Viki provides a much bigger collection of Chinese TV shows. As of March 2024, Viki.com has more than 800 mainland China TV shows, including romance, historical drama, fantasy, crime and mystery, many of which are productions of the three streaming services. In 2022, viki.com featured a Tencent Video Zone, listing 42 TV shows produced and distributed by Tencent Video (see Figure 5). Viki’s platforms often have the latest episodes of the latest Chinese hits at about the same time they are available on Chinese platforms.

However, Viki is dwarfed by Ai Yi Fan in terms of most up-to-date offering of Chinese TV shows, movies, and reality TV shows. Ai Yi Fan even carries live streaming of major Chinese TV stations. Overseas Chinese can watch TV on this platform as if they were in China.

Given the enormous number of videos available on YouTube, it's impossible to count every single one of them. Each streaming service has one main YouTube channel, plus many other channels (see Table 2). Each main channel features multiple created playlists, such as the playlist of particulars TV drama series, or a playlist of behind-the-scenes videos of TV dramas. Each playlist contains anywhere between single digit to hundreds of videos. Together, the three main channels, plus dozens of other channels, provide hundreds of thousands of videos of Chinese pop culture content (see Table 2). Besides the huge amount, these YouTube videos also covers a wide range of genres (see Table 3), providing a rather comprehensive library of Chinese pop culture content.

The global operation of these streaming services has substantially advanced the first-stage deterritorialization of Chinese content. According to a report released by China's National Radio and Television Administration, "The 2022 Report on the International Communication of Chinese Television Dramas," television dramas, including web-only shows, of which iQIYI, Tencent Video and YouKu are the main producers and distributors, have become the "main export of China's audio visual programs and an important force in establishing the new configuration of international communication." Chinese television dramas have been shown in more than 200 countries and regions across the world. The report credits the international version of iQIYI, WeTV and YouKu as some of the main platforms for showing Chinese TV dramas, calling them the new developing force for international reach of Chinese content (Zhu et al. 2022). In fact, state media such as CCTV and CGTN have lagged far behind these private companies in providing Chinese media content, especially pop culture, to the world (see Table 4). By and large, "the commercial digital platforms are outperforming the state's cultural power emissaries" (Keane and Wu 2018, p. 62).

The widely available platforms and channels have made it a lot easier for international audiences to be exposed to Chinese content. "More and more foreign audiences are interested in the Chinese people's daily lives and different aspects of Chinese society," Yang Xianghua, an iQIYI executive, recently told Variety.com (Frater 2023). Pop culture provides a source for international audiences to learn about Chinese society, culture and history. The global popularity of "Love Between Fairy and Devil" and "Love Like A Galaxy," as well as their lead stars, are indications of global audience engaging with Chinese productions. *The New York Times* reviewed nearly 100 international TV shows available in the United States at the beginning of 2023 and selected five of them to recommend. "Meet Yourself" (去有风的地方 *Qu Youfeng de Difang*) is one of them. "This charming series," the article reads, "demonstrates that a Chinese producer can take the kind of romantic

dramedy churned out by American networks like Hallmark and Up and do it better: more subtly, more naturally, more resonantly, and with equal or higher production values” (Hale 2023). The author of this review watched this show on Rakuten Viki.

The researcher teaches an Asian pop culture class at an American university. Students in this class watched “Ripe Town” and “Reset” on YouTube, “The Rise of Phoenixes” (天盛长歌 *Tiansheng Changge*) and “The Wandering Earth” on Netflix, to name just a few. Based on their presentations and class papers, they were impressed by the characters, stories, the game of Go, the beautiful costumes and sets, as well as the individual sacrifices for the greater good, among other things, seen in these shows. Without these internationally available streaming platforms and rich content offering, such exposure and consumption won’t be possible. Through such exposure and consumption, symbolic expressions, ideas and meanings originated in China are now part of the media consumption and cultural experience of non-Chinese speakers, like these American college students.

As discussed earlier, deterritorialization is a two-stage process, including offering content made in one country to the global audience (first stage) and the latter consuming such content (second stage). The examples of content consumption provided above, including popularity of Chinese TV shows on Instagram, *New York Times* TV reviewer’s encounter of “Meet Yourself,” and American college students’ appreciation of Chinese TV dramas, are rather anecdotal. More systematic and comprehensive study of overseas audience’s consumption and reception of China-produced content requires separate research design and data collection.

4.4 Challenges and risks

As shown in the preceding discussion, Chinese streaming services have become a contender in global media markets (see Figure 6). However, their global excursion still faces many challenges and risks. The “going out” of China’s culture “remains a work-in-progress” (Keane 2019, p. 253).

For starter, all three streaming services are still a long way to upend the global dominance of English-language platforms such as Netflix and Disney+ (Tang and Wei 2023). So far, people watching or subscribing to overseas platforms of Chinese streaming services are primarily the Chinese diaspora, and many of them reside in the Asia-Pacific region (Keane and Wu 2018; Keane 2019). Korean productions, in contrast, has been much more successful in engaging a global audience.

Netflix released its viewing data for the first six months of 2023. In the top 10 most watched shows, the Korean drama “The Glory” is ranked no. 3 with more than 622 million hours viewed. There are 15 Korean productions made it to the top 100 of this list, and zero Chinese titles. The most watched Chinese show on Netflix is “Meteor Garden,” ranked 856th on the list with more than 24 million hours viewed (Netflix 2023). Netflix made many of its Korean productions globally available while the Chinese titles are only available in certain regional markets, such as North America. That has to do with the fact that Netflix is the main investor and distributor of most of its Korean catalogue.

In 2023, Netflix announced it would invest US\$2.5 billion in the next five years to produce K-dramas, movies and reality shows. The company invested about US\$500 million in 2021 on Korean content, on top of the US\$700 million spent since 2016 (Bae and Toh 2023). Such deals are unheard of for Chinese productions. The collaboration between Netflix and Chinese streaming services, such as iQIYI, mostly focuses on content licensing rather than direct investment, let alone in such huge amounts (Keane 2019; Keane and Wu 2018). Chinese cultural industry, and perhaps the Chinese state, may never entertain such foreign investment in content production, as this model yields control to an American company like Netflix and perpetuates Western dominance of global cultural production and distribution, which could be seen as another form of cultural imperialism (Jin 2007).

These streaming services face other risks in their global expansion, as mentioned in their annual reports (Alibaba Group 2022; iQIYI 2022; Tencent Holdings 2022):

- Changing Chinese and international laws and regulations, including laws regarding investment and operations by foreign companies [considering the looming ban on TikTok].
- Tightening control of the Chinese government on internet operations and content offering. Lack of creative freedom and the ability to take creative risks pose a major hurdle for Chinese content to engage international audience (Keane 2019).
- Difficulty in catering to a wide range of tastes, preferences and expectations of a global audience, including providing content that is culturally and socially appropriate in certain regions.
- Uncertainty in geopolitical situations, including possible conflicts.

The proceeding discussion demonstrates that for these companies to continue to grow their business outside China, they have to navigate the tension between state power, market forces, and users both in China and globally (Dai 2012; Keane and Fung 2018). They are perpetually solving the puzzle of generating content that satisfies the

party state's governance needs while also being attractive to a global audience (Keane 2010).

4.5 Analysis of findings

Based on the findings presented above, this study makes the following three analytical and theoretical arguments about the global reach of China's pop culture content within the conceptual framework of deterritorialization.

First, the first stage of deterritorialization of Chinese pop culture content, i.e., the offering of Chinese content globally, is now carried out with scale, synergy and strings attached. The findings about the platforms and content offering have shown that the global reach of Chinese pop content is carried out at a scale, with multiple multilingual international platforms, more than 80 YouTube channels, thousands of shows, and hundreds of thousands of videos. Such a scale is enabled by global conglomerates that are many things in one: tech companies, internet companies, e-commerce providers, logistic network operators, as well as content producers, distributors and exhibitors. Different parts of their complex businesses influence and support each other, forming synergy. "Digital media and entertainment is a natural extension of our strategy to capture consumption beyond our commerce businesses," states Alibaba's 2022 annual report. "This synergy delivers a superior entertainment experience, increases customer loyalty and improves monetization for content providers across the ecosystem" (Alibaba Group 2022, p. 25). Tencent has a vast international gaming business and Tencent Video helps promote and strengthen that business by offering shows featuring attractive professional gamers, such as Ye Xiu in "The King's Avatar." Tencent games, such as Cross Fire and Honor of Kings, are also featured in popular shows, "Cross Fire" and "You Are My Glory," respectively. IQIYI's business is rather concentrated on video streaming, but uses its YouTube channel to tease out their latest and hottest shows, luring viewers to their paid platforms. This can be seen as cross-platform synergy.

The various challenges and risks facing these companies indicate that they have many strings attached. "China offers unique challenges such as strict censorship, government intervention, unclear regulations and underdeveloped industry mechanisms" (Peng and Keane 2019, p. 10). The three companies face these obstacles to become even stronger competitors in the global streaming market. Nonetheless, while lots of studies are about what the Chinese media are not allowed to do, this

study has demonstrated what these streaming services can accomplish despite all the strings attached.

Second, the private sector has become the main force of the first step of deterritorializing Chinese media content: removing the content from its country of origin and bringing it to the rest of the world. The Chinese government used to lead the venture of Chinese media into the global market (Zhang 2007). That role is now largely taken over by private-sector streaming services with their various platforms available throughout the world and vast content offering, both in terms of variety and quantity. These private-sector media companies can be more effective in engaging the global audience than state media entities. They are more sensitive and responsive to market demand and therefore can produce more compelling and entertaining content, while the state media are slow-moving and insufficient in providing compelling content (de Burgh 2017; Keane 2010; Keane and Wu 2018). They also don't bear the kind of international stigma often associated with China's state media: too much political propaganda and ideological preaching, which has resulted in low credibility, suspicions, and hostilities among global audiences (de Burgh 2017; Hu and Ji 2012; Keane and Wu 2018).

Third, the global reach of China pop is expanding cultural deterritorialization around the world as a process and consequence of cultural globalization, further disrupting the global cultural configuration. "There is little doubt that the availability of media material emanating from a major non-western center [i.e., China] of global media production complicates the discourse about international media" (de Burgh 2017, p. 4). Chinese streaming services have brought Chinese stories, Chinese people's experiences, Chinese culture, values and world views to the rest of the world. These discourses and representations add to "the diversity, variety and richness of popular and local discourses, codes and practices" (Featherstone 1990, p. 2). The global reach of Chinese media content has contributed to "increasing interconnectedness of varied local cultures," which gives rise to a "world culture," where "the world has become one network of social relationships, and between its different regions there is a flow of meanings as well as of people and goods" (Hannerz 1990, p. 237).

Overall, the global reach of Chinese streaming services, as mapped out in this study, is significant both theoretically and practically. Global availability of Chinese content has contributed even more ingredients to an already complex global cultural mixture, adding to the uncertainty and ambiguity caused by deterritorialization (Hannerz 1990; Tomlinson 1999). The global expansion of Chinese streaming services further complicates the configuration of global cultural landscape: no more core versus periphery, but multicentered, multi sources; instead of one-way flow, it's

multiway flow; instead of the West versus the rest, it's an interconnected world (Hannerz 1990; King 1990; Tomlinson 1999). At the same time, it also generates more possibilities, inspires more imaginations and perspectives. The cultural meanings from China can be part of the mixture of global audience's lived cultural experiences and cultural identification, although it remains to be seen and yet to be studied on how global audience, especially non-Chinese descendents, are consuming and engaging Chinese content.

5 Conclusions

Through a close examination of various platforms and content offered by the top three Chinese streaming services, iQIYI, Tencent Video and YouKu, this study has provided a comprehensive review of these services' international operation and started mapping out the global presence of Chinese pop culture content.

This study contributes to the rising field of research on global expansion of Chinese media in several ways. It focuses on export of pop culture content rather than news or other kind of practical information. It provides a close-up, comprehensive, and cross-platform analysis of the global reach of private-sector Chinese streaming services, differentiating itself from previous studies focusing on state-run media outlets and macro level policy, political economy, or geopolitical analyses. It conceptualizes China's content export as the first stage of cultural deterritorialization (Tomlinson 1999) and therefore offers new theoretical insights on the global reach of Chinese cultural content specifically and cultural globalization in general. Furthermore, this study advances the conceptual framework of deterritorialization by specifying the two stages of its process: foreign cultural content producers sending the content, and local audiences consuming it.

This study conceptualizes the global reach of Chinese streaming services as the first-stage of deterritorialization of China-made content and symbolic goods. It argues that this stage is now done on a scale, with synergy and strings attached. It also argues that private-sector media companies are the main force disseminating Chinese pop culture content globally, in many ways outperforming state-run media. Finally, this study argues that the global expansion of Chinese content further complicates but also advances cultural globalization, providing more options of media consumption, more opportunities for cultural representation, and more possibilities for meaning formation.

As Curtin (2012) once stated, the case of globalization of Chinese media calls for new approaches. By conceptualizing the global reach of Chinese streaming services

as the first stage of cultural deterritorialization, this study transcends the long-established theoretical framework of cultural imperialism, the West versus the rest construct, and the center versus periphery dichotomy. It makes theoretical contributions to the broader discussion of cultural globalization, while advancing the theoretical framework of deterritorialization by highlighting the information senders.

There are also some limitations of this study. The global reach of Chinese content is not the entire process of cultural deterritorialization, which includes both the supplying and consuming of foreign cultural products. Who are the audiences? Are they mainly overseas Chinese or more diverse global audiences? How do global audiences engage with Chinese content? Does such pop cultural export have real impact on China’s soft power (Chu 2014; Keane 2010, 2019; Keane and Wu 2018; Nye 1990)? This study does not answer these questions. Future research can explore these areas.

Table 1: Main platforms and features of iQIYI, Tencent Video and YouKu (as of March 2024).

	iQIYI	Tencent	YouKu
Websites	https://www.iqiyi.com/ (Chinese site) https://www.iq.com/?lang=en_us (international site)	https://v.qq.com/ (Chinese site) https://wetv.vip/en?language=en (international site)	https://youku.com/ (Chinese site) https://youku.tv/ (international site)
Desktop app	Mac or PC (Chinese and international versions)	Mac or PC; can switch between Chinese and overseas versions	Mac or PC
Mobile app	Chinese mobile app: only available in mainland China	Chinese mobile app, developed by Tencent Technology (Shenzhen) Company	Chinese mobile app, developed by YouKu.com Inc.
	International mobile app, developed by iQIYI International Singapore	International mobile app, developed by Image Future Investment (HK) Limited	International mobile app, developed by Jet Brilliant Inc.
Smart TV App	China and overseas	China and overseas	China only
Subscription rate (standard regular rate; promotions and discounts excluded)	Chinese services: RMB25/month; RMB238/year	Chinese services: RMB35/month; RMB298/year	Chinese services: RMB25/month; RMB258/year
	International services: USD8.99/month; USD89.99/year	International services: USD7.99/month; USD71.99/year	International services: USD5.99/month; USD56.99/year
Payment options	Chinese services: Zhifubao, Weixin Pay	Chinese services: Weixin Pay, QQ wallet, Q coin, Caifutong, etc.	Chinese services: Zhifubao, Weixin Pay

Table 1: (continued)

	iQIYI	Tencent	YouKu
Language options	International services: credit card, debit card, Apple ID	International services: Apple ID	International services: Apple ID
	Chinese platforms: Chinese only	Chinese platforms: Chinese only	Chinese platforms: Chinese only
Log-in options	International platforms: 12 languages	International platforms: 12 languages	International platforms: 8 languages
	Chinese platforms: SMS, WeChat, QQ, Weibo, Baidu, Apple ID	Chinese platforms: QQ, WeChat, SMS	Chinese platforms: SMS, Taobao, Zhifubao, WeChat, QQ, Weibo
	International platforms: SMS, Google, Facebook, Apple ID	International platforms: SMS, email, Facebook, Google, Line, Apple ID	International platforms: Google, Facebook, Apple ID

Appendix: Tables and figures

Table 2: Overview of YouTube channels offered by iQIYI, Tencent Video and YouKu (as of March 2024).

	iQIYI	Tencent Video	YouKu
Main YouTube channel URL	https://www.youtube.com/@iQIYIofficial	https://www.youtube.com/@TencentVideo	https://www.youtube.com/@youku-official
Main channel subscribers	5.6 million	8.21 million	4.83 million
Number of videos on main channel	31,000	47,000	51,000
Number of YouTube channels (main channel included)	34	27	28
Full episode availability	Only short clips; VIP (\$9.99/month) can view full episodes	Full episodes free; paid members (\$3.99/month) can view the latest episodes as soon as it is uploaded; non-members have to wait for a few days	Full episodes free; paid members (\$2.99/month) can view the latest episodes as soon as it is uploaded; non-members have to wait for a few days

Table 3: Type of content and examples on the main YouTube channels of iQIYI, Tencent Video and YouKu.

Categories		Examples
TV dramas	Contemporary	Romance 夜色倾心 <i>Yese Qingxin</i> Night of Love with You (Tencent)
		Family 摇滚狂花 <i>Yaogun Kuanghua</i> Rock it Mom (iQIYI)
		Crime/ mystery 冰雨火 <i>Bing Yu Huo</i> Being A Hero (YouKu)
		Career 玫瑰之战 <i>Meigui Zhizhan</i> Rose War (Tencent)
	Costume/ historical	Romance 梦华录 <i>Meng Hua Lu</i> A Dream of Splendor (Tencent)
		Swords- man 山河令 <i>Shanhe Ling</i> (YouKu)
		Palace/ politics 风起皇城 <i>Fengqi Huangcheng</i> The Imperial City of Fengqi (YouKu)
		Fantasy 沉香如屑 <i>Chenxiang Ruxie</i> Immortal Samsara (YouKu)
Movie Trailers	Chinese	唐朝诡事录 <i>Tangchao Guishi Lu</i> Strange Tales of Tang Dynasty (iQIYI)
		雷震子: 封神缘起 <i>Leizenzi: Fengshen Yuanqi</i> Thunder Twins (iQIYI)
		明妹的日子 <i>Mingmei de Rizi</i> My Sister's Day (Tencent)
		这!就是街舞 第二季 <i>Zhe Jiushi Jiewu</i> Street Dance Of China S2 (YouKu)
Variety TV Shows	Games	心动的信号 S2 <i>Xindong de Xinhao</i> Heart Signal S2 (Tencent)
	Talent competitions	象牙山爱逗团 <i>Xiangyashan Aidou Tuan</i> Ivory Mountain Love Fun Group (YouKu)
	Dating/romance	全职高手 S1, S2 <i>Quanshi Gaoshou</i> The King's Avatar S1, S2 (Tencent)
	Outdoor/travel	一路象北 <i>Yilu Xiangbei</i> All the Way North (YouKu)
Animations	Chinese	独家花絮:沈如琢戏外竟然这么惨?不仅要挨打还要 有文化 <i>Dujia Huaxu</i> A Dream of Splendor Behind the Scenes about Shen Ruzhuo (Tencent)
Document- aries	Chinese	Zhao Lusi Interview about Cheng Shaoshang (Tencent)
Extras	Behind the scenes	Word of Honor Concert (YouKu)
	Star interviews	新少年包拯片段 <i>Xin Shaonian Baozeng Pianduan</i> The Legend of Young Justice Bao Clips (YouKu)
	Fan events	
	Clips/trailers	

Table 4: International platforms of CCTV versus the private streaming services (as of March 2024).

	CCTV	iQIYI, Tencent Video, YouKu
Owned platforms	– CCTV-4 (live TV) – CGTN (web, mobile app, online streaming, radio) – CGTN Africa (web) – CGTV America (web, online streaming, mobile app) – CCTV+ (web, online streaming)	– Websites – Desktop apps – Mobile apps – Smart TV apps
Number of YouTube channels	16	89
Main YouTube channel subscribers	4.98 million (CCTV + CGTN main channels)	18.64 million
Other third-party platforms	Ai Yi Fan	Rakuten viki, Netflix, Ai Yi Fan
Content	News, documentaries, entertainment	Documentaries, entertainment

iQiyi				Tencent				YouKu			
Website		DesktopApp	MobileApp	Website	DesktopApp		MobileApp	Website	DesktopApp	MobileApp	
Chinese	International	Chinese	International	Chinese	Chinese Version	International Version	Chinese	International	Chinese	Chinese	International
电视剧	Drama	推荐	ForYou	精选	精选	精选	直播	Drama	电视剧	精选	小剧场
电影	VarietyShow	VIP会员	VIP	免费专区	中视频	电视剧	精选	综艺	电视剧	精选	Movie
云影院	Movie	片单行	Drama	中视频	热点短视频	电影	发现	Anime	电影	电影	原创
会员中心	K-station	综艺	VarietyShow	电视剧	免费专区	综艺	电视剧		动漫	综艺	Variety
综艺	ThaiCollection	电视剧	Movie	电影	世界杯	动漫	电影		少儿	少儿	电影
儿童	Kids	综艺	Kids	综艺	电视剧	少儿	综艺		纪录片	体育	综艺
动漫	Anime	综艺	Documentary	动漫	你正在追	纪录片	儿童		游戏	会员	动漫
游戏	Documentaries	动漫	K-Station	纪录片	综艺		动漫		学堂	音乐	少儿
纪录片		纪录片	ThaiCollection	云游戏	动漫		纪录片		VIP会员	动漫	纪录片
体育		知识		世界杯	少儿		动漫		直播直播	游戏	经典
知识		新片		VIP会员	纪录片		短视频		体育	搞笑	港剧场
小说		风云榜		传奇游戏库	VIP会员		爱玩		娱乐	娱乐	体育
漫画				游戏	游戏		世界杯		文化	纪实	快看
风云榜				科技	王者荣耀		新征程		直播	汽车	直播
公益				音乐	NBA		知识		音乐	科技	资讯
VR				NBA	体育		体育		汽车	公益	文化
随机热点				欧冠	WWE		游戏		时尚	文化	资讯
娱乐				德甲	微电影		电竞		母婴	财经	短剧
音乐				中超	知识		音乐		生活	旅游	新知
搞笑				体育	学堂		生活		公益	时尚	学堂
军事				知识	艺术		时尚		电竞	亲子	游戏
汽车				学堂	音乐		草场地				
资讯				艺术	母婴				片库		
生活				财经	新闻						
母婴				生活	娱乐						
时尚				健康							
健康				汽车							
科技				育儿							

Figure 1: Content category of the three platforms (all categories are top level categories shown on the homepage main menu. All categories recorded on March 16, 2024).



Figure 2: Screenshots of iQIYI Chinese website (top) and International website (bottom) homepages on October 20, 2022.

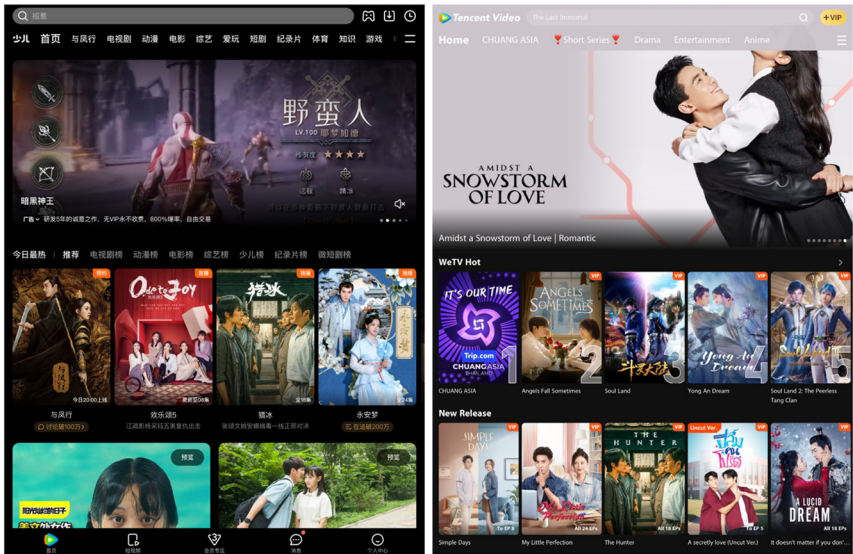


Figure 3: iPad screenshots of Tencent Video’s Chinese mobile app (left) and international mobile app (right) (March 2024).



Figure 4: iPad screenshots of YouKu’s Chinese mobile app (left) and international mobile app (right) (March 2024).

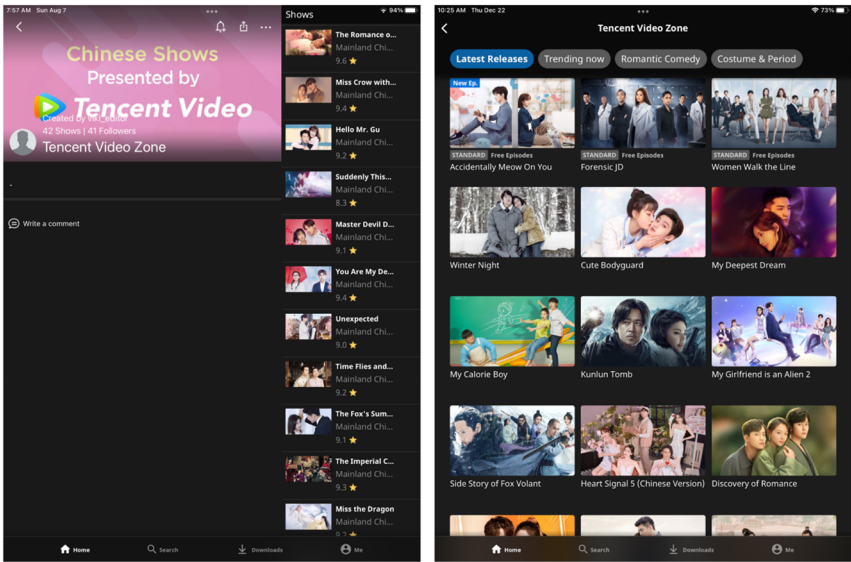


Figure 5: Screenshots of Tencent video zone on viki mobile app (2022).

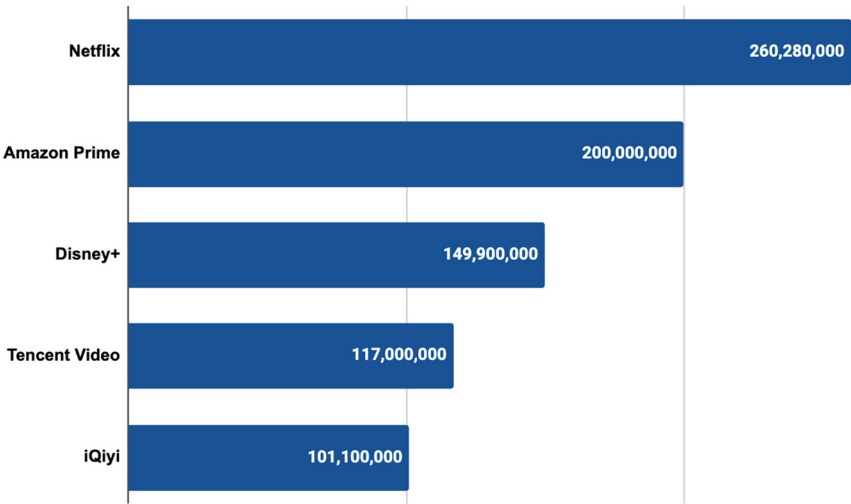


Figure 6: Subscribers of world's top streaming services by the end of 2023 (data source: FlixPatrol, financial reports of Tencent and iQIYI).

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