



Minerva Access is the Institutional Repository of The University of Melbourne

Author/s:

Khoo, O;Martin, F;Yue, A

Title:

Introduction: Australia in the field of trans-Asian media flows

Date:

2020-02-22

Citation:

Khoo, O., Martin, F. & Yue, A. (2020). Introduction: Australia in the field of trans-Asian media flows. *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture and Policy: quarterly journal of media research and resources*, 175 (1), pp.3-5. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X20907410>.

Persistent Link:

<https://hdl.handle.net/11343/322010>

Introduction: Australia in the field of trans-Asian media flows

Media International Australia

1–3

© The Author(s) 2020

Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/1329878X20907410

journals.sagepub.com/home/mia**Olivia Khoo**

Monash University, Australia

Fran Martin

The University of Melbourne, Australia

Audrey Yue

National University of Singapore, Singapore

Although it has long been considered a non-Asian country located in Asia, Australia is increasingly linked to Asian media circuits, and the rise of the Asian media industries is changing Australian media culture. At the level of consumption, Asian media content – from Bollywood film to Japanese TV to Chinese online video to Korean social media and K-pop – is now more readily accessible than ever to media users in Australia due to broadband connectivity and mobile media technologies, as well as (more unevenly) via mainstream commercial distribution. This increased access is not only helping Australia's Asian migrant populations maintain cultural ties; it is also creating new media tastes for the general Australian audience. Meanwhile, at the level of production, Australian governments, keen to harness the potential for the country's involvement in the region's expanding media industries, are exploring new ways to support Australia's screen media industries by establishing regional partnerships. This Special Issue of *Media International Australia* grows out of a collaborative research project funded by the Australian Research Council to explore the cultural and industrial implications of these unfolding developments. It seeks to understand how these intensifying media flows across Asia, and including Australia, are transforming the cultural identities of Australian audiences and media products.

The papers in this Special Issue explore transnational Asian media engagements by audiences in Australia through a range of cultural texts, examining the limits of media-based 'soft power' in Australia. In their article, 'If You Are the One and SBS: The Cultural Economy of Difference', Wanning Sun and Jing Han analyse the popular Chinese television dating programme, *If You Are the One*, which screened on Australia's Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) and attracted a cult following among English-speaking viewers. Seeking to uncover the programme's transnational appeal, the authors address the challenges as well as the opportunities facing Australia's media

Corresponding author:

Olivia Khoo, Monash University, Caulfield East, VIC 3145, Australia.

Email: olivia.khoo@monash.edu

industries when working with Asian content, in seeking to appeal not only to Asian diasporas in Australia but also to mainstream English-speaking audiences.

Relatedly, Aline Scott-Maxwell's 'K-Pop Flows and Indonesian Student Pop Scenes: Situating Live Asian Pop Music in an "Asian" Australia' considers the possibility of cross-border dialogues and the role of transnational media in migrant and diasporic public spheres. Tracing the flow of Asian pop music genres, especially Korean popular music (K-pop), into Australia, Scott-Maxwell notes that Australia has become a significant destination in the international concert circuit for pop stars from East Asia. Riding the success of the Korean Wave (*hallyu*), young Asian Australians and international students from Asia are consuming K-pop and other Asian pop media in various digital formats (e.g. via SBS' *Pop Asia*, a streamed digital radio channel), as well as at live concert events by touring Asian pop artists. Examining two live Asian pop events, Soundsekerta, a pop and rock concert targeted at international students from Indonesia, and Asia Pop Fest, a concert of Asian pop acts, Scott-Maxwell highlights how these events are generative of a 'collective sense of belonging and empowerment' within these two audience groups.

Shifting the focus to the realm of geopolitics, the next paper by Denise Woods, 'From Eurovision to Asiavision: the Eurovision Asia Song Contest and negotiation of Australia's cultural identities' considers the media's role in diplomatic relations between Australia and Asian nations. Woods examines the circumstances surrounding the thwarted launch of the Eurovision Asia Song Contest, a competition spinoff from Europe's Eurovision, that was planned to be organised and led by Australia. Whereas Eurovision began as a post-war project to unify Europe in the cultural sphere, the regional identity promoted by the Eurovision Asia Song Contest poses a different set of questions about the role Australia plays as the organising country of this (yet to be launched) singing competition. As Woods notes, 'Australia's engagement in regional programmes is a shift from the perception of Australia as being a European nation located in the Asia-Pacific region to a nation that is part of the Asia-Pacific region'. Australia's insider-outsider status, as Woods notes, consists in its being 'part European, geographically Asian and increasingly demographically Asian-Australian'.

Nicole Talmacs' 'Chinese Cinema and Australian Audiences: An Exploratory Study' explores a set of questions about collaborations between Australian and Chinese media producers. Talmacs notes that China's involvement in the Australian film industry has grown steadily over the last decade, due in part to an official film co-production treaty between Australia and China coming into effect in 2008, and to the acquisition of the Hoyts Group cinema chain and advertising company by China's Wanda Cinema Line in 2016. Through focused interviews and post-screening discussions with Australian audiences of Chinese films with Australian involvement in production, distribution or exhibition, Talmacs' study provides illuminating insights on audience engagement and awareness of the increasing interrelations between the two film industries.

The final paper in this Special Issue, Claudia Astarita and Allan Patience's 'Chinese students' access to media information in Australia and France: A Comparative Perspective' takes a timely look at forms of media use and engagement by Chinese students studying abroad, in light of growing numbers of international student enrolments in higher education institutions in Australia and elsewhere. Through a series of in-depth interviews with Chinese students in Australia and France, the authors explore the differences in how Chinese international students in Australia engage with Chinese media sources when looking for information about China, in contrast to how Chinese students enrolled in a French university access the same material. The paper raises important questions about how Chinese international students use and relate to foreign media during their time studying abroad and prompts a consideration of how foreign media can better engage with Chinese international student communities.

While Australia may seem a minor player in the circuits and flows of trans-Asian media, it is our contention that a consideration of these diverse topics and questions in and from Australia can enrich the study of trans-Asian media, and contribute in significant ways to ongoing discussions about the place of Australia within regional circuits of Asian media and culture.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The editors gratefully acknowledge the Australian Research Council's funding of DP160100304.