

Chinese media in South Africa: attitudes and awareness amongst media practitioners

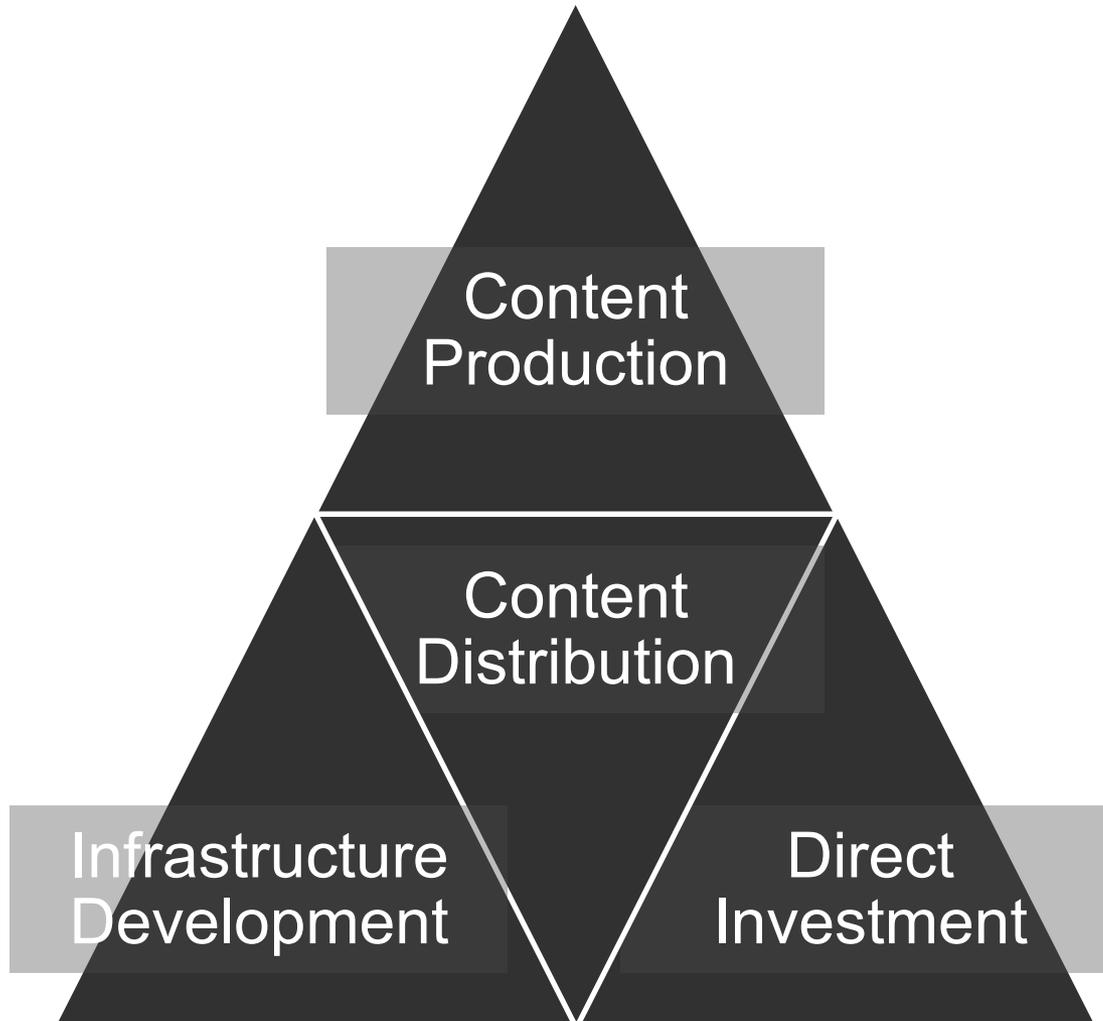
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Beijing, 12/13 June 2015

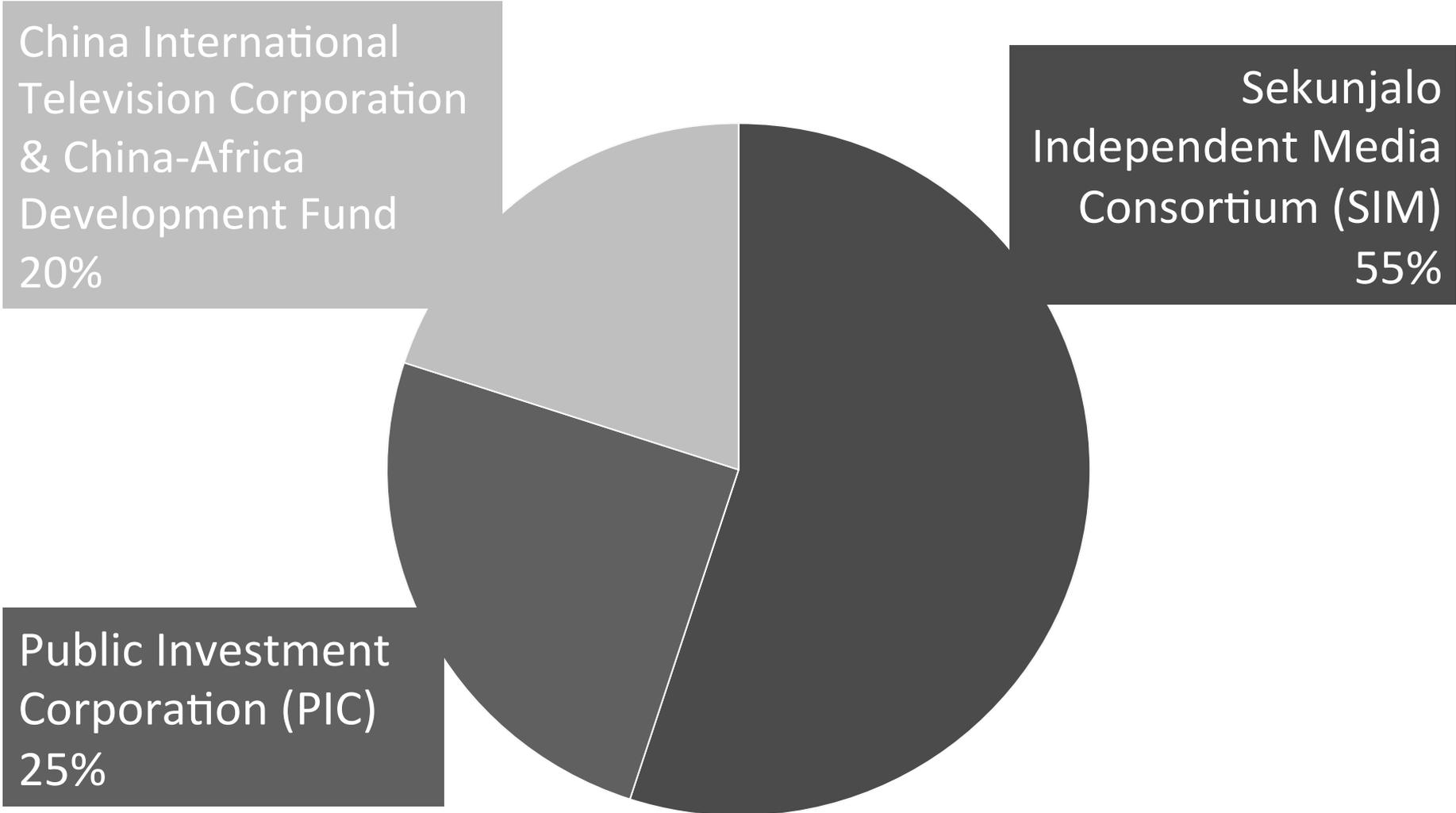
Outline

1. South Africa-China media relations
2. Assessing China's impact – the research project
3. Background
4. Findings
 1. Awareness
 2. Journalistic relevance
 3. Professional influence
 4. Long-term impact
5. Conclusions

Chinese media in Africa



Independent Media | Shares



Independent Media | Portfolio

THE INDEPENDENT
on Saturday

Isolezwe
Iwele umfala ugqwelo

Isolezwe
ngoMgqibelo

Isolezwe
ngeSonto

POST
THE VOICE AND HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

PRETORIA NEWS

THE SUNDAY
independent

SUNDAY TRIBUNE

THE MERCURY

Weekend Argus

Cape Argus

PRETORIA NEWS
WEEKEND

CAPE TIMES

Daily News

DFA

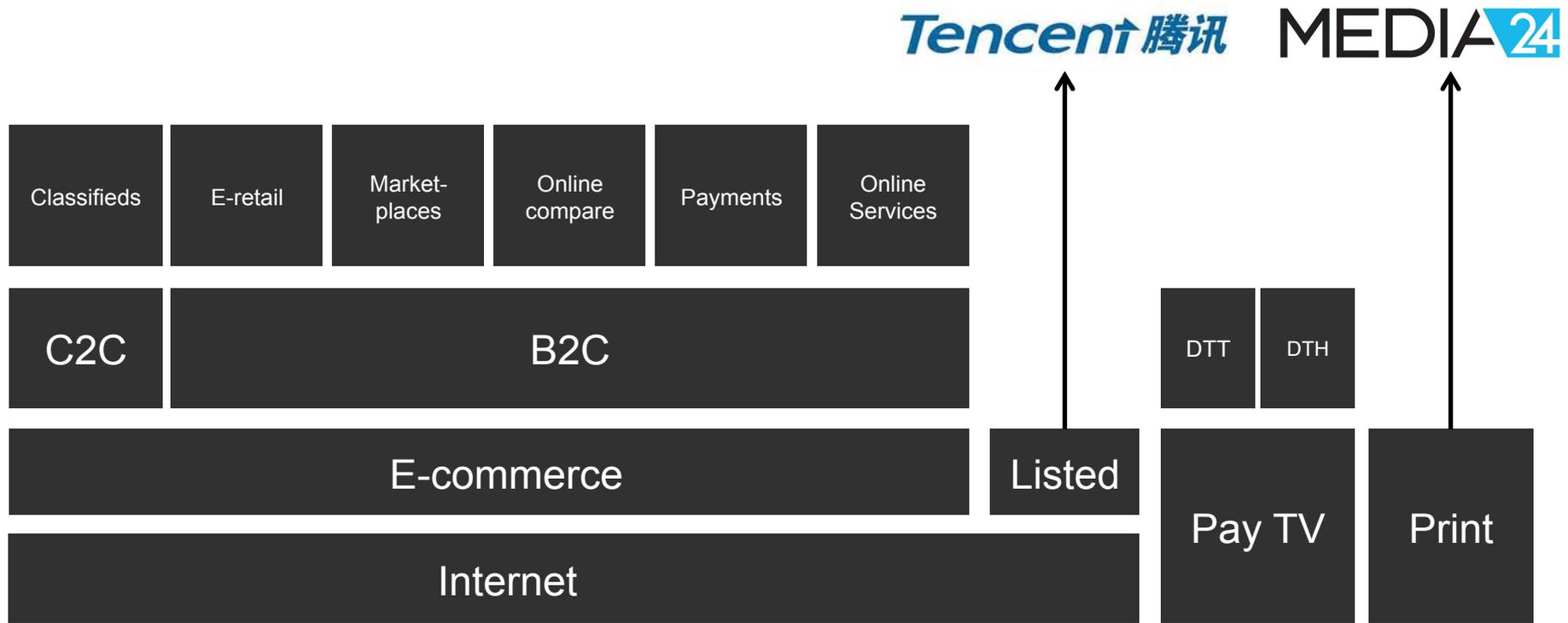
The Star

SATURDAY Star

Independent Media & China

- Exchange agreement with CCTV for provision of multimedia content.
- Cooperation between Xinhua and the newly created Africa News Agency (ANA).
- MoU signed in 2014 to start a 'new media platform for the continent'.

Naspers | Structure



Adapted from <http://www.naspers.com/page.html?pageID=10>

Naspers & China

- Derives most of its profit from its investment in Tencent (34%).
- Investment in Beijing Media Corporation, publisher of the *Beijing Youth Daily* (北京青年报).
- There are no content exchange agreements between Naspers and its Chinese partners.

Research Project



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South African Media and the New Geopolitics of Communication Research Project

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The project

Find out more about the group and the main areas of research.

<http://www.sachinamedia.info>

Gauging audience impact

- Focus Groups across South African universities
- Nation-wide survey of policy makers, political figures and opinion leaders
- In-depth interviews with media practitioners and policy makers

Method

- We conducted 18 interviews in Gauteng and the Western Cape over a period of 2 months.
- Semi-structured face-to-face interviews, except for two phone interviews, lasting between 30 to 120 minutes.
- Interviews were divided into four blocks:
 - Awareness
 - Journalistic relevance
 - Professional influence
 - Long-term impact

Interviewees

Position	Organization
Journalist	Weekly paper
Policy maker	National think tank
Africa Editor	Weekly paper
Senior Manager	TV station
Journalist	Online publication
Correspondent	Online publication
Journalist	Weekly paper
China analyst	SA university
Freelance writer	Online publication

Position	Organization
China Analyst	SA university
Senior Reporter	Weekly paper
Editor	Media group
Editor	Media group
Media analyst	SA University
Editor	General daily
Media officer	Government office
Foreign editor	National newspaper
Senior Journalist	English daily

Awareness

- Xinhua and CCTV are the brands that resonate the most with informants. But 'brand recognition' does not equate to regular consumption.
- Senior staff are generally more familiar with Chinese media operations in Africa than those reporters that would be expected to use them in their work.

Journalistic relevance

- There's a relative resonance with the idea of 'positive stories' about Africa advocated by Chinese media.
- Those who know the work of Chinese media in Africa tend to praise their Africa coverage.

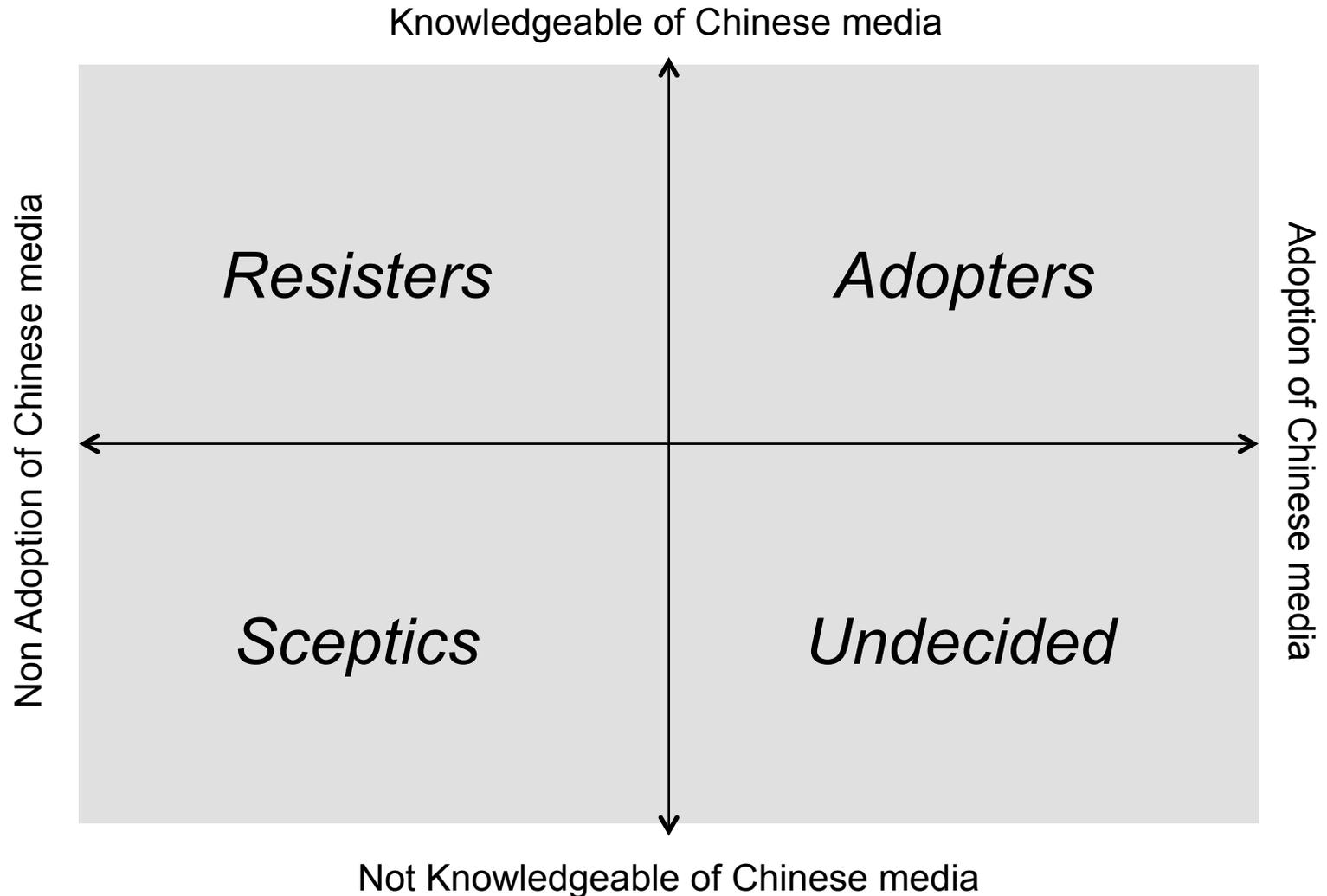
Professional influence

- Very little penetration of CCTV, Xinhua and *China Daily* in the newsroom. CRI was never mentioned.
- Respondents resort to online sources (Twitter, Facebook...) often, but the presence of Chinese media in these platforms is still residual.

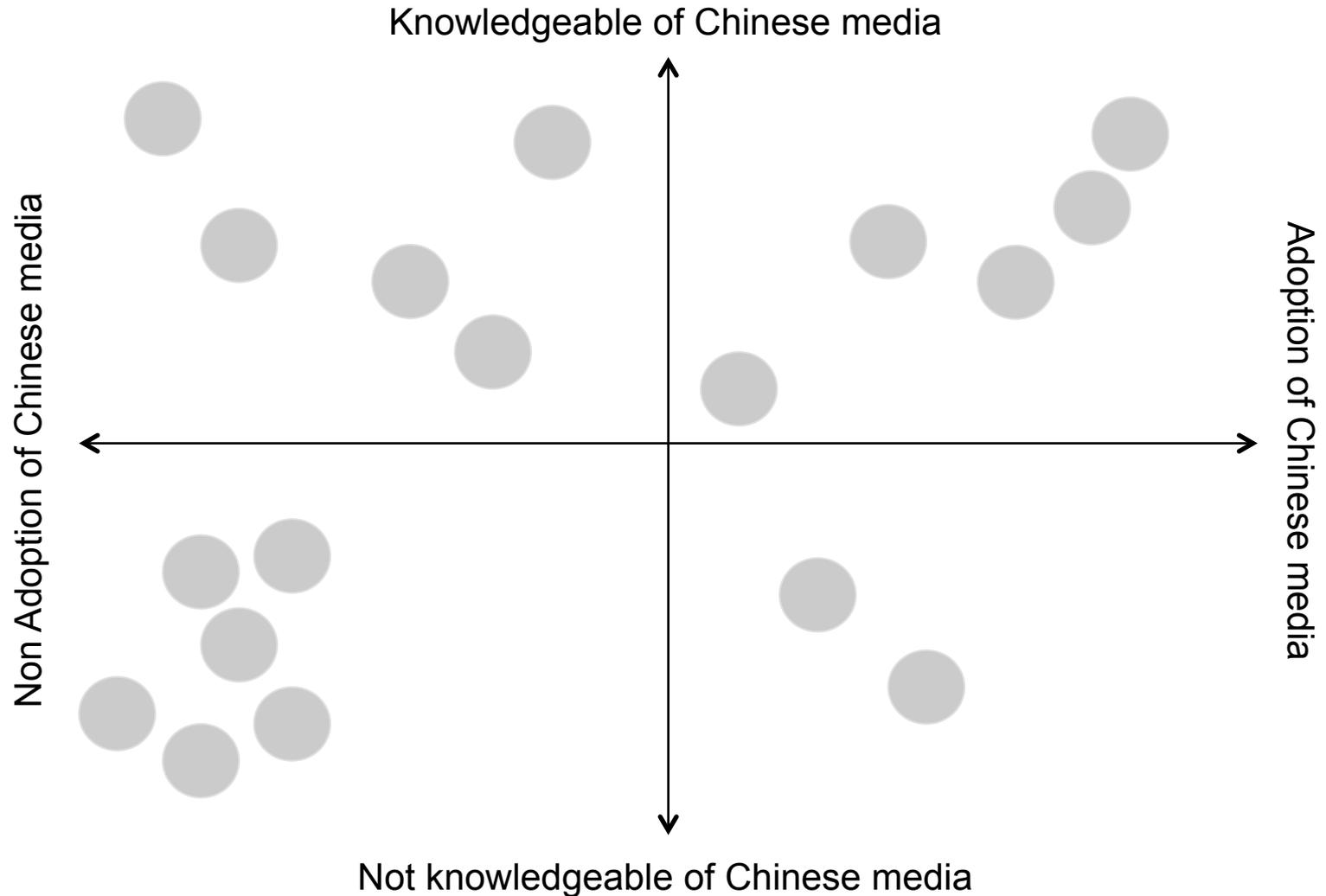
Long-term impact

- Scepticism dominates opinions about the nature of South Africa-China relations.
- Journalists and editors alike consider South African and Chinese journalism diametrically different, thus making any impact of Chinese media on South African media unlikely.

A framework of analysis



An approximate picture



An Adopter

«I do [watch CCTV] actually. Mainly, not as much as I ought to. I do, I think that their Africa coverage is very good. I think it is good from the point of view that they clearly are investing. They have, I think, a stronger commitment to using local people than, say, CNN or BBC. And they tend to do stories that are not necessarily on the main agendas. So, no no, I do watch CCTV.»

Senior Manager, TV Station

An Adopter

«If the Chinese perspective is that the motivation for every story we do, has to be in line with our foreign policy objectives, maybe that is problematic. But I don't see it when I watch some of the CCTV offerings on Africa.»

Senior Manager, TV Station

An Adopter

«We still suffer from the legacy of the Cold War. [...] You'd be at hard press, to find ordinary, reasonably intelligent Europeans to watch Al Jazeera as their first choice. They'd probably think of it as an Islamic, and I use the term deliberately, mouthpiece. I have friends and associates who won't watch CNN at all. So why is it so difficult for CCTV, or for Chinese media to make an impression? It is about changing generations, notions of what is good media. [...] It's a very difficult egg to crack.»

Senior Manager, TV Station

A Sceptic

«(...) I watch Russia Today

[Do you also watch CCTV?]

No.

[Is there a reason why?]

No, not really. Ok my husband is also a big consumer of news, so we tend to consume news together, like on TV. I think both of us, none of us, think about China very like in favourable terms or very positively about China... He watched China Today (sic.) once, but he was laughing... he just kept saying: 'Aghh, these Chinese people, these Chinese people' he was like, what they are doing is not important or what they are saying is not relevant.'»

Editor, Weekly paper

A Resister

«Not really, and that's not because... it's just that it's not established on my radar. It's not because I have any sort of ideological problem with Chinese news.

[...]

There is an element of suspicion when it comes to Chinese media reporting on Chinese issues and I will say that I do not trust Chinese media in that regard. But for general issues, I don't have a problem at all and, you know a lot of the Africa stuff being produced is very good. »

Correspondent, Online publication

A Resister

«[...] the perception of having worked for Chinese media, I think, is still too dangerous in the journalism sphere. I felt that if I had three years at *China Daily* on my CV that would have tarnished my credibility in the eyes of future recruitment editors [...]. There would have been a perception of partiality and bias, and yeah, I'm not sure that's Chinese media's fault, but that is what I worried about when I was assessing it in terms of long term career prospects.»

Correspondent, Online publication

An undecided

“I don't exactly know their agency and how it works...

[It's called Xinhua]

I think I've heard, read about it.”

“(...)the Chinese channel I haven't really watched. I don't know why. It is an interesting question...

Maybe there's a perception that [it] is government biased, propaganda as well, but I haven't checked it out as well to have an informed view about it.”

Editor, Daily Newspaper

Conclusions (I)

- Views and attitudes towards Chinese media are diverse and suggest a complex and nuanced relationship between South Africa's media practitioners and Chinese media.
- Data offers evidence to debunk the idea that, despite their increased presence in the country, Chinese media are having a profound impact on South African.

Conclusions (II)

- While data reveals a slow incorporation of certain Chinese media, mainly Xinhua, into the toolkit of some journalists, there is still widespread scepticism.

Way forward

- The replicability of the research design allows for **multi-country** comparisons:
 - On-going research in Kenya.
 - Interest in exploring other countries.
- Project to systematically record **access** and **availability** of Chinese media in Africa.

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