The Development of Shashi and Foshan Cable TV and Their Subscribers’ Program-Watching Behavior

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In recent years, mainland China has witnessed rapid development in the cable TV industry. The Shashi and Foshan cable TV stations were among the first to begin operations, are currently well-developed, and have served as models for many other cable TV stations during their initial stages. The objective of this paper is to study the development and management of these two stations and the program-watching behavior of their subscribers. The methodologies include literature review, personal interviews, and questionnaires.

Keywords: Shashi (Hubei), Foshan (Guangdong), cable TV industry, data processing, channel and program arrangements

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With the development of broadcasting technology, cable TV and satellite TV have become popular areas for mass media studies and investment. Cable TV systems are so widespread in Taiwan that some operators have begun considering the feasibility of investing in mainland China’s cable TV industry.

Over the past ten years or so, the cable TV industry has rapidly developed in cities and towns throughout the Chinese mainland. The trend began with community antennas in the 1970s, and in the following decade many enterprises ran cable TV stations to provide broadcasting services to their own employees. However, with only a small number of viewers, these stations’ development was limited. In the early 1990s, regional cable TV stations which offered services according to administrative districts were set up. With a large number of potential subscribers, they will eventually become the mainstream in mainland China’s cable TV industry.

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At present, mainland China has three kinds of cable TV transmission systems: cable TV stations, cable TV centers, and community antenna systems. According to the Local Administration Department of the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC’s) Ministry of Radio, Film, and Television (MRFT), by the end of July 1993 mainland China had more than 2,000 cable TV stations and 15 million subscriber households, ranking second in the world.¹

In view of potential profits, mainland Chinese cable TV stations are competing for their own share of the market. For instance, Shanghai Cable TV’s total subscribers increased rapidly from 95,000 households in July 1993 to 720,000 households in January 1994; by the end of the year, that number had further increased to one million.² Without a doubt, this rapidly expanding market is very attractive to Taiwan’s cable TV operators.

People in the Chinese mainland and Taiwan share the same history, culture, and language, but forty years of separation have created differences in their thinking and tastes. In addition, mainland China’s policies toward the cable TV industry have not been clear-cut and the central and local governments have each gone their own way. As a result, although Taiwan cable TV operators are very much interested in investing in mainland China, they feel the need to gain a better picture of mainland Chinese cable TV stations and policies.

To understand the current situation, regulations, and investment feasibility of the mainland Chinese cable TV industry, Taiwan scholars and cable TV operators have begun studying the industry; some have already published research reports.³ Regional cable TV stations that have great potential include those in cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Wuhan, as well as other cities and towns. To further understand the concrete development conditions of the industry, the author conducted a survey of the cable TV stations of Shashi City in Hubei Province and Foshan City in Guangdong Province.

Although small in size, Shashi and Foshan were among the first cities in mainland China with cable TV services. Foshan Cable TV

¹Yu-li Liu, *Dahu youxian dianshi jiemu xiankuang yu fagui zhengce zhi yanjiu* (A study of the current situation, regulations, and policies of mainland China’s cable TV programs) (Taipei: Mainland Affairs Council, 1994), 22.
²The author twice interviewed Hu Yuntao, director of Shanghai Cable TV, in July 1993 and January 1994. The statistics were renewed in early 1995.

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first began operation in July 1987, while Shashi Cable TV began operating in September 1989 and was the first station to be granted a license by the MRFT. It was also mainland China's first cable TV experimental project. These two stations are now well-developed and, in the author's opinion, representative medium-sized cable TV stations worthy of analysis.

In this paper, the author focuses on the history, current situation, and future prospects of these two cable TV stations; their management, programs, and channel arrangements; and the program-watching behavior and the degree of satisfaction of their subscribers.

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Shashi and Foshan Cable TV, each of which operates in a medium-sized city, have already acquired rich experience and are considered to be pioneers in mainland China's cable TV industry. Although the area of their coverage is much smaller than that of stations in big cities such as Beijing, Wuhan, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, they are landmarks in the development of mainland China's regional cable TV stations. A study of their development may help us to understand the development patterns of the cable TV industry in other mainland Chinese inland and coastal cities.

Shashi Cable TV

Shashi, a city directly under the Hubei Provincial Government, is located in the Jianghan Plain on the northern bank of the Yangtze River's middle-reach Jingzhou section. Its urban area, which lies like a belt along the river, and its suburbs cover a total area of 166.2 square kilometers. As of the end of July 1993, 280,000 people, or about 80,000 households, lived in its 26-square-kilometer urban area; if the number of people living in its suburbs were also included, the whole city had a population of 345,000, or about 90,000 households.

The predecessor of Shashi Cable TV was Shashi Cable Radio, a long-established cable radio station with a dozen staff members. When its business went downhill with the establishment of on-the-air radio and TV systems in many mainland cities, the station decided to

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5San Jingxian et al., eds., Zhongguo youxian dianshi toushi (A perspective of China's cable TVs) (Hubei: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 1992), 113.
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upgrade itself into a cable TV station. Preparations for the founding of Shashi Cable TV began in 1987, according to a plan of the Shashi Radio and TV Bureau.

At that time, the PRC, anxious to promote economic reform and opening-up, borrowed more than US$20 million from the World Bank to improve the infrastructure of medium-sized cities. Changzhou, Luoyang, and Shashi were chosen to be prospective beneficiaries of this loan. However, Shashi's loan proposal to set up a cable TV station was rejected by the World Bank since the bank considered promoting cable TV in a developing country unsuitable. However, under the condition that the city already had on-the-air TV and radio broadcasting, the Shashi Radio and TV Bureau proposed to join hands with Shashi Cable Radio to set up a cable TV station on a so-called "three no's" principle, meaning that the government, enterprises, and individuals would not be asked to provide funds for the station's setup.

The proposal gained the support of the MRFT's Science and Technology Department, the Hubei Provincial Government, and the Shashi city government. During a conference on Shashi's cable radio and TV project in December 1988, documents on technology and management were adopted. It was decided that the Shashi Radio and TV Bureau would organize the system, technology, and equipment and the Wuhan Antenna Institute would be responsible for construction designs. The MRFT then made the Shashi Cable TV station an experimental project for cable TV systems throughout the Chinese mainland.

On September 28, 1989, the Shashi Cable Radio & TV station began broadcasting ten channels of programs. On December 8 of the same year, Shashi Cable TV came into being. Eight days later, it was granted a license by the MRFT and became the first city cable TV station with a license.

Over the past six years, Shashi Cable TV has had a brilliant record as the first cable TV station in mainland China to uphold the joint use of a cable station for both radio and TV broadcasts; the first cable TV station to telecast programs live; and the first cable TV station to broadcast information with pictures and written commentary. These records have qualified Shashi Cable TV as a pioneer in mainland China's burgeoning cable TV industry.

On the basis of the "three no's" principle, Shashi Cable TV obtained its founding funds by collecting from its 400 subscribers a 200-yuan initial subscription fee in advance and obtaining a bank loan.
of 300,000 yuan. At present, its chief financial source is the monthly fees paid by its subscribers. As a result of successful business management, it has accumulated fixed assets worth more than 7 million yuan.

The greatest portion of Shashi Cable TV's expenditures has gone toward maintaining the station's hardware. The average annual figure is more than 2 million yuan. In comparison, not much money is spent on purchases of software (programs), which amount to only about 200,000 yuan a year. At present, about 40,000 households in Shashi subscribe to Shashi Cable TV, accounting for half of its urban population. The number of subscribers is expected to increase further after the reconstruction of old urban districts is completed.

Shashi Cable TV employs more than 100 personnel, 75 of whom are regular and the rest temporary. Its organization is shown in chart 1.

**Chart 1**
Organization of Shashi Cable TV

- General Editorial Office*
- General Office*
- Economic Section
- Technological Section
- Engineering Section
- Production Section
- Cultural and Educational Section
- News Section

*The General Editorial Office includes the Program Section, the O.S. Section, and the Broadcast Editorial Section.

**Under the General Office, there is also a fee collection office.

**Foshan Cable TV**

Foshan, located in the Pearl River Delta, refers to Foshan City and the Foshan area in a broad sense. The downtown area of Foshan City consists of the Cheng District, with 60,000 households, and the Shiwan District, with 10,000 households. In addition, there are a total of 80,000 households living in four nearby county towns (Nanhai, Shuride, Sansui, and Gaoming). Therefore, the entire Foshan area is populated by more than 150,000 households.

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During implementation of reform and opening-up in the early 1980s, Foshan did not have any on-the-air TV, and many people installed community antennas to facilitate the reception of on-the-air TV programs; however, quality of the signals was poor. At that time, mainland China was actively planning to promote the cable TV industry. In accordance with this policy, the Foshan City Chinese Communist Party Committee and the Foshan city government confirmed that cable TV systems were a component part of the radio and TV industry. The Foshan city government then approved a report by the Foshan Radio and TV Bureau and earmarked 100,000 yuan as the founding funds of a cable TV system. Thus, preparations for building a cable TV system began in 1986.

In early 1987, the Bureau began installing cable TV in the courtyard of the city government. The small community antenna systems were then connected with the station. Broadcasting began in July of that year. Thus, Foshan became mainland China's first city to have a cable TV station. In 1988, the Foshan city government promulgated the city's Regulations on the Management of Radio and Television Facilities, set up the Foshan TV News Agency, and allocated nearly one million yuan to buy various kinds of video recording equipment to produce cable TV programs. In 1991, the news agency was renamed Foshan Cable TV, and from February 1992, Foshan Cable TV began to transmit its programs by microwaves to the county towns near Foshan City. Currently, it has already become the fourth indispensable service station for Foshan residents, in addition to telephone, electricity, and cable radio.

The greatest financial source of Foshan Cable TV has been the 100,000 yuan annual allocation from the Foshan city government. The next largest source of income has been the monthly subscription fees paid by subscribers. Other funds come from the 200 yuan installation fees collected from each new subscriber and the 80 yuan refit fee from each user of old community antenna systems.

Foshan Cable TV's utilization of funds is similar to that of Shashi Cable TV, as more has been spent on hardware maintenance than on program purchases. Total expenditures amount to about two million plus yuan a year. About 700,000 to 800,000 yuan is spent to buy programs and about one million is spent on equipment; thus, compared with Shashi Cable TV, Foshan Cable TV is more willing to spend money on program purchases.

Since Foshan does not have on-the-air TV, almost all of its households have installed cable TV. At present, Foshan Cable TV
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has more than 150,000 subscriber households, a penetration of higher than 90 percent.

Foshan Cable TV has 47 regular employees. Its organization is shown in chart 2.

Chart 2
Organization of Foshan Cable TV

- General Office
- Broadcast Control Section
- Advertisement Section
- Production Section
- Program Section
- News Section

Transmission Facilities

General information about the two Cable TV stations, including their transmission systems, is shown in table 1.

Functions of Foshan and Shashi Cable TV

The cable TV industry in mainland China has two special characteristics: upholding the principles of Party spirit and extending, supplementing, and developing on-the-air TV systems. The two cable TV stations in Shashi and Foshan are no exception; they therefore consider the time not yet ripe for introducing the two-way cable services of Western countries, including such modern services as TV conferences and TV shopping.

Under mainland China’s social system, the future development of Shashi and Foshan Cable TV will remain under socialist restraints. However, as the demand for reform and opening-up has grown stronger, mainland people have begun to demand quality cable TV services suited to their changing lifestyles. Moreover, because of man-

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6The author had an interview with Luo Lesheng, deputy director of Foshan Cable TV, in July 1993.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Shashi City, Hubei Province</th>
<th>Foshan City, Guangdong Province</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Urban population</td>
<td>280,000</td>
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<td>600,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of urban households</td>
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<td></td>
<td>150,000+</td>
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<td></td>
<td>July 1987</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of subscribers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>150,000 households</td>
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<td>tree-type</td>
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<td>230 MHZ</td>
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<td>Transmission capacity</td>
<td>TV 16 channels (3 of which locally-originating)</td>
<td>13 channels (3 of which locally-originating)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Radio 9 channels</td>
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<td>Monthly subscription fee: 6 yuan</td>
<td>Installation fee: 200 yuan</td>
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<td>loans and subscription fees</td>
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<td>City government subsidies and subscription fees</td>
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<td>Department responsible</td>
<td>Shashi Radio and TV Bureau</td>
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<td>Foshan City Government</td>
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<td>for the construction project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual expenditures</td>
<td>2 million yuan</td>
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<td>2 million yuan</td>
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<td>Expenditures on hardware</td>
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<td>More than 1 million yuan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expenditures on program</td>
<td>200,000 yuan</td>
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<td>700,000 to 800,000 yuan</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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agement needs, cable TV stations have begun to emphasize varied channels and programs and improve their quality. Some of these stations have even begun to broadcast advertisements. Hence, pragmatism has become the management style of the cable TV industry.

In the present stage, the people of Shashi and Foshan are eager for high-quality program transmission, varied programs with substantial contents, and information services. In Foshan, audiences are greatly interested in information about the stock market, finance, and women's affairs. Starting from May 1992, Foshan Cable TV began to offer comprehensive information such as weather forecasts; foreign exchange rates; tourist itineraries; bus, train, and ship schedules; and information about hotels, real estate, and various commodities. Shashi Cable TV also uses pictures and written commentary to provide viewers with weather forecasts, market information, general knowledge, transportation services, and news briefs.7

Cable TV news is also different from on-the-air TV news in that it is a highly local medium that can more directly address topics related to the local population. Foshan Cable TV is very proud of its news programs and hires individual "correspondents" to shoot news episodes with home-use camcorders (V8) for the station. In the years 1989-92, the work of these correspondents won many news awards for the station. Compared with on-the-air TV stations such as Hong Kong's Asia TV, the Pearl River TV Station, and the Guangzhou TV Station, it has an outstandingly high news audience. Shashi Cable TV is relatively conservative, as it continues to consider cable TV stations an extension and supplement to on-the-air TV stations.

Shashi and Foshan Cable TV are still equipped with relatively simple transmission systems; in addition, the income and education of their audience are lower than those in big cities. It is therefore difficult for these cable TV stations to offer two-way services, as they cannot afford the large expenses needed for station transformation. During this transitional period, they can only offer one-way, simple, low-level, but practical services. Despite these disadvantages, the two stations are actively taking steps to improve the quality of their transmission lines, increase functions such as telephone and BB call, and enrich program content so as to attract more subscribers.

7Sun, Zhongguo youxian dianshi toushi, 113-25.

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In short, the development prospects of Shashi and Foshan Cable TV are not as bright as the cable TV stations in big cities, such as Beijing, Wuhan, and Shanghai. However, their experiences in program management, control, and production are richer than those of municipal stations.

The Management Strategies of Shashi and Foshan Cable TV

The management strategies of Shashi and Foshan Cable TV can be shown through a discussion on channel and program arrangements, subscription fees, advertisement, sources of programs, program screening, and self-originating program rates.

Channel and Program Arrangements

Most cable TV stations in mainland China have about ten channels, but Shashi and Foshan Cable TV each have more than ten channels.

1. Shashi Cable TV. In the beginning, Shashi Cable TV had only ten channels, but at present its total number of channels has increased to sixteen. They are: CCTV I, II, and IV (transmitted via satellite); Central Educational TV I and II (via satellite); Hubei TV station (via microwave); Sichuan, Tibet, Yunnan, and Guizhou TV stations (via satellite); Xinjiang TV station (via satellite); Jingzhou and Shashi TV stations; and three locally-originating channels, including a comprehensive channel, an entertainment channel, and a service channel. Shashi cable radio runs nine channels. They are the Central Broadcasting Station I, II, and III; two international stations; Hubei People's Broadcasting Station and Shashi People's Broadcasting Station; and two locally-originating channels, one of which is an “on the street” wire, and the other cable-transmitted.

On the three locally-originating channels, Shashi Cable TV begins its broadcast with an announcement of the day's programs at 5:55 a.m. and continues to show various programs until the wee hours of the next day. The broadcast time is divided into three blocks, each lasting seven or eight hours. The programs broadcast during the first time block in the morning are rerun during the second and third time blocks in the afternoon and evening.

The comprehensive channel's programs include local news, education, culture and art, adolescents' and children's programs, economics, and services. Radio and TV news programs are broadcast every day on this channel. The entertainment channel broadcasts news, prop-
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agenda, TV dramas, and movies, and its main emphasis is on entertainment programs. The broadcasting time is twenty hours a day, from 6 a.m. until 2 a.m. of the next day. The service channel, broadcasting eighteen hours a day from 6 a.m. to midnight, consists of TV programs with pictures and written commentary on weather, market information, transportation, general knowledge, and news briefs.

Shashi Cable TV has some special characteristics. First of all, it is mainland China's first cable TV station to combine cable radio with cable TV. Second, it is mainland China's first cable TV station to broadcast TV programs live (referred to as a two-way direct broadcast in mainland China, which is different from how two-way services are defined in the West). Finally, it is mainland China's first cable TV station to broadcast information with pictures and written commentary. Therefore, it has much more experience in program management than other mainland Chinese local TV stations.

In addition, Shashi Cable TV runs self-produced ten-minute-long cable news programs six times a week, including two "Economic News" and four "Joint News" broadcasts. "Joint News" is not really a joint broadcast program; it is so named to distinguish itself from the on-the-air "Shashi News." The news programs of Shashi Cable TV give special attention to social news and reflect the opinions of the grassroots and the people.

Shashi Cable TV has two channels of locally-originating cable radio programs. The first channel broadcasts comprehensive radio programs 16.5 hours a day from 6 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Its programs, mainly including fifteen regular programs, are broadcast via cable FM and the original cable station of Shashi Radio. On the second channel, FM stereo music programs are broadcast eighteen hours a day from 6 a.m. to the zero hour.

2. Foshan Cable TV. Preparations for the construction of Foshan Cable TV began in 1986. It was mainland China's first cable TV station to begin broadcasting, and at the very beginning, it ran only eight channels, but now offers a total of thirteen. These channels are CCTV I and II; Star TV Chinese Channel, Hong Kong Asia TV, and Hong Kong TVB English Channel; the Zhujiang, Lingnan, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen TV stations; Central Educational TV; and three locally-originating channels, which include Cable I (a comprehensive channel), Cable II (a service channel), and Cable III, a channel produced in cooperation with Hong Kong's TVB.

The Foshan locally-originating comprehensive and service channels were renamed Cable I and Cable II in mid-July 1993. They
broadcast twenty hours a day. Cable I mainly broadcasts news, social education, culture and art, entertainment, and service programs, including "Journalists' Review of One Hundred Trades"; "Not a Different Word" (an educational program); "A Hundred Things in Life" (a program about general knowledge); "A Round-the-World Train" (programs displaying scenery in various places in the world which are bought from the Guangzhou TV station); "The Market Kaleidoscope"; and "The Foshan News" (in Cantonese).

Cable II began broadcasting on May 1, 1992 and offers comprehensive information, including news forecasts, foreign exchange rates, tourist itineraries, and labor demands. Its programs include drama series bought from the cable TV center of the Audio-Video Office of Guangdong's Radio and TV Department; self-produced music programs (music performances either sponsored by Foshan Cable TV itself or in cooperation with other orchestras); foreign drama series (bought from the Audio-Video Office); news in Putonghua [standard Chinese pronunciation]; and a self-produced information program called "Information Square."

Foshan Cable TV emphasizes local news in its self-produced news programs. The main principle for the content of these programs is to improve the quality standards of the cable TV stations and to make penetrating reports on people's actual lives. As has been mentioned, the station has gained many news awards; hence its self-produced news programs have a high audience rate.

Fees and Advertisements

People in Western countries have long been accustomed to paid TV, but the concept only gained momentum in mainland China after the introduction of reform and opening-up policies. For economic reasons, the PRC began upholding the principle of "paid services" in developing the cable TV industry, and after an MRFT vice minister and other high-ranking officials openly emphasized the significance of such services, cable TV stations began to collect fees from their subscribers.  

A cable TV station needs to spend a large sum of money on the purchase and installation of hardware in its initial stage and buy programs on a continuous basis thereafter. In developing cable TV

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8Liu, Dalu youxian dianshi jiemu xiankuang, 25.
stations, medium-sized cities such as Shashi and Foshan could not get financial support from the central government, which was heavily burdened with centrally-run projects. Moreover, geographical location has had an impact, as Foshan, a coastal city, is fortunate to have a yearly subsidy of 100,000 yuan from the Foshan city government, but Shashi, an inland city, had to announce from the very beginning that it would not ask the government, enterprises, and individuals to provide funds for its establishment or operation. However, in both cases most of the founding fees came from monthly subscription fees paid by the audience.9

Mainland cable TV stations have varied standards for subscription fees, depending on local economic levels and subscribers' acceptance. The average is five to ten yuan per month.10 Shashi Cable TV collects a 200-yuan installment fee and a six-yuan monthly subscription fee. Foshan Cable TV spent 12 million yuan on construction and management in the initial stage and collected a 200-yuan installment fee and a two-yuan monthly management and maintenance fee at the time of its formation. At present, the monthly management fee is about 4.5 yuan.

In addition to subscription fees, income from advertisements is another financial source for cable TV stations. Judging by the gradual development of mainland China's market economy, the most important portions of the profits for cable TV stations will come from advertisements. In February 1992, the MRFT issued a document (Document No. 250) to forbid cable TV stations from running commodity advertisement programs, or so-called Category 1 advertisements.11 However, because of the high profits from advertisements, almost no mainland cable TV station has obeyed this order.

Shashi Cable TV considers advertisement broadcasting an inevitable trend because a cable TV station should not only serve the people but also provide information to enterprises. As many factories have asked for advertisement broadcasts, the station's policy has been to broadcast Category 2 advertisements, which provide only information. To avoid conflicts with on-the-air Shashi TV stations, its total volume of advertisements does not exceed those of the on-the-air TV,
advertisement broadcast time does not exceed thirty seconds at a time, and no advertisements are broadcast on the entertainment channel.

Since there is no on-the-air TV in Foshan, Foshan Cable TV has no concerns over outside reactions. It was mainland China's first cable TV station to broadcast advertisements, and its subscribers are long accustomed to watching them. To meet the needs of local and foreign enterprises in the Pearl River Delta, it broadcasts both Category 2 and Category 1 commodity advertisements. However, most of the advertisements are narrative. Having been in the advertisement business for years, Foshan Cable TV has an advertisement price list which is as high as those of the cable TV stations in big cities like Beijing.

Sources, Screening, and Self-Production Rates of Programs

Sources of programs. Mainland cable TV stations usually obtain their programs through six ways:

1. Borrowing. According to the needs of individual stations, TV station and radio programs are taped and can be selected and rearranged for the stations' own use.

2. Relaying. CCTV and other TV station programs are relayed. Relayed programs account for the greatest number of programs on cable TV stations.

3. Videotaping. Performances are videotaped for future broadcasts.

4. Self-production. At present, mainland Chinese cable TV stations have a very low rate of self-produced programs. Only a few stations produce their own programs.

5. Purchases of foreign and domestic movies. Only financially strong cable TV stations are able to buy foreign movies.

6. Exchanges of programs among members of associations of cable TV stations.

Shashi Cable TV has utilized four of these options in obtaining programs. First, it relays CCTV and other provincial TV stations' programs, most of which are broadcast on its locally-originating service channel. Second, it purchases movies from provincial movie supply stations. Third, it obtains movies through exchanges at the Program Center of the Association of Enterprise-Run Cable TV Stations. Fourth, it borrows on-the-air TV stations' programs. Over the past four years, it has videotaped more than 500 comic dialogue programs of the CCTV and other provincial TV stations and edited them into more than 200 collections of comic dialogues that are broadcast in serial form once a day.
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Foshan Cable TV has five sources for programs. First, it purchases movies from the Cable Audio-Video Section of Guangdong’s Radio and TV Department. Second, it purchases programs from the Guangzhou and Guangdong TV stations. Third, it purchases programs from audio-video publishers. Fourth, it obtains the greatest part of its programs through exchanges among members of cable TV station associations. Finally, it produces a small number of programs.\textsuperscript{12}

Probably due to its shortage of funds, Shashi Cable TV only purchases movies from program centers and provincial supply centers and never buys foreign movies. Although Foshan Cable TV has a larger budget for the purchases of movies, its sources for programs are not much different from Shashi Cable TV. In addition, they are conservative and buy only movies approved by the central and provincial governments. Compared with the cable TV stations in big cities, their movies are older and less interesting.

The types of programs bought by mainland cable TV stations also vary depending on the station’s location. Foshan is located in Guangdong, and due to language problems, it is difficult for its people to accept Taiwan or Singapore-produced programs in Mandarin. In comparison, Cantonese programs produced in Hong Kong and Macao are preferred. Moreover, foreign programs are better received in Foshan than in inland cities because Foshan began contacts with the outside world earlier. Generally speaking, programs containing scenery and customs are well received because they are free from ideological shackles.

Screening of programs. Foreign (overseas) programs broadcast by cable TV stations must have the approval of the MRFT’s Local Administration Department, and domestic movies are screened by provincial radio and TV departments. Self-produced programs are mostly controlled by the stations themselves but are also subject to supervision by the administrative department at a higher level. Usually, a cable TV station has a program-screening group within itself. The procedures of program-screening of Shashi and Foshan Cable TV are shown in the following flow chart:\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12}See note 6 above.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid.

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The existence of program-screening indicates that there are limits to cable TV programs. To prevent foreign or out-of-bounds programs which might affect the people’s patriotism, the PRC’s Provisional Regulations on Cable TV forbid cable TV stations from broadcasting any materials that are reactionary, pornographic, or detrimental to national security and social stability. Shashi and Foshan Cable TV observe the rules, of course. However, in the near future, when the Chinese mainland becomes more open, limits on cable TV programs will become more relaxed.

*Self-production rates.* At present, mainland China’s cable TV industry is in a budding period. Almost all of its cable TV stations depend heavily on borrowing and relaying on-the-air TV and FM radio programs, and there are very few self-produced programs. Even Shashi and Foshan Cable TV, which are among the longest-established stations in mainland China, have only a few self-produced programs. Thirteen of the sixteen channels of Shashi Cable TV are channels of borrowed and relayed programs, and only three of its channels run self-produced programs. In addition, eight of its nine cable radio channels broadcast borrowed or relayed programs, and only one channel offers self-produced programs. Similarly, only three of the thirteen channels on Foshan Cable TV show self-produced programs, and these channels are not broadcast the whole day.

Judging from the above, we can see that although Shashi and Foshan Cable TV are medium-sized stations, they have accumulated a wealth of knowledge and experience in the business. Compared with the cable TV stations of big cities, their number of channels and program content are rated as above average. This achievement is remarkable in light of their limited budgets, which translates into very few foreign movies on their channels and less expenditures on software than big-city and Western cable TV stations.

The relatively small size of these two cities and the existence of nearby big cities (Wuhan and Guangzhou) are expected to impose restrictions on the future development of Shashi and Foshan Cable TV. However, their brilliant operating records and many “firsts” indicate that township-type cable TV stations still have good development prospects. It is unnecessary to judge these stations on a national or international level; serving the local people is an attribute of local
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cable TV stations, and both stations carry out this function well. Therefore, the future of Shashi and Foshan Cable TV will probably rely on pragmatism, that is, satisfying the needs of the local population.

Methodology

The methods employed in the study included literature review, personal interviews, and surveys. Interviews were held with the directors and deputy directors of the two stations as well as with other specialized personnel of related departments. The objective was to obtain detailed information about these stations, including founding preparations, operation fees, transmission facilities, personnel and organization, channel and program arrangements, sources of programs, subscribers, subscription fees, and advertisements.

Surveys were conducted during June and July 1993. The total number of samples was 1,600, or 800 for each station.

Conducting the survey included the following steps:

Questionnaire design. The content of the questionnaires was chosen after consulting mainland China's local survey reports (including the Program-Watching Survey and Statistics for Beijing Cable TV Station Subscribers and the Description of the Program-Watching Tendencies of Dual TV Audiences) and a report of a similar type by the author herself to the Republic of China's Mainland Affairs Council. The questions were designed to discover how subscribers to Shashi and Foshan cable TV stations watch on-the-air TV, videotapes, and cable TV programs. The questionnaires were divided into three parts: general broadcast watching behavior, cable TV watching behavior, and individual respondents' basic data.

Part I examines respondents' behavior in watching on-the-air TV and videotaped programs. The first eight questions dealt with on-the-air TV programs, including whether the respondents have watched programs from on-the-air TVs; why, how long, and how frequently they watch such programs; the kind of programs they like; how they feel about news programs; and their degree of satisfaction. The answers to these questions reveal how dependent Shashi and Foshan people are on on-the-air TVs and their choices of programs. There were eight questions about watching videotaped programs, including whether the respondents had VCRs; when they watched these programs; sources of movies; their opinions about Hong Kong and Macao movies; their opinions about Taiwan movies; and their degree of satisfaction. The objective of these questions was to understand
Shashi and Foshan people's tastes in movies and the extent of Taiwan movie circulation among them.

Part II, which concerns cable TV watching behavior, was the focus of this study. It included twenty questions about motives for cable TV installation; attitudes toward the number of channels; time spent on program watching; channel preferences; preferred types of programs; level of satisfaction with domestic and foreign entertainment programs (movies and dramas); level of satisfaction with programs produced in Taiwan; level of satisfaction with programs and services offered by cable TV stations; and opinions on the standards of cable TV programs.

Part III consisted of nine questions on individual respondents' basic data, such as sex, age, area of residence, educational level, occupation, economic situation, family size, marital status, and category of subscriber. Mainland China's classification for types of occupations was adopted. In addition, because of the existence of enterprise-run cable TVs in mainland China, a ninth question about the subscriber category was designed to explore viewers' motives for subscribing to cable TV stations.

Surveys through interviews. The questionnaires were posed to cable TV station subscribers of Shashi and Foshan during interviews. The method of random sampling was adopted to obtain 800 samples from each of the two cities.

In principle, a respondent wrote answers to the questionnaires by himself/herself. An interviewer helped write down answers only when the respondent was illiterate. If family members of a respondent were present, they were asked to leave to ensure that he/she would be free from interference when answering the questionnaires. The interviewer collected the finished questionnaires on the spot. In addition, random sampling among household members was also conducted.

Interviews were conducted in Foshan during July 12-26, 1993. Since the city had no on-the-air TV, cable TV penetration was 99 percent; in other words, 99 percent of the residents were cable TV subscribers. A total of 800 households were chosen from the list of subscribers of Foshan Cable TV by random sampling according to streets, buildings, floors, and room numbers.

Interviews were then conducted in Shashi during July 26-31, 1993. About 40,000 households were subscribers to Shashi Cable TV, most distributed along the city's four main roads. On the basis of doorplate numbers, 800 samples were chosen in proportion to the total number of subscribers along each main road. Details are as follows:
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No. of subscribers</th>
<th>No. of samples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Main Road</td>
<td>8,600 households</td>
<td>149 households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Main Road</td>
<td>10,200 households</td>
<td>230 households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Main Road</td>
<td>17,500 households</td>
<td>340 households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Main Road</td>
<td>3,700 households</td>
<td>81 households</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data processing. A total of 1,600 valid samples were collected from the two cities. Except for some open questions (for example, the first and sixteenth questions of Part II), all data was coded. The coded data was then processed with SPSS computer software. Methods of statistical analysis such as percentage, average, standard deviation, T-test, and chi square analysis were adopted.

Basic data of individual respondents. Although a total of 1,600 valid questionnaires were collected during the interviews in Shashi and Foshan, some respondents did not answer or refused to answer all the questions for Part III. Therefore, answers of some questions did not amount to 1,600. Respondents' individual data can be described as follows:

1. Sex. Of the 1,600 respondents, 73 did not answer this question. Those who did answer included 786 males (or 51.4 percent) and 741 females (48.5 percent). The male-female ratio was 1.05:1.

2. Age. Respondents aged 30-39 formed the largest group. They amounted to 472, accounting for 33.2 percent of the total. The next largest group was those aged 20-29, comprising 405 respondents, or 28.5 percent of the total. The smallest group was those aged 60-69, who comprised 39 respondents, a mere 2.7 percent of the total.

3. Educational level. The largest group, consisting of 586 respondents with senior high school education, accounted for 40.2 percent of the total. The next largest group, composed of 432 respondents with junior high school education, accounted for 29.5 percent. The other groups were college-educated, those with elementary education, and illiterates. Therefore, most cable TV subscribers in Shashi and Foshan had a high school level education.

4. Occupation. Three hundred sixty-eight respondents were workers and 367 were cadres of Party and government organizations, each group accounting for 24.3 percent of the total. However, the largest group of subscribers in Foshan consisted of Party and government organization cadres, while workers were the largest group of subscribers in Shashi. This indicates that coastal Foshan had more Party and government organization cadres than Shashi, an inland city.

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5. Income. In order of size, the four groups were those who earned 201 to 300 yuan a month (442 respondents, 30.5 percent of the total), those who earned less than 200 yuan (24.1 percent), those who earned 301 to 400 yuan (13.2 percent), and those earning more than 400 yuan. Wages are a reflection of the local economic situation, and in mainland China, the inland cities are poorer than coastal cities. This can be proven by a comparison of the incomes of the Shashi and Foshan respondents. More than 90 percent of respondents in Shashi earned less than 300 yuan a month, while those who earned 500 yuan a month accounted for only 0.6 percent of Shashi’s respondents, but approximately 35 percent in Foshan.

6. Family size. Six hundred sixty-three (48.2 percent) of the respondents had a family of less than three members, and 636 (46.3 percent) had a family of four to six members. Therefore, about 90 percent of the families in the two cities were small or medium-sized. However, it should be noted that most families in Shashi had less than three members and that most families in Foshan had four to six members.

7. Marital status. Of the 1,600 respondents, 1,116 (74.8 percent) were married; 338 (22.7 percent) were single; 23 (1.5 percent) were widows or widowers; and 14 (0.9 percent) were divorced.

8. Subscriber category. The largest group consisted of 335 enterprise subscribers, or 30 percent of all respondents; the second largest included 158 institutional subscribers, or 23.1 percent of the respondents. Therefore, more than half of the cable TV subscribers of both cities were enterprise and institutional subscribers.

The Program-Watching Behavior of Shashi and Foshan Cable TV Subscribers

For this study, subscribers of Shashi and Foshan Cable TV stations were interviewed mainly to discover their level of satisfaction with the stations as well as their opinions on Taiwan-produced programs. The questionnaires asked their views on on-the-air TV, videotapes, and cable TV programs.

On-the-Air TV Programs

Respondents in Foshan could not give any answers to questions about on-the-air TV programs because there is no on-the-air TV in the Foshan area.

In Shashi, almost all respondents (795 persons or 99.5 percent) said that they watched on-the-air TV programs; only four said that
they did not. This proves that “national” joint broadcast programs are widely watched throughout the Chinese mainland. The reasons given by the four respondents who did not watch those programs included “poor reception of TV signals,” “no interest,” and “no time.”

According to the questionnaire results, over 50 percent of the cable TV subscribers in Shashi watched on-the-air TV programs almost everyday. People who watched such programs for one to two hours per day accounted for the largest percentage (30.3 percent), and those who did so for two to three hours per day were the next largest group. Women, people aged 50-59, people with senior high school or lower educational backgrounds, people engaging in business or doing professional and technical jobs, and low-incomers tended to spend more time watching on-the-air TV programs.

Most viewers in Shashi watched on-the-air TV programs during the “golden period” from 7 to 8 p.m. (537 persons, or 77 percent). The next two favorable periods were from 8 to 9 p.m. and 9 to 10 p.m. This indicates that mainland people, like those of other countries, like to watch TV when the whole family is present and also watch “national” joint broadcast programs.

As for the kind of on-the-air programs that Shashi people favored, 60 percent of the 772 respondents selected news as the answer. The next two favorites were theatrical performances (59.1 percent) and drama series (58 percent). Other kinds of programs lagged far behind. The results indicate the popularity of CCTV joint news broadcasts.

It should be noted that the programs favored by male viewers were in the same order listed above, but female viewers had a different priority order: drama series came first, theatrical performances second, and news programs third. This shows that women’s preference for drama series seems to be universal. In addition, younger people, students, people with relatively low educational backgrounds, and people engaging in business preferred “soft” programs such as theatrical performances, but Party and government organization cadres and high-incomers liked news programs the best. If judged by subscriber categories, hotels showed a special preference for drama series.

Shashi people’s strong preference for watching on-the-air TV news programs proved that they are popular, as 91 percent of the 751 respondents said they watched such programs and only 8.7 percent said they did not. The main reasons for not watching these programs included “too much coverage of conferences” (25 percent), “too much propaganda” (25 percent), “few international news” (20 percent),

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“high similarity to radio and newspaper news” (20 percent), and “biased coverage.” This implies that Shashi residents have begun to look for objective and pluralized news coverage of both domestic and foreign affairs; conference news and propaganda cannot satisfy them.

As for Shashi respondents’ opinions about on-the-air TV programs, 48.2 percent of them held a “so-so” attitude; 31.1 percent said they were satisfied; and 10.8 percent said they were dissatisfied. In the dissatisfied group, there were more men than women. Broken down to groupings of age, occupation, educational background, income, and subscriber categories, dissatisfaction was higher among those aged 30-39 and 60-69, workers and the retired, people with junior high school education and the college-educated, middle-class income-earners (310-500 yuan), and hotel operators. It might be hypothesized that workers and middle-class income-earners probably wanted more variety of a programming as a break from their hardship, while hotel operators wanted the same in order to enhance their business. On the whole, however, the Shashi cable TV audience was satisfied with local on-the-air TV programs.

**Videotaped Programs**

Of the 1,600 respondents in Shashi and Foshan, only 37 percent had VCRs at home. The low ratio indicates that the living standards of medium-sized cities cannot compare with those of big cities. Shashi’s ratio (21.3 percent) was lower than Foshan’s, indicating that in mainland China, inland cities lag behind coastal cities in economic development.

Of the respondents in the two cities, 83.4 percent said that they had watched videotaped programs from Hong Kong and Macao. The high ratio proves that such videotaped programs are widely circulated in medium-sized cities in mainland China. Foshan had a higher ratio of such viewers than Shashi (93.4 percent versus 76.2 percent), suggesting that coastal cities have more contacts with the outside world. As for what types of Hong Kong and Macao-made videotaped programs they liked best, each respondent was permitted to choose three items at the most. The five best-liked types were: comedies (64.6 percent); ancient-costume swordsmen movies (40.5 percent); drama series (35.4 percent); kung fu movies (31.7 percent); and MTV songs (20.2 percent).

Most videotaped programs produced by Hong Kong and Macao are comedies, and the questionnaire results prove that they were, as
expected, the most-liked programs of both men and women in Foshan and Shashi. However, the next favorites for men were kung fu movies and ancient-costume swordsmen movies, while women preferred ancient-costume swordsmen movies and drama series. The tastes of different age groups also varied; comedies were still the first choice, but the intensity of that preference declined with older groups. People aged 60-69 picked scenery films, not drama series, as their third favorite program. In addition, people with lower educational backgrounds had a stronger liking for videotaped drama series. Students showed the greatest support for comedies (83.3 percent). KTV songs were better accepted by hotel and restaurant operators and educational and research institutions, coming in second and third, respectively.

As for Taiwan-made videotaped programs, 75.8 percent of the Shashi and Foshan respondents said that they had watched such programs, a slightly lower ratio than that for Hong Kong and Macao-made videotaped programs. Under the conditions that respondents could choose more than one item, the best-liked Taiwan-made videotaped programs were drama series (49.2 percent), comedies (47.8 percent), ancient-costume swordsmen movies (37.4 percent), KTV songs (20.4 percent), and kung fu movies (15.2 percent)—a different order from that of Hong Kong and Macao-made videotaped programs. Thus, depending on their point of origin, videotaped programs had different attractive features, as Shashi and Foshan respondents had the greatest preference for Taiwan-made drama series and KTV songs and Hong Kong/Macao-made comedies, kung fu movies, and ancient-costume swordsmen movies.

The types of Taiwan-made videotaped programs preferred by Foshan and Shashi respondents had slight differences. Foshan respondents preferred drama series, comedies, ancient-costume movies, and MTV songs, while Shashi respondents preferred comedies, drama series, and ancient-costume movies. Sex also affected people's preferences, as drama series were women's favorite, followed by comedies and ancient-costume movies. However, the order for men was comedies, drama series, and ancient-costume movies.

Reactions of different age groups to Taiwan-made videotaped programs seemed to be polarized. Middle-aged and old people (aged 40-69) preferred comedies, but those older than 69 preferred ancient-costume movies and younger respondents preferred drama series. It should be noted that the older and younger respondents highly regarded KTV songs (as their third and fourth favorite programs, respec-
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tively). A possible explanation for this trend might be that KTV songs meet younger people's need to express themselves and be in vogue and older people's need to overcome loneliness.

People with senior high school education, students, and professionals and technicians picked KTV songs as their third favorite program, not ancient-costume movies. Taiwan-made drama series were liked best by people of all income brackets and by all categories of subscribers, while comedies were their second favorites. However, hotel and restaurant operators picked KTV songs as their second favorite program. This shows that along with the growth of Taiwan investment in mainland China, its "sing during leisure time" culture has gradually spread to both Shashi and Foshan.

Generally speaking, Shashi and Foshan respondents held a positive attitude toward Taiwan-made videotaped programs: 39.1 percent of them expressed satisfaction and 42.2 percent of them gave a "so-so" opinion. Moreover, the Foshan people were slightly more satisfied with such programs than the Shashi people (45.2 percent versus 42.3 percent).

Cable TV Programs

Shashi and Foshan respondents had cable TV installed for similar reasons. They were: "having one more choice" (44.6 percent); "improving reception results" (35.3 percent); and "watching videotaped movies or TV plays" (26.9 percent). As for whether the two stations offered sufficient programming, 55.8 percent of Shashi and Foshan respondents said "yes" and 44.2 percent said "no," with Foshan viewers more satisfied than those in Shashi.

When asked how many days they watched cable TV programs per week, 55.2 percent of the respondents said they did so every day. Shashi had a higher ratio of everyday watchers than Foshan (56.8 percent versus 53.7 percent). The average time respondents spent on watching cable TV programs per day was mostly "two to three hours" (32.6 percent), then "three to four hours," and then "one to two hours." On the average, Shashi subscribers spent more time watching cable TV than Foshan subscribers. In Foshan, the one-to-two-hour watchers were the largest group and the three-to-four-hour watchers the third largest group, indicating a deviation from the general trend. One possible reason for this might be that Foshan respondents had more contacts with the outside world and were thus less dependent on cable TV information than Shashi residents.

Women and older people tended to spend more time watching
cable TV, and retirees were the most faithful group of cable TV watchers. Better-educated and high-income respondents were less dependent on cable TV. Of all categories of subscribers, army troops spent the least time watching cable TV, and only 33 percent of them were everyday watchers.

In both Shashi and Foshan, cable TV was mostly watched from 6 to 11 p.m. The golden period was from 8 to 9 p.m., during which 85.6 percent of subscribers were involved; the next favorable time period was from 9 to 10 p.m. According to the survey data, more than half of the Shashi audience still watched cable TV as late as 11 p.m., suggesting that Shashi people tended to sleep later than Foshan people.

Out of the week, Saturday, Sunday, and Friday were the days with the largest cable TV audience. From Monday to Thursday, when people had to go to work or school, the cable TV watching rate was only slightly more than 10 percent. The rate increased to about 20 percent on Friday (the so-called "small weekend"); 52.4 percent on Saturday; and 49.2 percent on Sunday. The slight rate drop on Sunday suggests that some people preferred to take a rest in preparation for the next day's work.

The most-watched channels of Shashi and Foshan Cable TV were similar. Shashi Cable TV's most popular channels were the three locally-originating channels: the entertainment channel (68.9 percent), the comprehensive channel (66.4 percent), and the service channel (13.8 percent). The Shashi on-the-air TV station came in fourth, and CCTV lagged even further behind. Foshan Cable TV's most-watched channels were the locally-originating comprehensive channel (61.6 percent), Hong Kong's Asia TV (53.5 percent), and the locally-originating service channel (26.6 percent). These figures prove that both the people of Shashi and Foshan had strong support for the locally-originating programs of their cable TV stations. Though widely watched, CCTV was not listed among their favorite channels. The reason for this might be that CCTV programs do not pay sufficient attention to local affairs and interests. In direct comparisons, the Foshan audience liked CCTV better than the Shashi audience, though the difference was not statistically significant.

As for which type of cable TV programs subscribers liked the most (under the condition that each respondent could select three items at most), the results were as follows: movies and dramas (66.2 percent); theatrical performances (37.2 percent); news programs (26.8 percent); sports programs (17.4 percent); and economic programs.
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(11.8 percent). Shashi and Foshan respondents both favored movies and dramas the most; however, the Foshan audience liked news programs better than theatrical performances, while the Shashi audience preferred entertainment programs to news programs.

A trend common to both cities was that a higher percentage of women than men listed movies and dramas as their favorite (72.9 percent versus 59.2 percent). This same trend also occurred with the second favorite program, theatrical performances (40.1 percent versus 33.1 percent). However, men’s support for news and sports programs, the third and fourth favorites, was obviously stronger than women’s. It can be inferred from this that women were the fundamental audience of “soft” programs, while men also liked news and sports programs.

While observing the types of best-liked programs by age group, the author discovered that people aged 60-69 and 20-29 liked movies and dramas the most (73 percent and 68 percent, respectively). However, news programs replaced theatrical performances as the favorite program for people aged 50-59 and 70-79 (40.2 percent and 37.9 percent, respectively). The preference order of other age groups was the same as the general trend.

Breaking the results down in terms of educational background, viewers with lower education (illiterates and those with elementary education) and higher education (college-educated and above) considered news programs their second favorite, while the second favorite of those with junior or senior high school education was theatrical performances. In addition, people earning higher incomes preferred new programs and showed less liking for movies and dramas.

Of the occupation categories, professional and technical personnel showed an almost equal liking for various types of programs. Retirees and individual laborers preferred news programs to theatrical performances, listing news programs as their second favorite. Individual laborers were interested in economic programs more than all other occupational groups, probably because they needed to be aware of social changes in order to adjust their economic activities.

Different categories of subscribers also showed different preferences. To help relax their clients, hotel operators preferred movies and dramas, theatrical performances, and sports programs to news programs. However, the order of preference for educational and research institutions was movies and dramas; news programs; theatrical performances; economic programs; and sports programs. These institutions probably required news and economic information for research.
purposes, thus creating a preference order different from the general trend. Moreover, theatrical performances, not movies and dramas, were the best liked among army troops, probably because the armed forces' cable TV station had only a few movies and dramas to show.

Questionnaire respondents liked movies and dramas, but which movies did they like best according to place of production? The questionnaire results showed that Hong Kong-made movies were best liked (84 percent); mainland China movies came next (55.7 percent); Taiwan movies followed (55.44 percent); and European and U.S. movies and Japanese movies were the two least liked types. The preference orders of the two cities were slightly different, as Hong Kong-made movies were the best liked in both cities, but Taiwan and mainland Chinese movies were engaged in a seesaw battle for second favorite. Taiwan-made movies won a small victory in Foshan, while mainland Chinese movies were preferred in Shashi, though the differences were not statistically significant. However, it is certain that Taiwan-made movies had made an impression on respondents, suggesting the market can be further expanded.

In terms of sex breakdown, men preferred movies in this order: Hong Kong movies, mainland Chinese movies, Taiwan-made movies, and European and U.S. movies (the percentage of men who liked European and U.S. movies was higher than that of women). For women, Taiwan-made movies held second place, indicating that Taiwan-made movies had much appeal for Shashi and Foshan women.

As shown by the data, audiences aged 20-29 liked Taiwan-made movies better than mainland Chinese ones (56.1 percent versus 44.6 percent) and were more fond of European, U.S., and Japanese movies than any other age groups. However, the older the audience group was, the more they supported mainland Chinese movies. Thus, the young people in mainland China showed a taste for new information and modern movies.

Illiterate respondents liked mainland Chinese, European, U.S., and Japanese movies better than those produced by Taiwan. Those with elementary education preferred mainland Chinese movies to Taiwan-made ones, but those with senior or junior high school education liked Taiwan-made movies better than mainland Chinese ones. As for college-educated respondents, their exact order of preference was: Hong Kong-made movies; European and U.S. movies; Taiwan-made movies; mainland Chinese movies; and Japanese movies. However, all these five kinds of movies appealed to them rather equally. Moreover, those with better education showed a stronger liking for

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Hong Kong-made movies were the favorite of all the occupational groups. However, Party and government institution cadres and retirees were core supporters of mainland Chinese movies, while professional and technical personnel preferred Taiwan, European, and U.S. movies to mainland Chinese ones. Thus, occupational factors also affected people's choices of preferred programs.

Subscribers' preferences were also affected by their incomes. The order of preference for medium and low-income earners (earning 200 to 400 yuan a month) was Hong Kong movies, mainland Chinese movies, and Taiwan movies. For those earning 401-500 yuan a month, the order was Hong Kong movies, Taiwan movies, mainland Chinese movies, Japanese movies, and European and U.S. movies. High-income earners earning more than 501 yuan per month preferred Taiwan movies to mainland Chinese ones. This indicates that preferences for mainland Chinese movies were inversely proportional to income, though the trend was not yet statistically significant.

Of all respondent groups, troops showed the least preference for Taiwan movies. Hotel and restaurant operators liked movies produced by Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Europe, and the United States better than mainland Chinese movies. The order of preference for educational and research institutions was: Hong Kong movies, European and U.S. movies, Taiwan movies, Japanese movies, and mainland Chinese movies. Therefore, it can be deduced that educational and research institutions, which had more contacts with the outside world, were prompted to choose movies produced by other countries because they had few choices for mainland Chinese movies.

Mainland Chinese Movie Preferences

As for mainland Chinese movies, Shashi and Foshan respondents said that comedies (54.1 percent), historical movies (32.1 percent), and war movies (26.2 percent) had the greatest appeal for them. However, men liked comedies (49.1 percent), historical movies (38.2 percent), and war movies (33.1 percent) but rejected suspense movies and kung fu movies; while women liked comedies (59.2 percent), romance movies (28.3 percent), and historical movies (24.9 percent) but disliked suspense movies and horror movies.

Shashi and Foshan respondents of all age groups said comedies were their favorite and historical movies their second favorite. However, the third favorite varied depending on the age group. People aged 20-49 liked war movies better, those aged 50-59 chose modern
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and ancient-costume movies, and those aged 60-79 preferred biographical and ancient-costume movies. These choices possibly reflected younger people's love for excitement and modernity and older people's tendency to look back on history.

Comedies and historical movies held first and second place among all groups classified by educational background. In addition to these two choices, illiterate subscribers liked ancient-costume and modern movies, those with elementary education chose war and ancient-costume movies, those with junior high school education preferred romance and ancient-costume movies, and those with senior high school and college education selected modern and war movies.

Of the occupational groups, individual laborers were the only ones who chose war movies as their favorite mainland Chinese movies; historical movies and comedies were their next two favorites. The choices of people engaging in commerce and service trades were also different from the general trend. Their order of preference was comedies, romance movies, modern movies, and historical movies.

In the minds of all groups of income-earners, comedies and historical movies held first and second place. However, third and fourth place were occupied by war movies, modern movies, or romance movies among different groups. The questionnaire data showed that people earning more than 301 yuan per month preferred romance movies to war movies.

On the whole, only a relatively small portion of people were attracted by suspense and horror movies. However, hotel operators liked comedies, modern movies, and suspense movies, probably because they liked to offer their customers programs that they did not usually have an opportunity to watch. It is also worth noting that the top choice of individual subscribers was different from other categories of subscribers, as they preferred historical movies to comedies.

Overseas Movie Preferences

In the questionnaire, Shashi and Foshan Cable TV subscribers were asked what kinds of overseas movies they liked best. According to the questionnaire results, the preference order was comedies (62.8 percent), romance movies (30.9 percent), modern movies (25.3 percent), horror movies (24.4 percent), and kung fu movies (22.9 percent). Comedies and romance movies held first and second place for audiences in both cities; however, Foshan respondents preferred modern, kung fu, and horror movies (ranking third, fourth, and fifth, respectively) while Shashi respondents preferred horror movies (ranking
third) to modern and kung fu movies. Compared with the previous results of their mainland Chinese movie preferences, we can see that mainland Chinese historical and war movies were more liked than those produced overseas, but overseas romance and horror movies were considered more exciting than those produced by mainland Chinese studios.

For both men and women, the first choice among overseas movies was comedies. However, women were much fonder of comedies than men (67 percent versus 58.5 percent). Women respondents' second and third choices were romance and modern movies, while men chose horror and kung fu movies. Thus the women's preference for "soft" programs such as romance movies was again reinforced.

Dividing groups by age, people aged 20-29 chose comedies as their favorite, followed by romance, kung fu, and horror movies. However, romance movies had less appeal for older groups, as people aged 50-69 and 70-79 chose modern and old-costume movies as their second favorite.

Examining the results from an education perspective, people with elementary education preferred modern movies to romance movies. Their preference order was comedies, modern movies, old-costume movies, and romance movies. People with junior high school education selected old-costume movies as their second favorite and people with senior high school and college educations tended to choose modern movies.

Comedies were the first choice for people of all kinds of occupations and romance movies were the second choice for most of them. Receptionists' second choice was kung fu movies, while workers chose horror movies, with romance movies their third choice. Students preferred kung fu and horror movies to historical and suspense movies, while retirees were fond of modern, ancient-costume, and romance movies, but disliked biographical and suspense movies.

All groups of income-earners liked comedies and romance movies best, but their third and fourth choices were either modern movies or horror movies, depending on different groups.

Different categories of subscribers showed varied tastes for overseas movies. In addition to comedies and romance movies, enterprises and army troops also liked horror movies. The preference order for educational and research institutions was comedies, romance movies, war movies, and horror movies. Judging from the above, Shashi and Foshan Cable TV subscribers considered overseas romance and horror movies better than similar mainland Chinese movies.
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Satisfaction for Local Cable Programs and Taiwan Programs

On the whole, 46 percent of the 1,600 questionnaire respondents said that they were satisfied with the self-produced programs of local cable TV stations; 37 percent took a "so-so" attitude; and only 10 percent said that they were dissatisfied. A comparison of these percentages with data regarding the audience's support for locally-originating channels shows that self-produced programs of Shashi and Foshan Cable TV stations were well appreciated.

Forty-seven percent of female respondents said that they were satisfied with cable TV stations as a whole, but only 38 percent of male respondents said so. About 20 percent of the audience (both male and female) said they were dissatisfied. Dissatisfaction was strongest among those aged 70-79 and 20-29, and was also strong among illiterates (20 percent) and the college-educated (23 percent). Moreover, 24.4 percent of the professional and technical personnel and 21.7 percent of individual laborers expressed dissatisfaction with cable TV stations. Low-income earners, including those earning less than 200 yuan per month and those earning 201-300 yuan per month, were relatively more satisfied, at 46 percent and 44 percent, respectively. Finally, 26 percent of the army troops and 28 percent of hotel operators surveyed believed that cable TV stations could be improved.

A total of 1,104 respondents replied to the question about their opinions of Taiwan-made programs. Thirty-six percent of them said that they were satisfied; 45.3 percent held a "so-so" attitude; and less than 10 percent expressed dissatisfaction. Data reveals that men, young people aged 20-29, people with junior high school education, people earning 301-400 yuan per month, individual laborers, and troops were the most dissatisfied of the respondent groups. Generally speaking, Taiwan-made programs were slightly less appealing to Shashi and Foshan subscribers than the self-produced programs of the local cable TV stations. In other words, the image of Taiwan-made programs has room for improvement.

As for cable TV program limits, most Shashi and Foshan subscribers considered that cable TV programs should be more open than those broadcast by on-the-air TV stations. Only less than 10 percent of the respondents were for the contrary, and 24 percent of them thought limitation standards for both cable and on-the-air TV program should be more or less the same. The percentage of Shashi people supporting more open standards for cable TV stations was higher than that of Foshan people (74.3 percent versus 59.6 percent).

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Conclusion

Shashi and Foshan Cable TV were mainland China's first two cable TV stations to begin broadcasting, and though located in medium-sized cities, they have already acquired recognition and experience in the field. Their subscribers are eager for high-quality program transmission, varied programs with substantial content, and information services. Particularly in Foshan, which is the economically better developed, the people are greatly interested in information about the stock market, finance, and women's affairs. Therefore, Foshan Cable TV has already begun to offer comprehensive information, including weather forecasts; foreign exchange rates; tourist itineraries; bus, train, and ship schedules; hotels; real estate; and various commodities. Shashi Cable TV also uses pictures and written commentary to inform the viewers about weather, market information, general knowledge, transportation services, and news briefs.

Shashi and Foshan Cable TV may not develop as quickly as stations in big municipalities such as Beijing and Shanghai. However, expansion of urban areas resulting from economic growth, introduction of foreign investment, and coordinating efforts of the local governments are expected to boost their development. In brief, the experiences of the cable TV stations in these two cities can provide valuable information to those who want to understand the development of mainland China's cable TV industry and its future direction.