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At the ongoing [International Journalism Festival in Perugia](#) 2017, the Media Diversity Institute (MDI) hosted a panel “China: Between Traditional and Digital Media”. The panel moderated by MDI Executive Director Milica Pesic attracted attention of the Festival’s participants since the panellists explored the impact of technology on the Chinese media outlets, their social media presence and the way traditional media operate in a digital age.

The Dean of the [School of Communication and Design at Sun Yat-Sen University in Guangzhou](#), Zhang Zhi’an, said that the print in China is on a rapid decline, but that the traditional media are still the main channels of information. Professor Zhang said that popular messaging applications such as WeChat and QQ have 700 million and 900 million active users.

“WeChat is far more advanced than WhatsApp. For instance, an author of the bestselling book about the rise of the biggest internet company in China – Alibaba, says that he feels like going backwards in time every time he leaves China. It is because the impact of technology in China is so strong. In the same time, there are negative sides to that. For example, technology empowered our censors with techniques and means to control the internet in China even

better,” said Fang Wang, a senior duty editor and head of video content of [FTChinese.com](http://FTChinese.com), the Chinese website published by the UK’s Financial Times.



Xin Xin, a Reader in International Communications of the [Communication and Media Research Institute](http://www.commr.ac.uk) at the University of Westminster in London showed to the audience in Perugia a cartooned video released by the Chinese state news agency Xinhua, promoting “Four Comprehensives,” priorities that President Xi Jinping laid out in 2014.

“This video managed to reach a wider audience through the amplifying effect of social media in combination with the traditional media coverage. Xinhua published a story about the video in several languages. The New York Times also published a story under the title ‘Video Extols China’s Party Slogans, Turning to Rap and Beethoven’,” said Xin Xin. She emphasised though, that the agency Xinhua does not have the largest digital presence in China. “CCTV and People’s Daily are far more present on digital and social media, but still they are far behind from their Western counterparts,” said one of the speakers at the MDI panel at the International Journalism in Perugia.

You can watch the whole session [“China: Between Traditional and Digital Media” here](#) .

The Festival in Perugia takes place on 5 – 9 April 2017 and it can be followed on Twitter under [#ijf17](https://twitter.com/ijf17)