

**EXPLORING AN ETHNIC WEEKLY:  
DAWA BUSINESS PRESS AND ITS COMMUNITY**

by

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PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF PUBLISHING

In the  
Faculty of  
Arts & Social Sciences

Publishing Program

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## **ABSTRACT**

The ethnic press plays a vital role in the consolidation of ethnic communities and the formation of multicultural mosaic of Canada. Through a case study of *Dawa Business Press*, this report examines the ethnic weekly's operation and major survival strategies in terms of editorial practice and social-political activities. Specifically, it explores the press's enterprising interaction with its community through getting involved in local community organizations, advocating community-conscious programs, promoting civic and political participation, establishing goodwill with government and politicians, and building rapport with local Chinese businesses. These formulas are effective in building readership and advertising, but also lead to the risk of compromised journalistic standards.

The report also discusses financial hardships and intense competition that ethnic media confront. It recommends establishing industry partnership and strengthening government support for the ethnic press in the context of demographic trends and increasing ethnic diversity in the country

### **Keywords:**

ethnic press, weekly publisher, journalistic and editorial practice, Chinese community, immigrants and minority media

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To John Maxwell, my senior supervisor. I thank him for his insights, his encouragement, and his skills. His detailed commentary and correction helped this report evolve from a rough manuscript to a finished work.

To Rowland Lorrimer, my supervisor, for his crucial guidance throughout the Mpub program.

To Zaixin Ma, the publisher of *Dawa Business Press*, who generously took his time to give me the benefit of his experience and expertise.

To Victor Ho, Xining Guo, Jason Yang, Paul Wu, Jennifer Han and many other interviewees, for sharing their insights and experience in the press.

To my families, for their unconditional support and encouragement.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The ethnic press plays a significant role in multicultural Canada. It is the primary news and information source for the ethnic population in the country. It facilitates their adaptation and integration process to the host society, while preserving their shared values and heritage and addressing their special concerns. Recent decades have witnessed a rapid expansion and transformation of the ethnic press due to demographic change and technological development. It is now identified as one of the fastest growing media sectors in the print world (Uhrich, 2006), whereas mainstream newspapers, for example, have suffered from a steady circulation decline for years.

Low in profile, the ethnic press – especially ethnic weeklies – has invited very limited academic research, although it displays many distinguishing features that are not represented in mainstream media. This report attempts to explore the inner world of an ethnic newspaper through a case study of *Dawa Business Press* (DBP) – a Chinese weekly in Vancouver.

During my internship in DBP from June 2006 to January 2007, I observed how a small ethnic press tried to survive and thrive in a multicultural but highly competitive environment. Two themes were identified as most salient in DBP's operation: ethnic audience-oriented editorial strategies and close involvement with its community groups. These led to the formation of three research questions:



1: How does a small weekly respond to the changing needs of ethnic audience through its editorial practice?

2: How does it facilitate development through interacting with various community groups?

3: What challenges and problems are ethnic presses facing and what are their future trends?

To answer these questions, the report examines DBP's operation in satisfying its two customers – the readers and the advertisers – through its content and community participation. In particular, it describes how DBP engages itself in community life as well as social, cultural and political activities to bridge the gap between host country and homeland, new life and old practice, Canadians and Chinese.

## **1.1. Methodology**

This report is built upon my internship experience in DBP from June 2006 to January 2007. My internship period was divided into three stages. In the first two months, I was assigned to update the website of DBP, translate news items from mainstream English media into Chinese and prepared supporting materials for in-depth news reports. During the following three months I assumed the responsibility of a reporter, covering and writing news stories about local events. At the last stage of three months, I was primarily engaged in editorial work as an editor. The diverse experience allowed me to observe the press closely and acquire first-hand materials about its practice.

Three main research approaches were mainly utilized in this study.

(1) Participant observation

Working first as a journalist and then as an editor, I got the opportunity to scrutinize the whole publishing process of the newspaper. Through attending various press conferences, interviewing government officials, community organization leaders and local entrepreneurs, as well as engaging in plenty of activities such as Dawa Business Forum and Dawa Education Forum initiated in Chinese community, I acquainted myself with the operation of the press and observed some key factors in shaping the survival strategies of DBP.

In addition, the experience of editing community news furthered my understanding about the relationship between editors, advertisers and other community groups. I also noted some challenges and limitations the newspaper was confronting, on which I gradually developed possible suggestions to help to remove the constraints of ethnic media (Part 4 of the report).

## (2) Personal interviews

Interning in DBP offered me privileges to talk with its staff with various responsibilities, including the publisher, the marketing manager, editors, reporters and distributors. Through my journalist practice, I also established a wide range of personal contacts in local Chinese language media such as *Sing Tao Daily*, *Ming Pao Daily News*, *Fairchild Television* and *M Channel*, etc., whom I used to gather information, check the accuracy of materials and develop a comprehensive view of Chinese language media in GVA.

For this report, eight in-depth interviews were conducted with the DBP publisher Mr. Zaixin Ma, editor-in-chief Mr. Xining Guo, vice marketing executive Mr. Paul Wu and editor-in-chief of *Sing Tao Daily* Mr. Victor Ho. Each interview took between one

hour and two and a half hours. Dozens of discussions and consultations with the editors and advertising sales representatives were carried out informally during working time. The face-to-face interviews elicited elaborations on issues central to the arguments of my report and offered a certain insight that statistics cannot.

Different questions were prepared for different interviewees. Questions directed to the publisher and the chief editor included history and structure of the news institutions, conflicts and strategies in the competition, relationship with local communities as well as the trend and their plans in the future. Questions addressed to the reporters and editors covered their professional experience, workload and practice in news covering and selection. Questions directed to marketing staff were focused on the advertising solicitation process. This report presented a few citations from the interviews; much of what was reported is integrated in the following chapters. To ensure consistency and accuracy, some of their answers were checked and verified against data in document records and my personal observation.

### (3) Document analysis

During my research, I conducted a bibliographic survey at the National Library of Canada and Vancouver Public library to locate and identify all Chinese language newspapers in Canada. This list was crossed-checked through an unsystematic but extensive observation of newsstands in Chinese-dominant communities in Vancouver to find which were really available and consumed by the readers.

From the list I selected some major weeklies and dailies in Vancouver, primarily *Dawa Business Press*, *Global Chinese Journal*, *Sing Tao* and *Ming Pao* for general review so as to gain a broad sense of the coverage of topics and the types of information

and advertising. Then I randomly chose 30 issues of DBP published from June 2006 to January 2007 to measure its theme, origin, geographic focus, and content organization to identify the editorial characteristics of paper.

I also reread some back issues, important speeches and program brochures of DBP to try to find the interplay between the press and its community. Literatures about ethnic media, immigration research and demographic Statistics were studied and quoted in the report as well.

Although the ethnic press shows resilience and vitality, it is still very fragile, always menaced by financial hardship and fierce competition. The report further discusses difficulties and problems confronted by ethnic publications in Canada. Suggestions such as government recognition and support as well as industry partnership are proposed to counter the high mortality rate of ethnic print media.

Investigating a Chinese weekly in Vancouver introduces a way of understanding a unique publishing pattern in Canada. An ethnic weekly is not only different from a mainstream newspaper; it is also dissimilar to major transnational ethnic dailies which owe their success more or less to financial or editorial support from their homeland or parent company. The independent practice of DBP makes it more representative of the real publishing world dominated by small-sized enterprises.

Moreover, this study might be advantageous to the development of non-Chinese ethnic press. Chinese-language newspapers are not alone in filling an ethnicity-based news niche. There are about 250 to 300 ethnic presses representing Canada's cultural mix: Punjabis, Latinos, black Canadians, etc. – everyone has a voice of its own these days. In fact, these newspapers are reaching out to a potential audience of five million members of

visible minorities<sup>1</sup> in Canada. Although working in different minority communities, they share similar experiences and challenges in many aspects with the Chinese press.

Therefore, the survival efforts and realistic concerns of the Chinese weekly may be used as a supportive reference to them. This gains special significance in a multiethnic Canada where cultural difference and ethnic diversity are highly respected and valued.

This report is divided into five parts. The first part is an introduction. Next we examine the background in which DBP emerged, including a literature review of the roles of ethnic press, an analysis of the dynamics and recent development of Chinese language newspapers in Canada, and an overview of the structure of DBP. Then we turn to the sample of DBP, probing its survival strategies through content analysis and its socio-political interaction with community groups. The fourth part focuses on constraints and challenges the ethnic press is confronting and provides some possible suggestions. The final part presents conclusions and the limitations of the research.

1. The Employment Equity Act of Canada defines visible minorities as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.” Under this definition, regulations specify the following groups as visible minorities: Arabs, Blacks, Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, Koreans, Latin Americans, South Asians, Southeast Asians, West Asians and other visible minority groups, such as Pacific Islanders (Canadian Heritage website).

## 2. BACKGROUND

### 2.1. The ethnic press, its role and functions

#### 2.1.1. Definition and current status

The ethnic press could be defined as newspapers or periodicals that serve a specific linguistic, cultural or racially distinct group<sup>1</sup>. This used to be referred to as the immigrant press or foreign language press since it was primarily designed to meet the needs of immigrants who leave one country or region to settle in another. As the immigrant community grows, researchers believe ethnic press or ethnic minority press is a more useful term because this kind of publication serves not only immigrant generations but also locally born, acculturated residents (Miller, 1987).

The ethnic press is generally published by an ethnic organization or individual<sup>2</sup>. It can include local, regional or national initiatives. The majority of Canadian ethnic press has published in languages other than English and French, although there have been few published in official languages or a combination of official and non-official languages.

The first Canadian ethnic publication was a German weekly, *Die Welt, und*

*Neuschottländische Correspondenz*, which appeared in Halifax in January 1788<sup>3</sup>.

1. According to Publication Assistance Program of Canada Heritage, the ethnic group in Canada is specified as “a commonly recognized specific cultural or racially distinct community, or specific linguistic groups using other than Canada's official languages” (PAP:Glossary).

2. Publications produced by the government of the country of origin to serve countrymen abroad, or by the host government or commercial interests seeking the attention of ethnic communities are excluded from the range of the ethnic press.

3. Libraries and Archives Canada: *Facts about newspapers*.

Nowadays there are a rich variety of ethnic newspapers coexisting with mainstream print media. Nevertheless, establishing a comprehensive listing of ethnic presses is a challenging task, be it on regional or national basis. In addition to the great variety and geographical diversity of ethnic presses, their length of existence varies considerably. Many of them are short-lived; some are only available occasionally. The National Library of Canada currently receives about 140 ethnic newspapers, as listed on its website. These only represent a portion of the industry. It is estimated there are 250 to 300 ethnic newspapers in the country, which represent “over 50 cultures and over five million Canadians whose cultural heritages are neither French nor Anglo-Saxon” (Ojo, 2006).

According to Ben Viccari, the former president of Canadian Ethnic Media Association, half a century ago, there were only about 50 ethnic newspapers and one or two isolated radio programs, most of which served readers of European origins (Viccari, 1995). At present, if we include newspapers, magazines, radio and television programs as well as the growing number of online publications, there will be well over 1,000 ethnic media representing non-English, non- French communities. The growth and form of ethnic press vary greatly with the changing patterns of ethnic population.

### **2.1.2. Literature review**

Compared with abundant and profound scholarship on mainstream media, academic studies of the ethnic press have remained sporadic and uneven; most were conducted by sociologists and communication scholars with focus on the sociological significance of the ethnic press – its role and functions in a multiethnic society.

Researchers have been in disagreement about the role of ethnic press. Two schools of thought are usually represented in this debate. One school believes the ethnic press accentuates national consciousness of origin country, centres the immigrants' interests and activities in their homeland and creates a type of cultural segregation which sets them apart from the life of host country. Kim and Kim (1989), for example, hold that newspapers with a solely ethnic bent may serve to isolate the ethnic groups from the rest of Canada. Jack Snyder indicates that ethnic media only promote a form of intellectual and cultural "ghettoization." Instead, their roles should be replaced by mainstream media, which can better represent ethnic minorities through their effort "to attract a politically and ethnically diverse audience, invite the expression of various viewpoints, and hold news stories to rigorous standards of objectivity" (Snyder, 2000).

Contesting the negative views, Robert Park, a groundbreaking urban sociologist said the ethnic press offers newcomers an entry portal into new society and fosters their adaptation to a new cultural environment. It not only assists immigrants in integrating to the host country, it also serves as a bond to hold an ethnic group together (Park, 1922).

Subervi-Velez (1986) proposes the idea of a dual role of assimilation and pluralism. He maintains that the ethnic press is a major means of informing an ethnic minority audience of the dominant mainstream culture and values, while being the means of sustaining the cultural identity of the ethnic group. His idea has been supported by a great many researchers (Riggins 1992; Fleras, 1995; Waters, 2003).

The functions of the ethnic press are multifaceted (Park, 1922; Curfoot-Mollington, 2002, Gross, 2006):



- (i) It is an important, and sometimes the first and only avenue for immigrants to gain information of host country and integrate into the large society;
- (ii) It is a tool for cultural retention;
- (iii) It is a forum for members to speak for, and to, their own ethnic communities;
- (iv) It is a communication channel between the ethnic community and the mainstream.

The existing studies to date far have offered a variety of perspectives regarding the influence and contributions the ethnic press has made to the minority as well as the majority communities. However, how it operates to fulfil these functions, how it meets heterogeneous needs of its audience and advertisers through journalistic and business practice, and how it survives and thrives in a fiercely competitive marketplace draw nominal scholarly attention. Given the fact that the ethnic press reaches out to a potential audience of 13.4% of total population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2003), it is necessary to put them on the agenda of academic publishing research.

## **2.2. Dynamics and recent development of Chinese language press**

### **2.2.1. Dynamics of Chinese language press**

History professor Sally M. Miller (1987) in her work *The Ethnic Press in the United States* points out that population size, education level and literacy of ethnic groups contribute to the emergence of ethnic minority press. Bai (2005) proposes three other elements that facilitate its rise: (i) ethnic community members' low English skills, (ii) a large number of ethnic entrepreneurs as a main source of advertising revenue, and (iii) an ethnic community concentrated in metropolitan areas. In addition to these, I believe

underrepresentation and misrepresentation of racial minorities in mainstream media are also a driving force of establishing the ethnic press in Canada. I will turn to each one of these now.

### **2.2.1.1 Increasingly growing population**

As one of the oldest diasporas in Canada, Chinese Canadians have endured a long history of migration and settlement. The first Chinese community in Canada was established in Barkerville, B.C. in 1858 (Chui, et al. 2005). However, due to severe social and political discrimination and legal exclusion, Chinese were excluded or strictly restricted from entering Canada for a long time. It was not until 1967 when Canada introduced a race-blind, universal point system for the selection of immigrants that large numbers of Chinese persons were able to enter Canada. With successive waves of immigration since the 1970s, the Chinese population has surpassed 1 million, rising from 289,245 in 1981 to 633,933 in 1991, and 1,029,400 in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2003a).

By now, the Chinese Canadian community is the largest visible minority group in Canada, comprising approximately 4 percent of the total Canadian population and 26% of all minorities (Statistics Canada, 2003b). It is also a diverse group, virtually representing citizens of 132 countries speaking one hundred languages and dialects from Afrikaans to Yiddish (Guo et al., 2005), though the majority of them came from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan<sup>1</sup>.

1. The Chinese territories have been divided into three entities: Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, each with distinctive characters in terms of political system, economic development and culture. For example, Hong Kong had been under the British rule for 150 years, which resulted in a political and economic system very different from those of Mainland China. Even after its return to China's sovereignty in 1997, the difference has been allowed to continue under the "one country, two systems" agreement. Taiwan has been separated from the Mainland China since 1949. During the past 50 years, different political, social, and economic systems have also evolved there.

**Table 1: Summary of Canadian population of Chinese origin**

	People of Chinese origin			Total Canadian population		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
<b>Total population (in thousands)</b>	529.4	565.3	1,094.7	14,564.3	15,074.8	29,639.0
<b>Percentage change between 1996 and 2001</b>	18.0	19.5	18.8	3.7	4.1	3.9
<b>Percentage immigrant</b>	70.3	73.6	72.0	18.0	18.7	18.4
<b>Percentage with Canadian citizenship</b>	80.4	80.1	80.2	94.9	94.5	94.7
<b>Language</b>						
<b>Percentage able to speak English or French</b>	87.9	83.0	85.4	98.8	98.2	98.4
<b>Percentage speaking only non-official language at home</b>	62.9	64.0	63.4	9.6	9.9	9.7
<b>Age distribution</b>						
<b>Percentage aged less than 15</b>	20.3	18.9	19.6	20.2	18.6	19.4
<b>Percentage aged 25 to 44</b>	32.4	34.4	33.4	30.4	30.6	30.5
<b>Percentage aged 65 and over</b>	9.0	10.0	9.5	10.9	13.4	12.2
<b>Education, employment and income</b>						
<b>Percentage with university degree<sup>1</sup></b>	30.5	23.9	27.1	16.0	14.9	15.4
<b>Percentage employed</b>	59.9	51.5	55.5	67.2	56.1	61.5
<b>Unemployment rate</b>	8.2	8.6	8.4	7.6	7.2	7.4
<b>Percentage with low income</b>	25.8	26.1	25.9	14.7	17.7	16.2

1. Includes people aged 15 and over.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada.

Immigrants from Hong Kong increased significantly in the mid-1980s and early 1990s as concerns mounted about the colony's return to China. Immigration from Taiwan also increased throughout the 1990s. But since 1998, Mainland China has become the top source of newcomers to Canada. From 1980 to 2001, among 755,698 Chinese immigrants who landed in Canada, about half of them came from Mainland China, 37% from Hong Kong, and over 12% from Taiwan (Guo et al., 2005). The booming population generates a big consuming and advertising market for Chinese language presses. At the same time, since Chinese people in these long separated areas have different experiences and to a

certain degree, distinct perspectives and aspirations, they would welcome newspapers providing information that caters to them. This explains why Chinese communities sustain quite a few Chinese dailies in Canada.

#### **2.2.1.2 Language**

Language ability has a strong influence on media use. In Canada, Chinese has become the third most commonly used language, next only to English and French (Zhou, 2002). According to the statistics of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2005), 790,500 people reported speaking a Chinese language at home on a regular basis. Among them, a sizable group (15%) have no knowledge of either of Canada's official language. Ethnic media accordingly become the only channel beyond word of mouth for receiving news and information about their adopted country.

Evidently, Chinese speakers have a strong tendency to keep their mother language and use the ethnic press. A media study in 2004 showed that the top eight media used by Metropolitan Vancouver's 342,665 Chinese-speaking people (17.2 percent of the total population) were all Chinese language, with the *Vancouver Sun* the ninth choice and BCTV the tenth (Will, 2005).

#### **2.2.1.3 Educational level and literacy**

The majority of Chinese immigrants, especially most recent arrivals, are literate and highly educated. According to 2001 Statistics Canada, "In 2001, 27% of Canadians of Chinese origin aged 15 and over had either a bachelor's or post-graduate degree, compared with 15% of the overall adult population...Adults of Chinese origin made up 3% of the overall Canadian population, but represented 9% of all those with a Doctorate

and 7% of those with a Master's degree.”<sup>1</sup> Friedlander (2000) recognized that people with a higher education tend to read newspapers more often than the less educated. The well-educated new settlers reasonably constitute an active audience for the Chinese press.

#### **2.2.1.4 Geographical distribution**

The existence of ethnic media requires a concentrated audience for distribution and advertising. From 1980 to 2001, the majority of Chinese immigrants (87%) landed in Canada's metropolitan cities<sup>2</sup>. Toronto attracted the largest group of Chinese immigrants (41%), followed by Vancouver (31%), Montreal (7.8%), Calgary (4%), and Edmonton (3.2%). The ratio of Chinese immigrants concentrated in big cities is higher than the national average proportion for all immigrants in Canada (75%) (Guo and DeVortze, 2005). The concentrated population no doubt facilitates the rise of the Chinese press.

#### **2.2.1.5 Chinese businesses**

Parallel to the unprecedented increase in Chinese immigrants in the 1990s was the tremendous influx of financial capital and expanding ethnic consumer market, which led to thriving Chinese ethnic enterprises in Canada. Since traditional word-of-mouth or face-to-face interaction was no longer sufficient to reach a larger market of ethnic consumers (Zhou and Cai, 2002), the ethnic press appeared as an appropriate tool to these businesses for marketing and advertising their products and services. The ethnic press provided an

1. Statistics Canada: the Chinese Community in Canada, 2001.

2. Based on Landed Immigrant Data System (LIDS), a data system contains immigrant landing records and is operated by the Immigration and Employment. Canada.

cultural preference of the advertisers and consumers. It was estimated that the blooming Chinese ethnic economy in Canada has created an advertising market of at least 50 million Canadian dollars for printed media alone (Szonyi, 2002).

#### **2.2.1.6 Underrepresentation and misrepresentation by mainstream media**

Despite their obvious presence, ethnic groups have seldom seen their interests and perspectives represented equally or fairly in the pages of major daily newspapers. When they were covered, they have often been perceived as troublemakers who stole jobs from Canadians or engaged in illegal activities such as drug deals or smuggling. Take the *Vancouver Sun* for example. A study carried out in 2004 revealed that:

Only 0.5 percent of stories even bothered mentioning the Chinese in Vancouver, and only one-seventeenth of that tiny percentage was actually about the Chinese community. Besides this, the representation was full of negative stereotypes, or just cultural-festival fluff. (Will, 2005)

There are still very few media professionals from minority ethnic groups working in the mainstream media. Stories and characters that fairly represent the views and cultures of minority ethnic communities are insufficient. As a result, ethnic news outlets have emerged to cover their community from within and reflect their particular views and interests.

Chinese newspapers have risen and prospered in sync with the immigration wave. The upsurge of population, characteristics of Chinese immigrants, expanding ethnic economies as well as the need for better representation in the media world all contribute to the vibrancy of the Chinese language press in Canada.

### 2.2.2. Recent development of Chinese newspapers

The development of Chinese newspapers in Canada can be traced back to the late part of the 19th century. However, it was not until recently that the ethnic press has matured and achieved the status of an influential ethnic institution. In the early period, there were only back issues of periodicals from the home country and irregular publications of community newsletters circulated in a small group of the Chinatown elite. The first Chinese newspaper in Canada *Yat Sun Bo* (Chinese Reform Gazette) was published in Vancouver in 1903 (Li, 1999). Prior to 1970s, Chinese presses in Canada were largely propaganda instruments of political parties in China, concerned more with China than with Canada. Not until the late 1970s did Chinese newspapers take root on Canadian soil. They appeared more Canadian oriented, presenting the local Chinese' way of life and advocating full participation in the larger society. Chinese publications have burst into full bloom since the 1990s.

According to Xu and Huang (2005), there are about 60 Chinese language newspapers and magazines, more than 10 radio stations, 7 to 8 Television channels and more than 100 Internet websites serving the Chinese community in Canada. The largest and most influential newspapers are Hong Kong-based *Sing Tao Daily*, *Ming Pao Daily News* and Taiwan-based *The World Journal* (See Table 2). With a combined readership of nearly half a million per week (Szonyi, 2002), these “big three” dailies take a disproportionate share of Chinese newspaper consumer market in major Canadian cities. Publishing seven days a week in broadsheet format, the three dailies each create two or three metropolitan editions to serve their audience respectively in East and West Canada.

The largest one, *Sing Tao Daily*, owned by a partnership between Hong Kong's Sing Tao newspaper group and Toronto-based Torstar Corporation, was launched in 1978 and has a weekly readership of about 198,000 in Greater Toronto Area and 182,000 in the Greater Vancouver Area.<sup>1</sup> Publishing about 100 to 120 pages a day, and four supplements a week, the newspaper has stayed a leader among Canada's Chinese- language newspapers due to its long presence in this country.

*Ming Pao Daily News*, owned by Ming Pao Group of Hong Kong, was established in Canada in 1993. As the major rival of *Sing Tao*, it publishes five sections, 100 to 120 pages every day with five supplement magazines coming free with the newspaper. *The World Journal*, affiliated with the United Daily Group based in Taiwan, is the largest Chinese newspaper in North America with independent operations in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Texas, Vancouver and Toronto. It has stronger presence in the United States than in Canada. In Vancouver it publishes five sections and 60-80 pages daily. Like mainstream newspapers such as *The National Post* and *The Globe and Mail*, the three dailies compete fiercely on the battlegrounds of “editorial stance, circulation methods and advertiser appeal” (Szonyi, 2002).

Coexisting with the dailies, there are a great many Chinese language weeklies and periodicals (See Table 3), which are owned mostly by immigrant entrepreneurs and published weekly, biweekly or irregularly with a circulation typically ranging between 5,000 and 20,000. Most of them are distributed free of charge at Chinese retail shops, community centres and libraries. In the Greater Vancouver Area, there are three relatively

1. The data is from *2005 Chinese Newspaper Readership Study* made by Environics Research Group and posted on the *Sing Tao Daily* Website. The three dailies invited different research institutions to make their readership survey. Therefore the outcome might have difference because each survey has different emphasis and approach.



influential Chinese weeklies. *Dawa Business Press*, a tri-weekly, is the case of my study and will be discussed later. *The Global Chinese Press* (GCP) was founded in 2001 and comes out biweekly on Wednesday and Friday. A single issue of GCP contains 40 pages, divided into four sections. With a claimed total circulation of 60,000 and two editions in Toronto and Vancouver, GCP distributes in the provinces of British Columbia, Ontario and Alberta. *Chinese Journal*, founded in Vancouver in 2000, publishes once per week on Monday with 40 pages. It claims a circulation of 20,000 to 30,000.

**Table 2: Three major Chinese dailies in Canada**

	<b>Sing Tao Daily</b>	<b>Ming Pao Daily News</b>	<b>World Journal</b>
<b>Founded</b>	Eastern Edition: 1978 in Toronto Western Edition: 1983 in Vancouver Alberta Edition 1988 in Calgary	Eastern Edition: May 1993 in Toronto  Western Edition: October 1993 in Vancouver	Eastern Edition: 1987 in Toronto  Western Edition: 1994 In Vancouver
<b>Parent company</b>	Torstar group and Sing Tao Newspaper group of Hong Kong (Founded in 1938 by Aw Boon Haw)	Ming Pao Group of Hong Kong (Founded in 1959 by Chinese martial arts novelist Louis Cha)	United Daily News Group of Taiwan (Founded in 1951 by T.W. Wang)
<b>Reader demographic</b>	Chinese Canadians from Hong Kong and Mainland China	Chinese Canadians from Hong Kong and Mainland China	Chinese Canadians from Taiwan and Mainland China
<b>Circulation<sup>1</sup></b>	30,000 to 50,000	30,000 to 50,000	20,000 to 40,000
<b>Supplements (Magazines) :</b>	<i>Home Choice Magazine</i> (Friday), <i>Sing Tao Weekly</i> (Saturday), <i>Star Magazine</i> (Sunday)	<i>Ming Pao Gourmet Supplement</i> (Wednesday), <i>Property Golden Pages</i> (Thursday), <i>Exploring China</i> (Friday ) <i>Saturday Magazine</i> (Saturday), <i>Ming Pao Sunday Supplement</i> (Sunday)	<i>World Journal Sunday Magazine</i> (Sunday)

1. The estimated data were collected through newspaper articles and interviews from their staff. Hard Circulation figures are difficult to obtain because Chinese newspapers rarely reveal these figures and their claimed circulation are not audited.

**Table 3: Major Chinese weeklies and periodicals in Canada**

	<b>Weeklies and Periodicals</b>
<b>Ottawa</b>	The Capital Chinese News (加京华报), Chinese Canadian Community News (加华侨报), Canada China News (中华导报), The Ottawa Weekend (渥京周末)
<b>Toronto</b>	Sing Wah Press (醒华报), The Canadian Chinese Post (加华新闻), Chinese News (大中报), Chinese Canadian Times (加中时报), News Star Weekly (星星生活周报), Very Good News (华报), Toronto City News (多伦多都市报), North America Weekly Times (北美时报), China Today Digest (今日中国文汇报), Herald Monthly (号角), World True Buddha News (真佛报), Chinese Real Estate Weekly (地产周刊)
<b>Vancouver</b>	China Journal (神州时报), Dawa Business Press (大华商报), Global Chinese Press (环球华报), Chinese Times (中华时报), World True Buddha News (真佛报), Health Times (健康时报), Evergreen News (松鹤天地), Maple Family (枫华家庭), Maple Students (枫华学子), Popular Lifestyle and Entertainment Magazine (娱乐生活杂志), AutoNerve (车枢), Herald Monthly (号角), Chinese Buy and Sell (中文买卖报), New Continent Weekly (新大陆), Chinese Canadian Times (Vancouver Edition)(加中时报), Canadian Chinese Express (加拿大明声报), Canadian City Post (加拿大都市报)
<b>Montreal</b>	La Presse Chinoise (华侨时报), Les Nouvelles Chinoises (华侨新报), Luby Chinese Weekly Newspaper (路比华讯), Le Journal Chinois De Montreal (满华报), Journal Chinois Sinoquebec (蒙城华人报), Herald Monthly (号角), Trendmaker Magazine (先锋杂志)
<b>Calgary</b>	Oriental News (亚省东方报)
<b>Edmonton</b>	Edmonton Chinese Journal (爱华报), The Chinese Journal (光华报), Canada China News (中华导报), The Chinese Canadian Times (加华报)
<b>Winnipeg</b>	ZhongYuan Qiao Bao(中原侨报), Manitoba Chinese Times(缅省中华时报)

Source: Based on Xu and Huang (2005) and Libraries and Archives Canada (Newspapers).

## **2.3. An overview of Dawa Business Press**

To celebrate the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of DBP, Mr. Zaixin Ma, the publisher, described the growth of the paper:

In the beginning, we had only a couple of people with two telephones. Now we have a crew of about 30 employees. Our paper has grown from one issue, 16 pages a week to three issues with a total of 80 pages a week. The distribution area has expanded from the Greater Vancouver Area to Victoria, Edmonton and Calgary (Ma, 2006).

This was indeed a big achievement in view of the fact that the press was started on a small private capital, operated independently and sustained its growth all through its own effort, without any financial backing from government, political party or other organizations, fraternal or religious.

### **2.3.1. Establishment**

DBP was established in November 2001 in response to the upsurge of Chinese immigrants from Mainland China. While Hong Kong was the primary source of Chinese immigration from the end of World War II to the mid-1990s, Mainland China has taken over to become the largest source since 1998. Among 345,000 Canadian Chinese in the Greater Vancouver Area, about 48% are from Mainland China<sup>1</sup>. They make up a distinct consumer sector and sizeable community.

However, as mentioned earlier, major Chinese newspapers in Canada primarily catered to immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan. No influential newspapers were established in Vancouver to specifically gratify Mainland Chinese whose social background, political perspective and cultural needs are quite different from Hong Kong

1. Based on 2001 census data and 2001-2005 new immigration statistics reported by Statistics Canada.

immigrants and Taiwanese, although a couple of fledgling weeklies like *Chinese Journal* and *Global Chinese Press* felt the powerful pull and began serving the market. Mr. Ma and a couple of his friends recognized the large segment of underserved audience and intended to fill in this news market niche. The possibility of lucrative profits with low capital investment also attracted them to make the venture. So they capitalized the press with their private funds.

Mr. Ma was a veteran journalist and editor of Mainland China's two distinguished newspapers *People's Daily* and *Beijing Youth Daily*. He earned a bachelor's degree in journalism in People's University of China, a master's in law in Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and a doctorate in business in Durham University in England. His background and journalistic experience is the most valuable assets to the newspaper.

### **2.3.2. Mission**

DBP primarily serves the immigrants from Mainland China. It aims to bridge the gap – between old country and new, Chinese and Canadians, traditional ways and a new life, eastern and western culture. Its mission statement states: “DBP endeavours to keep its audience abreast of Chinese-related subjects, to show concern for the local Chinese community, to report their life, reflect their needs, and protect their rights.”

Printed in the full size of the daily newspaper (broadsheet) <sup>1</sup>, the weekly comes out three times each week; 20-22 pages on Tuesday and Thursday; 36-40 pages on Saturday. In content, it can be divided into three parts: news, information and advertising.

1. Adherence to the format of mainstream dailies is a result of technological, economic considerations as well as the reading habits of the audience. In addition, it seeks to legitimate itself by following the formula laid down by the more prestigious daily newspapers.

The space is split about 50-50 between advertisements and editorial contents.

### 2.3.3. Structure

DBP typically employs 6 to 8 journalists and editors in the newsroom. All of them are recent immigrants from Mainland China. They all have attained at least undergraduate education, and the majority have had journalistic or publishing experience in China. Because of cultural and language barriers, most of them have had difficulties in finding middle class jobs in Canada. The Chinese-language press thus became a logical alternative for them where they could use their professional experience and perhaps make a living as well. The newsroom fulfils a wide range of duties. Along with news gathering, translating, writing, editing work, new technology has shifted production work such as page composition and proofreading to editors. There is also one designer in charge of advertising design.

The marketing department is comprised of a dozen advertisement sales representatives, who have more varied origins. The press relies heavily on their work because advertising revenue is by and large the sole income of the paper.

DBP contracts out the printing work to *Sing Tao Daily*, which owns a modern printing press. It has a circulation of about 25,000 copies. The majority of the papers are distributed free of charge. Only a small fraction are distributed at the price of \$0.25 per copy just to “keep its exposure to the public, since the free copies are taken out too rapidly”<sup>1</sup>. Also, a small number of readers subscribe the paper at the rate about \$10 a month. The press is currently delivered to more than 100 Chinese gathering locations all

1. From the interview of Jennifer Han, the marketing manager of DBP.

over the Greater Vancouver Areas, such as China Town, supermarkets & shopping centres, public libraries, community centres, bookstores, restaurants, convenience stores and various retail shops, etc. It also distributes to Victoria, Calgary and Edmonton in small numbers.

### **3. SURVIVAL STRATEGIES**

Essentially local and privately owned, an ethnic weekly hinges its success on the readership and advertising support in the local community. This chapter examines DBP's adaptive strategies in two categories: editorial practice to increase readership and initiatives with its communities to build advertising and expand influence.

In content practice, DBP offers an editorial mix of news, features, reviews and other information to appeal to Chinese community. It devotes one third of its space to reporting Canadian and Chinese events. Employment and education get more emphasis in the weekly than in its larger counterparts as they top the concerns of the immigrant group. The newspaper also invests 10 to 15% to provide its readers entertainment and literature in order to alleviate their sense of cultural isolation and emptiness.

Community is vital to the function and purpose of DBP. Lacking the participation and support of its community, the press would become what a Chinese saying describes "water without a source, a tree without roots." To ensure its survival and development, DBP interacts actively with its community by involving itself with community organizations, advocating community-conscious programs, promoting civic and political participation and serving local businesses so as to obtain enough advertising revenues and expand its news channels. Still fragile though it may seem, DBP shows great resilience and resolution in striving for success.



### **3.1. Tailoring the content to meet the needs of audience**

DBP sees recent Mainland Chinese immigrants as its major readership, though its mission is geared toward the entire Chinese community. This newest Chinese diaspora arose when Canada started full immigration processing in China in 1995 (Teo, 2007). These immigrants remained emotionally or sometimes financially attached to China although they chose to leave it of their own accord. They sought to become a part of Canada but were often blocked by language and cultural barriers. For most of them, living in a new economic, social and cultural environment was a very taxing experience. They were starved for news, information and instructions to help them re-establish their identity, cultivate new networks and adapt to the host country.

DBP is answering the call. Mr. Ma noted:

Immigrants, especially the parental generation and most recently arrived young generation, their English or French are not quite at a level to consume mainstream media smoothly. They need an alternative source to tell them what happens in the world they stay, to get involved in the debates that Canadians are involved in. We undertake the role of a bridge. (Zaixin Ma. Personal interview. January 4, 2007.)

With its entire news staff drawn from the immigrant population, DBP fully knows the desires and discontent of its audience and strives every day to live up to the paper's motto –“Bridging the Gap” – by covering news in Canada as well as in China: reporting local news that would not make it into the large mainstream dailies, promoting local Chinese welfare and providing recognition to local heroes. It makes a great effort to satisfy the needs of its audience. These needs, on the other hand, condition the contents and coverage of the paper.

### **3.1.1. News — bringing both Canadian and Chinese issues to attention**

In his defining work *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*, Park pointed out: “It is the news that makes papers readable, and it is news, in the long run, that makes papers read ” (Park, 1922).

News is given top priority in DBP. Each issue includes local news, national news, international news, China news and special report. In addition, each Tuesday issue covers news on employment and education; Thursday issues report community news and news on finance; Saturday issues provide Alberta news and bilingual news. The total news accounts for 20 to 30% of the paper. Within that, on average 30 to 40% deals with issues of Canadian politics, values, traditions and lifestyles; 20 to 30% targets Chinese community in Canada, and the remainder is news and issues from outside the country. According to Mr. Ma,

The basic principle in news selection is Chinese related or involved. We assess the value of the news items not according to their prominence in mainstream news media, but based on their relevance and importance to our Chinese community. We might cover news that may seem insignificant in mainstream media but related to the lives and development of Chinese in Canada. (Ma. Personal interview. January 9, 2007.)

Compared to mainstream press, DBP gives much more extensive coverage to such stories as visits to Vancouver by government officers from China, traffic problems baffling businesspersons in Chinatown and crimes involving Chinese victims and suspects.

Recent arrivals are particularly concerned with news from homeland. They are interested in what is going on in China, because homeland politics and economy

influence their families and friends who are left behind. Canadian media outlets usually lack detailed coverage on these types of issues, so the ethnic media fill the gap.

### **3.1.2. Information — dealing with the major concerns of its audience**

Ethnic newspapers are valuable tools to meet the niche needs of ethnic minority groups. In DBP, besides news and advertising, you can find a wide range of information from the columnist's opinion on private health care to recent gossips about the Chinese top movie star Ziyi Zhang; from the flights details of airlines flying between Vancouver and various Chinese cities to updated guidelines and policies regarding entry visa to Canada. For example, the October 7, 2007 issue of DBP included an opinion questioning Fraser institute school rankings in Vancouver, a critic about the Japanese popular blog *Demon Wife Diaries*, tips to prevent flu with Chinese herbal medicines and some hiking messages to Pemberton Meager hot spring. Particularly, DBP places its focus on the preoccupations of immigrant readers – employment, education and culture issues.

The major concerns of Chinese immigrants are usually related to settlement and adaptation to the adopted society. In the Chinese community, the model for a successful immigrant, in many cases, is one who has a well-paid professional job or runs his own business, possesses his own house and has their children in elite universities (Zhou, Chen and Cai, 2002). DBP not only tries to bring into focus the stories of many successful immigrant professionals and entrepreneurs, it highlights the importance of expressing the group's critical concerns for employment and children's education. It also dedicates a significant portion of editorial contents to culture and entertainment issues to grow readership.

### 3.1.2.1 Employment

For recent Chinese immigrants, the overriding problem they have to face is employment, especially employment matched for their educational qualifications and work experience. According to the 2001 Census, prime-working age Chinese who immigrated in the 1990s had an employment rate 61%, lower than the average national level of 80% (Guo and Devoretz, 2006). There is a substantial amount of unemployment and underemployment among immigrants. Guo and Devoretz made a survey that sampled 322 Chinese households in Vancouver circa 2004-2005. They found “over 60% of the Vancouver-surveyed Chinese population indicated that their employment situation in Canada was worse than in China and only a minority (17%) perceived it as better.” This finding is notable because amid the survey people “72.54% have post-secondary education, among whom 26.76% have master’s or doctoral degrees. Moreover, the majority felt that their Chinese experience was not helpful in the Vancouver labour market” (Guo and Devoretz, 2006). It’s a commonplace phenomenon that engineers, doctors, bank managers, teachers working as dishwashers, machine operators, factory labourers and janitors, earning the minimum wage of \$8 per hour.

DBP goes to great length to address the employment problem. Jason Yang, the editor in charge of Employment and Business sections of DBP, introduced:

We attempt to collect the most helpful and practical information for them. For example, many readers complained about the vicious circle of “Canadian working experience”. If one wants to be hired, he must have Canadian experience. But how can he get the experience if he cannot be hired at all? So we published articles about how to negotiate initial entry into the local labour market, such as taking unpaid volunteer work, enrolling in course in local colleges, choosing working for temporary office or labour agencies, etc. (Jason Yang. In discussion with the author. October 2006.)

The Employment and Business section also offers news about employment trends, latest labour market statistics, occupational training and articles about job searching experience and techniques. For example, it cooperates with Richmond Career Centre, an immigrant service agency in British Columbia, creating the column “Hiring” to release local job openings in the Greater Vancouver Area. The job postings include assorted permanent and part time job positions primarily in administration, marketing, production and service sectors and are updated every week. The column also disseminates employment counselling information for new immigrants. In addition, profiles of successful Chinese in different professional segments are presented regularly, which helps to build self-confidence in the community, and encourages the readers to take initiatives in the changing circumstances.

### **3.1.2.2 Education**

Chinese come to Canada for a variety of reasons. A key motivation for their decision is the attractive nature of the Canadian educational system. With high aspirations for future generation, Chinese parents make great efforts to provide their children best education they can offer. Even if they come to a new country, this concept persists. For example, they are willing to move to a neighbourhood where quality schools are located despite its towering house prices or rents. As a result, in some of the best Vancouver public schools, ethnic Chinese often made up a majority of students (Edgington, 2001). They are also eager to send their children to Saturday schools to learn arts, music, math, martial arts and Chinese language – they see important future economic opportunities in China and the ability to speak their native language is an advantage in these circumstances.

DBP accordingly presents a wide coverage of education issues. In the Tuesday issue, it sets up four pages of editorial contents: *Jiaoyu Zhi Chuang* (Window of Education), *Jia Hua Xueyuan* (Learning Garden), *Jiaoyu Tiandi* (World of Educational Resources), *Xiaoyuan Shenghuo* (Campus Life) to cater to their readers.

Collaborating with “Vancouver Beijing Chinese School”, *Jiaoyu Zhi Chuang* (Window of Education) puts out compositions, poems, calligraphies and paintings created by children. Publishing children’s works in print on one hand encourages their interest and inspires their pride in Chinese culture; on the other hand, it attracts more families to read the paper. Two columns of “*Chinese History Tales*” and “*Listening Story and learning Chinese Idioms*” are produced on the same page, which conform to the parent’s expectation of instilling some Chinese heritages in children.

According to Jason, practical guides such as school ranking lists, university reviews and family education tips are popular among readers. They often ask for extra copies. Some readers clipped off latest ranking of schools and posted them on their walls. (Yang. Discussion. October 2006.)

### **3.1.2.3 Literature and entertainment**

Adults’ cultural interests and tastes are shaped to a great extent by their past cultural experience, values and worldviews. They tend to read, listen and view what they are “personally connected to or have grown up with” (Zhou, Chen and Cai, 2002). But the cultural scene in a new country is “unfamiliar and irrelevant and sometimes even unsettling in the case of racial stereotyping, insensitive ethnic jokes, and biased depictions of the group” (Zhou, Chen and Cai, 2002). The language obstacle aggravates the sense of cultural isolation and emptiness. This is especially true for readers of DBP.

Based on a readership survey made by the newspaper in 2005, 88% of its readers were above the age of 30; among them, 80% expressed a desire for more literary and leisure readings in their mother language.

DBP offers a wide range of literature and entertainment items to its intended audience – essays, poems and memories portraying travelling to Canada, life at work, the appearance of people and things in the city, comments on cultural clashes and immigrant policies, reviews of movies, plays, restaurants, etc. The authors are from different occupations and most of the writing is unpaid.

In December 2005, DBP Pen Association was set up, uniting over 60 active Chinese writers and artists in GVA. They become important author resources of DBP. For example, Ruizhi Lei, a famous caricaturist in China, has created hundreds of cartoons for DBP. His popular series “*Immigration Story of Lao Zhang*” depicted the exciting and sometimes awkward experience of a new arrival in Vancouver. The essayist, Wen Hua, has contributed more than 170 essays to the weekly. His articles vividly reflected the joy and sorrow, pursuit and confusion of Chinese immigrants in Canada, resonating with many readers.

The content of DBP is representative of a wide range of activities, values and aspirations present in the Chinese community but not given expression in mainstream press. Although no strict studies have been made about audience reaction or interpretation of the materials, some readers sent their letters to the press to commend it as one of the most valuable tools to meet their niche needs. Nevertheless, scarce resources and time pressure make the press far from ideal. To achieve excellence, it has a

long way to go, whether in terms of the quality of writing, the thoroughness and depth of reporting, or the overall effect of presentation.

### **3.2. Interaction with the community**

An ethnic weekly newspaper serves and reflects an ethnic community and its distinctive culture and identity. There is a special connection between an ethnic press and its community – a bond not shared by any other media. Establishing an intimate and trusting relationship with its community is not only a task, but also an essential ingredient for the successful operation of an ethnic weekly. Like its sister community papers, an ethnic weekly should care about “its community in a supportive, positive, nurturing way,” because “the paper’s own birth, history, development, welfare and the future is inextricably bound up with that of its community ” (Lauterer, 1995).

#### **3.2.1. Getting involved in local community organizations**

There are over one hundred Chinese community organizations in GVA, including family and kinship associations, business councils, social clubs, veteran societies, youth unions, professional organizations, singing societies, martial arts federation, religious and charity groups, etc. Some organizations have a history dating to a hundred years ago, e.g. the Chinese Benevolent Association of Vancouver. Some are composed of several thousand members, such as Chinese Professionals Association of Canada. Most social and cultural activities, local programs and campaigns in Chinese community are initiated, supported or implemented by these organizations. Politicians, community and business leaders usually network through these organizations.



DBP strives to establish and develop productive relationships with the community organizations to meet its goals. It has placed a great deal of emphasis on activities and events undertaken by them. The key personnel of the press – the publisher and the sales managers maintain fairly close and personal ties with the organizations. They typically have one or several membership in some of these organizations or even hold office in them. Mr. Ma, for example, has acted as president of a business-oriented organization – Chinese Career Development Association of Canada (CCDAC).

The publisher, journalists and sales representatives of the paper devote considerable time and energy to various community events – celebrations, festivals, fundraising activities, delegation visits, dialogues with politicians, fellowmen gatherings and elections. For the publisher, interacting with organizations is a regular part of life. His daily routine includes a constant flow of meetings and contacts with community associations. His weekends and holidays, more often than not, are contributed to community activities. Embarking on collaboration with community organizations requires sustained commitment, as Mr. Ma described:

Sometimes I feel I am kind of married to the community. There is barely any separation between my personal life and my professional life. But it is worth it. We get news that bigger papers do not cover. We satisfy the organizations' needs for publicity, which bigger papers cannot fulfil. We are looked upon as a trusting partner and a supporter. This helps us to acquire a high profile in the community. (Ma. Personal communication. November 2006.)

A number of reasons lie behind the dynamics of the involvement with local organizations. First, it enables the press to keep a finger on the pulse of the community and stay alert on community happenings, which ensures a consistent and comprehensive coverage of community news. Second, It establishes rapport with community leaders – a

good many of them are also entrepreneurs and business leaders. Building relationships always involves “emotional” work. Shared experience and common vision help consolidate existing advertisers and a network with potential patrons. Thirdly, it is a good chance to collect feedback from advertisers and readers. A quality newspaper should be always open to criticism and change. Finally, it is also an effective way for the press to publicize itself. High exposure to the community usually means the potential to reach more readers.

Altogether, the involvement with the local organizations helps to build up news resources, advertising revenues and readership. That is the reason why DBP spares no effort to mobilize their support.

### **3.2.2. Advocating community-conscious programs**

DBP provides information on community events, festivals and programs, which are crucial to the well-being and development of Chinese groups. It also supplies advice and assistance to social concerns from the blood bank campaign to police action. Furthermore, it acts as advocates through initiating programs that are beneficial to the community. DBP launched *The Song of the Immigrants – Mayflower Multicultural Art Performance*, held a children’s painting contest – *Where is the Spring*, organized fundraising for Canadian Red Cross Donation and South Asia disaster relief. The most prominent program is *Dawa Business Forum*.

Since the early 1990s, a large number of Chinese people immigrated to Canada as entrepreneurs and investors. By request, entrepreneurs must establish or purchase a business in order to obtain Canadian residency and eventually Canadian citizenship.

Investors have to make a substantial investment and create local employment opportunities. But doing business in Canada is no easy task. These businessmen have to deal with new economic and cultural environment, overcome the language barrier, adjust old practices and cultivate new networks. The demanding and complicated tax system and government regulations baffle many of them. A feeling of frustration and depression is prevalent among them (Jennifer Han, the marketing manager of DBP. Personal communication. September 2006.)

DBP works through two avenues – *Dawa Business Forum* and Chinese Career Development Association of Canada (CCDAC) to address their plight. *Dawa Business Forum* is a regular bi-monthly business conference, which brings together entrepreneurs, non-profit community representatives, politicians and government officials to speak on Canada-China economic and trade development, introduce business and investing policies, discuss investment surroundings as well as share their own trade experiences in Canada. Since its start in 2004, many successful entrepreneurs and professionals, including bankers, lawyers, accountants, property development consultants and traders who succeeded in establishing and growing their business in Canada, have been invited to share their expertise and successful stories with new arrivals. The forum also managed to introduce business opportunities for entrepreneurs. For instance, in May 2006, focusing on the theme “Investment Project Promotion”, the forum introduced several dozens of projects from about 30 Canadian and Chinese companies to Chinese community, covering the industries of food and beverage, mining, dollar shop, healthy homes, education, land development, chain stores, e-business, etc. In March 2007, cooperating with “Gateway to Asia” program of S.U.C.C.E.S.S., the forum invited Yang Qiang,

Chinese consul general to Vancouver; James Moore, M.P.; Paul Kan, Chairman and Founder of Champion Technology Group and other elites in the community to deliver talks on building up business networks between China and Canada by way of increasing the number of businesses exporting to China, the volume of export sales from western Canada, the number of new products and services tailored to the Asian market as well as increasing investment from Asia to the western provinces. This activity received an overwhelming response from the local community. More than three hundred local Chinese attended the forum.

Such activities were not only covered by DBP as a full-page story, they were also reported in local Chinese language television and radio programs, which helped to establish a positive image for DBP.

Besides assisting Chinese entrepreneurs and investors to acquire valuable insight into local commercial climate, DBP established “Chinese Career Development Association of Canada”, which brought together and served businessmen primarily from Mainland China. The members of the organization will meet regularly to share information and business trips, such as a tour to Calgary to investigate real estate project.

Marketing Manger Ms Han said, DBP would keep on running all sorts of community-conscious programs, including organizing a Chinese book fair, running a Golf contest of Mainland Chinese entrepreneurs in 2007. “It’s an all-gain activity, bringing benefits to our community, our readers and our press as well,” she said.

### **3.2.3. Promoting civic and political participation**

Immigrants and minorities demonstrate lower civic and political participation than average Canadians. According to the Ethnic Diversity Survey (Statistic Canada, 2003), visible minorities are approximately 30 percent less likely to vote in a federal election.

Traditionally, due to the long-term authoritarian policies in Chinese history, as well as latter-day political turbulence (e.g. the Cultural Revolution in Mainland China) in their homeland, many Chinese people think it is wise to keep aloof from politics. A lack of knowledge of western political system further reduces their concern and interest in Canadian democratic practice. They rarely join a political party, inform themselves of the election issues or, in many cases, even vote.

As an outlet where Chinese immigrants can voice their opinions, DBP believes it is one of its missions to raise local Chinese' political consciousness and encourage them to practice democracy. During election seasons, whether it is federal, provincial or municipal election campaign, DBP will assign extra space to compare the policies of three Canadian parties, increase coverage of candidate profiles, publish comments from the community and improve the climate of public discussion. Some of the reporting was produced through direct contact with politicians. Mr. Ma commented:

Ethnic communities often complain their marginalized positions in today's social and political arena. If they still refrain from their long-standing practice of inaction and fence sitting, if they do not get involved in the large society, the situation will not be improved. It is in their benefit to have ongoing involvement in social, political, and economic matters. (Ma. Personal interview. January 4, 2007.)

Based on this idea, in 2005, DBP initiated a campaign to call for more Chinese Canadians to vote or, even better, to run. The campaign encouraged people to act as

participants rather than spectators, helping the political community to act upon, rather than just learn about its problems. More than a hundred local organizations and associations came out to support the campaign.

No survey has been done in Vancouver about the impact of ethnic media in promoting political participation. But a similar survey made in San Francisco showed that “Consumers of Chinese-language media are three times more likely to vote, compared to those who do not read Chinese newspapers or listen to the radio, the poll reports. About 57 percent of respondents were registered to vote”(Hua, 2004). Some politicians remarked that media did act as a catalyst for creating greater interest in civic politics. Local politicians Raymond Chan, M.P.; John Yap, M.L.A and Wendy Yuan, Vancouver Kingsway Liberal candidate commended that DBP made up an impressive force in mobilizing Canadian Chinese to take part in the political life of Canada.

The success of such campaign is a source of great satisfaction, to the community as well as the publisher. Although it does not directly enhance the commercial revenue of the press, it earns the paper a good reputation of promoting the welfare of the community. DBP demonstrates itself a positive force of community building and growth.

#### **3.2.4. Interacting with government and politicians**

In dealing with the political contacts, an ethnic weekly presents a characteristic different from that of the mainstream media. In order to maintain journalistic objectivity and serve their watchdog role, mainstream media often regard close relationship with government officials and politicians as a taboo. But at ethnic weeklies, this is not an unusual practice; and to some extent, it is a necessary strategy.

In the GVA, with Chinese accounting for almost one third of the whole population, both the government and political parties pay significant attention to Chinese media. A Chinese newspaper list is a useful tool of public relationship officers in the government and social service agencies.

However, it does not mean the government will automatically put DBP on its list of news release or advertising. An ethnic weekly is somewhat sidelined and marginal compared to larger newspapers which the government favours more. Usually, a small paper doesn't get as much access to government sources as their large counterparts. To cope with the situation, DBP has to take the initiative to publicize itself, to reach out and seek the support of the government, and to keep the public relations officer updating the notions of its practice and policy.

In practice, DBP often invites government officials to attend its celebrations, social campaigns and programs. For example, it has invited high-rank officials to make a speech in its business forum for years, namely Leader of Government in Senate, the Hon. Jack Austin; Minister of State (Multiculturalism), the Hon. Raymond Chan; Consul General of People's Republic of China in Vancouver, Tian Chunyan and Yang Qiang; Minister of Small Business and Economic Development, the Hon. John Les. For one thing, it builds a bridge of understanding between the government and Chinese community; for another, it increases the popularity of the press.

With the established rapport, the interaction between the press and the government has increased. Mr. Ma has been invited to attend political and social discussions by all levels of the government. He becomes a "spokesman" who will carry forward Chinese community's opinions to the authority. He is now a frequent guest in

round table conferences held by the federal immigration minister, judiciary minister, or foreign minister. He attended the 2017 *Canada National Policy Forum* in Ottawa. At the 2005 *Vancouver Financial Forum* – the largest annual event of major Canadian financial institutions – Mr. Ma was distinguished as the only Chinese media representative invited.

Ethnic media's increasingly important role is projected most significantly in the interaction with political parties. In the GVA, political leaders make it a practice to call on Chinese publishers and journalists as part of the protocol of an election campaign. Perhaps the most realistic and shrewd evaluation of the influence of ethnic press is to be found in the attitudes and behaviour of political leaders. During my eight months internship in the DBP, quite a few politicians visited the office of DBP, i.e. Carole James, the leader of NDP in B.C.; Carole Taylor, Minister of Finance of B.C., and John Yap, Richmond-Stevenson M.L.A. They sought to cultivate personal connections and supply a stream of releases to Chinese media.

The connection established with politicians unquestionably increases the news and advertising resources for the press. However, it brings about the risk that political news might be inadvertently or even deliberately skewed in favour of those politicians who have best relationship with the newspaper. Mr. Ma addressed the probing question carefully:

We cannot avert this danger completely. Actually every media, more or less, has its own political slant. What we are trying to do is to cover the issues from as many sides as possible, as balanced as possible. For instance, in reporting the election for liberal candidate in Kingsway riding, we were cautious in assigning a fairly balanced space to the publicity of the Chinese candidates Wendy Yuan and Mason Lo. We made friends with both of them. We gave fair share of the coverage to both sides. In reporting political parties, we are always trying to give them even break. We are wary of expressing the opinions of a few select people to



manipulate the minds of our readers. (Ma. Personal interview. January 9, 2007.)

Another weakness in the press' political coverage is that a lot of reporting consists of politicians' press releases and published verbatim, without comment from the opposing party or critics and interpretation of the journalist. This is a practice all Chinese language newspapers prefer – to shy away from the conflict. There exist at least two considerations: one is concerned with the unity of the community; another advertising incomes. An impartial stand helps solicit advertising from both sides.

### **3.2.5. Dealing with local businesses**

Newspapers usually gather revenues from two sources: advertising and subscriptions. But for an ethnic weekly, almost all of its revenue relies on advertising. Most of DBP's advertising comes from local businesses. Therefore interacting with the local business circle plays a crucial part in DBP's survival. As the marketing manager Jennifer Han pointed out:

If there is not enough advertising in your area, the paper won't make it. A good many newspapers have closed down invariably because the inability to get a steady and sufficiently remunerative source of advertising revenue. (Han. Discussion. December 2006.)

Since the 1980s, Canada has run business immigration programs to attract skilled and entrepreneurial migrants “who will prime economic development in a new land in return for citizenship rights ” (Ley, 2003). The large size of ethnic Chinese population has led to substantial ethnic entrepreneurship, especially in Vancouver, which has the highest proportion (42 Percent) of all entrepreneur/investor-class immigrants among three

metropolitan cities in Canada (Wang and Lo, 2004). Consequently, a thriving ethnic consumer market was formed.

However, the majority of Chinese businesses are small-sized enterprises. They remain marginal to the mainstream economy and operate largely within a culturally and linguistically distinct environment (Zhou and Cai, 2002). According to a study made by David Ley, “57 per cent of entrepreneurs selected retailing or the restaurant, coffee- and tea-house sector, with another 16 per cent in retail services such as dry cleaners and travel agencies ” (Ley, 2005). Wang and Lo further inferred that this ethnic enclave economy was not as affluent as the general population of Canada (Wang and Lo, 2004).

For most part, the small local merchants have no concept of a monthly, much less an annual advertising budget; no set sum is specifically set aside for advertising purposes as is case with most large-scale enterprises in Canada. The reluctance and ambivalence many local merchants display toward advertising constitutes a perpetual source of insecurity for the press. Selling display ads requires a continual concentration on direct, face-to-face solicitation. A sale representative of DBP told me:

The process seems very simple. Find out a possible from scratch, do some research and figure out how to approach them, set up and conduct a meeting, then convince them to buy the ad space. But it is not so easy as it looks. Soliciting advertising requires aggressive salesmanship. (Kelly Ye. Personal communication. August 2006.)

The advertising sales force in DBP has demonstrated renewed vigour and knowledge for their work. They have a good insight into the community and present an overwhelming sense of customer service. The face-to-face selling and personal visits are conducted anytime when the clients are available, therefore, there is no fixed working

time for them. To establish a more favourable, long-term relationship, they participate in lots of activities of the target business, sometimes acting as helpers.

Moreover, the press is subject to fierce competition from competing and overlapping Chinese language newspapers, Chinese television channels, radios and also mainstream English dailies and community papers.

*Chinese Global Press* and *Chinese Journal* are direct rivals of DBP. Competition takes the form of *sub rosa* rate cutting, rebates (such as ‘buy one and get one free’: a customer who purchased advertising space could obtain similar space free of charge) and even stealing clients from another newspaper. This causes heavy fluctuations in numbers of advertisements. Paul Wu, a marketing supervisor of DBP, who had been the marketing director in *World Journal* over ten years, depicted the tough situation:

The local businesses are always attracted by lower price. It’s not rare that they display advertisement in our press today, then stop and transfer to the competing press tomorrow. There are multiple media there for them to choose. They call the shots. (Paul Wu. Personal interview. August 22, 2006.)

Continual solicitation is fundamentally required week-by-week, day-by-day. Each advertisement is the result of a carefully crafted relationship between sale persons and business owners. To DBP, from the mom and pop food stand that runs a one column by two-inch ad to the big supermarket displaying a full-page ad, each customer is treated like a king.

There are several strategies that DBP has adopted to build its advertising team. First, it hires some staff of Hong Kong and Taiwan origin. This helps the newspaper establish connections with Hong Kong and Taiwan businesses. Secondly, it adopts a

commission system in which the incomes of sales representatives are completely based on commission. This allows the paper to hire a large advertising team without much personnel expense; meanwhile, it encourages them to work harder and to be more aggressive than salary-based staffs. They are given the title of “business reporter” to facilitate their approach to customers. Sometimes they are also responsible for providing news stories about their customers — an unusual practice in Canada where sales and editorial are usually kept separate.

With a clear image of what is in the heart of its targeted audience – the recent Chinese immigrants – DBP provides extensive coverage of events and activities of Canada and China, and offers information and solutions on issues of utmost importance to them. Meanwhile, it makes a great effort to build trust and goodwill with local community organizations, political and business groups. It contributes to unity among the community and enhances understanding between the mainstream society and the ethnic Chinese group.

However, since the survival and prosperity of a weekly newspaper is fundamentally dependent on its advertising income, DBP’s interaction with its communities, to a considerable degree, has to centre around attracting more advertising dollars, which account for 90 to 95 percent of its total revenue. Although DBP realizes the intimate involvement cause the risk of biased coverage and misleading report, it cannot afford to detach from its communities because disengagement usually leads to less community news, less advertising dollars and finally demise. We will further explore the difficulties and constrains ethnic presses are facing in the following chapter.

## **4. CONSTRAINTS AND POSSIBLE REMEDIES**

Ethnic newspapers are where Canadian minorities can present their experiences and opinions. They address ethnic communities' special concerns, promote their integration to mainstream society and preserve the group's shared values and heritage. To fulfil these functions, they present great vitality and agility in their survival practices. However, the majority of them are "shoe string" operations, beset with financial woes and other problems for which there are no clear solutions.

### **4.1. Financial and competitive challenges**

Independent ethnic newspapers are always struggling for survival weighing cultural obligations against perennial economic problems. The uncertainty of advertising revenue from local merchants, intense competition among ethnic media and the ever-increasing operating costs constitutes immense financial hardship, constraining their ability to achieve professional excellence, and always putting them at the risk of bankruptcy.

#### **4.1.1. Financial difficulties impair journalistic excellence**

Generally undercapitalised, an ethnic weekly has to maximize savings in terms of cost, effort and time. It relies heavily on existing journalistic materials, whether from Canadian news media or ethnic publications. DBP is dependent heavily on stories from mainstream English media such as *the CBC* or *the Vancouver Sun*. Events that have already been reported in another news outlet or in press releases have good chances of

appearing in the paper, either printed word for word or translated with very slight changes. It runs fewer photographs and graphics than its larger counterparts and those it does run are often culled from news wires it subscribes to. With only one or two journalists to cover the local news, they can only report “diary” events in the community, which are usually conferences or dignitaries visits with pictures of a staged cheque presentation or “deadpan handshake”. The unpredictable “off-diary events”, such as accidents, emergencies and crimes are less likely to be covered in a timely manner by the press. On some occasions it has to shy away from “controversial issues” because its dependency on the advertising dollars from the related parties involved in the conflict.

In addition, the journalists usually have to wear several other hats – translating, editing and doing the page-layout work. When they have dozens of assignments at hand, they find it difficult to provide thoughtful, in-depth coverage of an event or present news stories in more vivid form, i.e. in feature, commentary or criticism style. Even when choosing ready-made materials, the paper shows a preference for those inexpensive or available for free. As a result, some contents presented to the public may be already known to them. Uninteresting repetition and a definite lack of motivation are certainly detrimental to establishing a quality newspaper.

The ethnic press usually does not have the finances to pay its staff at rates comparable to those of mainstream press, thus long hours, hard work and low pay seem to become the norm of the editors and journalists in ethnic newspapers. Most news staffers in DBP work around 45-50 hours per week for about \$20,000 to \$24,000 per year. However, a journalist in an ethnic newspaper is a highly demanding position. He or she has to be fluent in both English and an ethnic language and have excellent writing

ability. Chinese Journalists are required to be fluent in two dialects, Cantonese and Mandarin, besides an official Canadian language. Few people who are proficient in all of these are willing to stay in such a low-paid position for a long time. When they find other professional opportunities or better paid jobs, they will leave. During my eight-month stay in DBP, four staff members left or hopped to other jobs. The less committed or overloaded work force and their rapid mobility no doubt have a negative effect on the quality of the press.

Yet another big challenge facing the ethnic press is that journalism often has to compromise with advertisers. With abundant ethnic media available, ethnic business owners can exercise pressure through the allocation of advertising dollars, making media outlets pay more attention to advertisers than to readers. For example, many Chinese newspapers run paid advertisements in the form of articles. This practice involves favouritism to the business, creating a potential threat to the outlet's credibility. It is not uncommon that an ethnic paper kills a story to give space to an advertisement or play down story that could offend its advertisers. The intimate relationship between ethnic weekly and its community groups provides an open door to "publicity seekers" or risks giving preferential treatment to organizations or businesses with whom they have closer connections.

An idealistic view of the newspaper is that it "is published for readers, with their interests and concerns uppermost in the minds of all" (Hallman, 1981, P7). The massive dependence on advertising no doubt impedes the ethnic press' effort to pursue journalistic excellence, although it is not "an original part of the newspaper concept of itself, nor is it a comfortable part of the image of the industry held by most individual publishers today"

(Hallman, 1981, P7). However, the problems seem inherent in the economic structure of the press itself. The fragile financial status constrains their options to become more professional publications.

#### **4.1.2. Battling to survive in fierce competition**

Ethnic weeklies are not the sole news and information sources for minority groups. They have to compete with other print publications, electronic media and Internet news resources. In metropolitan Vancouver, there are three Chinese dailies, at least six weeklies, a bunch of local magazines, three Chinese televisions channels<sup>1</sup> and three Chinese radios to serve the Chinese community. With multiply media outlets, intra-ethnic competition for advertising and readership/viewership/listenership is intensive. The papers that cannot compete for with the front-runner are always at the risk of being killed off or merged with the successful.

The three transnational Chinese dailies constitute a great threat to independent weeklies. Over the past three decades, they have crushed a handful of smaller newspapers. For example, *The Chinese Times*, also known as “*Da Han Gong Bao*” (1907-1992), was the longest running Chinese newspaper in Canada (Wu Yanting, 2003). It closed down in 1992 due to the intense pressure from the three dailies. Supported financially, technologically or institutionally by their parent companies, the dailies have big advantages over local weeklies. First, these newspapers have a global news

1. In Vancouver now, there are three stations that offers Chinese-language services: Fairchild Television, Talentvision and Channel M. Richmond-based Fairchild Media Group runs Fairchild Television and the Mandarin-language Talentvision. In Vancouver, Fairchild Television reaches 150,000 adult viewers a day, while Talentvision reaches 92,000, according to Fairchild market data. Channel M carries 20 hours a week of Chinese-language programming, about 65 per cent of which is locally produced, while the remaining content comes from Hong Kong, Mainland China and Taiwan. The channel's Chinese viewership numbers between 40,000 to 50,000 for regular programs, and more than 80,000 for Chinese-language movies. (from Websites of the TV channel)



networks. They use the latest communication technology, such as satellites, to link various offices and transmit news globally. Second, they directly take contents from Hong Kong or Taiwan offices that provide extensive news stories appealing to readership. About two-thirds of the home office-produced contents are sent electronically across the Pacific to Vancouver and Toronto, where they are downloaded and local advertising and editorial copy are added before the papers hit the street. Third, they can recruit better journalists, marketing staff and management due to their relatively substantial funding resources (Li Yahong, 1999).

Recently, the dailies' competition for the readership from Mainland China has become intensified. On May 18, 2007, *Ming Pao* created a weekly *Canadian Chinese Express*, specifically targeting Mainland Chinese. One week later, *Sing Tao* started publication *Canadian City Post* for the same audience. Both weeklies were printed in simplified Chinese characters<sup>1</sup> to cater to the Mainlanders' reading habit. They were distributed free over 250 Chinese-concentrated locations in the GVA. The headlines of their founding issue were respectively "Canadians Love to Get Married to Chinese Girls" "Students from China Take Chances at Night Market", which lures readers with interesting stories about local Chinese. The dailies also hired journalists from Mainland China so that their papers were more adaptable to the taste and expectation of their targeting audience. The new established weeklies make the small local presses like DBP even tough to capture a share of the advertising market.

The news war among the local weeklies is also intense. Targeting the same

1. There are two standard sets of Chinese characters for written Chinese language. The simplified character is used in Mainland China, Singapore and Malaysia. The traditional character is used in Taiwan, Hong Kong and many overseas Chinese communities.

audience, they are competing in every aspect: news reporting, advertising and circulation. Furthermore, new papers and electronic media continue to join the war for Chinese audience. For example, *Chinese Canadian Times*, a weekly in Toronto, started its West Canada edition in Vancouver in January 2007. Paul, Wu talked about the threat:

The market is basically saturated. Not to advance is to go back. It is difficult to predict who will be driven out of the market. You may be the next one. (Wu. Personal interview. August 22, 2006.)

Still another contest comes from the Internet. Technology makes it far more affordable and easy in engaging in publishing. Hundreds of local ethnic websites have popped up to cater to different needs of immigrants. Moreover, the Internet provides many online versions of large homeland print papers. Some portal sites such as Sina, Sohu and Yahoo China have been recognized by many local Chinese as websites logged for news. They allow immigrants to access to a huge amount of news in their country of origin in an immediate and inexpensive way. In other words, the ethnic press' function of providing homeland news is being gradually erased by the Internet, especially when the readers are young or well-educated.

Most of the ethnic presses have their own websites. Some of them provide extensive news and information on Canada and the world. For example, the websites of DBP and the *Chinese Global Press* try to offer a comprehensive mix of features and services, such as news from the paper edition, local discussion groups, and access to the paper's archives and subscription service. But their limited ability to personalize information, to create more friendly and interactive features through hosting forums and chat rooms, etc. make it hard to expand their online readership, needless to say to get advertising revenues.

## **4.2. Possible remedies**

Dealing with financial and competitive challenges requires not only presses exploring ways of lessening business risks, but also external support from industry associations and the government.

### **4.2.1. Finding ads for ethnic print media**

The ethnic press gets very little advertising from the government, public utilities and national advertising agencies. Fleras and Kunz suggest it is because “those who work in advertising and marketing feel unqualified to create or authorize expensive targeting programs towards ethnic communities that they know little about in terms of language or culture” (Fleras and Kunz, 2001). Hassan Zerehi, the website editor of *National Ethnic Press and Media Council of Canada* (NEPMCC), pointed out ethnic newspapers were seriously under-represented in terms of public sector advertising spending. Among the Federal Government’s over \$100 million budget for advertising in 2006, less than \$1 million of that money reaches the ethnic press. There is a large discrepancy between resources allocated to ethnic communities and those allocated to other Canadians. Therefore, ethnic media should find effective measures to get a bigger share of government and national advertising. Partnership among ethnic media appears to be a good approach. Latino Print Network and New American Media have made good examples.

New American Media (NAM) is the first and largest national collaboration of ethnic news organizations in the United States. Based in California, it partners with 700 ethnic media. Not only producing and aggregating editorial content from and for the ethnic media to increase their editorial visibility, it has also been growing their access to

advertisement dollars through comprehensive multilingual, multiethnic marketing campaigns. For example, to launch a social marketing campaign to promote a patient's right to an interpreter, it mobilized California Endowment, a private, statewide health foundation to place an advertisement in nearly 200 ethnic media organizations across California in 14 languages, therefore helping the ethnic media garner a revenue of \$2.5 million. Since 2000, NAM has placed nearly \$10 million in advertising dollars with ethnic media (NAM website). The strength of NAM is the depth it reaches in each market. It places ads beyond the primary players into the secondary and tertiary media outlets, so that small weeklies can also benefit.

Another organization is Latin Print Network (LPN), the oldest & largest Hispanic owned one-stop advertising buy agency. It represents "350 Hispanic publications, with a combined circulation of 17 million, in 40 states" (LPN website). Since 1996, Latino Print Network has provided newspaper representation services exclusively for the Hispanic market. It has created an easy way for Spanish language press to reach for national advertisers and large chain stores.

In comparison, each Chinese press seems to be doing things in their own way. It is possible and worthwhile to establish an organization to find advertisers for these Chinese language newspapers, or wider, the ethnic media in Canada. Seeking out new markets in the larger society is a more viable strategy than taking away each other's customers.

Another suggestion that would assist the ethnic press to obtain advertising dollars is to collect and supply their verified audience or market data to local and national advertisers. All the four independent media measurement agencies in Canada – Nielsen

Media Research, the Bureau of Broadcast Measurement, the Print Marketing Bureau and Newspaper Audience Databank Inc. are inclined to ignore non-English speakers and ethnic media. They under-represent the numbers of ethnic readers and viewers in their audience surveys and typically exclude ethnic media outlets from mainstream media in their market surveys (Young, 2006). Whereas advertisers heavily depend on audited readership data to allot their ads budget, making the data available to them would significantly enhance the ability of ethnic media to “compete on a level playing field with mainstream players for advertising dollars”(Young, 2006).

#### **4.2.2. Strengthening government support**

Multiculturalism has been recognized as a valued aspect of Canadian society. The government has validated its importance through all sorts of multicultural programs. However, issues affecting ethnic newspapers have been given little recognition. For example, the ethnic press encounters more barriers in accessing government resources than its mainstream counterpart. Although the law prohibits government discrimination in the distribution of information based on the size, frequency or ethnicity of a publication, some ethnic editors and reporters I interviewed indicated that the phenomenon of favouring larger publications over smaller ones still exist. It is not rare that they experienced unresponsiveness, rudeness and discrimination when they inquired information from some government agencies.

Ethnic newspapers also do not get much access to government financial aid as the mainstream media. Take the Publication Assistance Program (PAP) as an example. Designed to provide postal subsidies to Canadian content magazines and non-daily newspapers mailed within Canada, this program supports the mailing of about 1,200

Canadian magazines and community newspaper titles every year. In 1999-2000 Activity Report, publications in languages other than English or French made up only 2.5% of the program beneficiaries (PAP 2000 Report). The proportion increased to 6.2% in 2004-05, but still disproportionate to the 5 million minority population in Canada, let alone reflect the changing demographic profiles of the country.

As a vital element in promoting Canada's multiculturalism, the ethnic press plays a key role in fostering vitality and expression in the ethnic community. Given the significant functions the ethnic press performs in society, it is important for the government to develop a more meaningful understanding of its role, influence and impact on the country. As the sociology professor Stephen H. Riggins has said,

Media organizations are not socially autonomous entities but are integrated in larger socioeconomic systems. They are affected most obviously by the state through policies of subsidization, regulation, and legislation. The state makes possible the technological and economic transfers that permit minorities to assume the means of media production, even though success may ultimately depend most on actions undertaken by minority communities themselves. (Riggins, 1992)

Therefore, the government should be more deliberately and positively involved in stabilizing the ethnic press. It should place an increased priority on using the ethnic media as a means of promoting communications and a sense of connectedness between the federal government and the minority population, and put them on a level playing field with the mainstream media. This conforms to the continued commitment to providing opportunity for the expression of Canadian diversity that made by successive governments.

The future of ethnic presses in Canada is hard to predict. Their survival and ability to thrive will be the result of many forces. The continual influx of immigrants is a

sustaining factor; and there is no indication that the demographic trend will cease. However, concerns about their ability to combat economic hardship and competitive pressures still linger in the mind of ethnic publishers.

In general, a big wave of consolidation has not yet really hit the print side of ethnic media, but the situation is now starting to change. In 2005, Torstar Corporation concluded a deal worth \$20 million, acquiring 55% of *Sing Tao's* Canadian holdings. Some other major media companies also showed great interests in buying or launching ethnic media outlets. In December 2006, Dennis Skulsky, President of CanWest MediaWorks Publications Inc, one affiliated company of Canada's largest and most diversified media, visited DBP to investigate ethnic publication market. Perhaps what matters is not how the ownership changes. Ethnic publishers live in the hope that they could sustain their newspapers to serve the community, since if they fail, not only the presses themselves, the community, social discourse and local democracy all suffer.

## 5. CONCLUSION

With the changing demographic trends, the ethnic press is becoming increasingly prominent on the media map of Canada. The magnitude of its numbers, audience and the scope of the contents of members of the ethnic press are impressive:

- There are more than 300 ethnic publications in Canada;
- 3 millions Canadians speak a home language other than English or French;
- 75-80% of content highlights information about the community in Canada and information about Canada or their culture of origin;
- 20-25% of the content deals with citizenship issues and integration-oriented content. (PAP, 2004)

Traditional research tends to evaluate the ethnic press according to its utility in facilitating the assimilation or integration of minority groups to mainstream society. When the concept of multiculturalism becomes increasingly valued and respected, the press's role in its minority group and its own existence and development attract more research attention.

As repeatedly observed in newspapers, advertisements, radio and television programs, the mainstream media's treatment of aboriginal and racial minorities in Canada is still unbalanced, biased, or inaccurate. "Minority experiences continue to be filtered through the fears and fantasies of a dominant white culture" (Fleras, 1995). Ethnic newspapers emerge to offer voices to these underrepresented or misrepresented groups. They fulfil desires bigger papers cannot fulfil, cover news that other papers do not report.



They act as informers, mirrors, advocates, watchdogs and historian of their community, while making meaningful contributions to enrich the cultural mosaic of Canada.

Important as they may be, ethnic newspapers, like mainstream media, are subject to commercial logic. Mostly privately owned and small-scale, they have to struggle to survive in an unstable and highly competitive business environment. Through the case study of *Dawa Business Press*, a Vancouver-based Chinese language weekly primarily serving the recent immigrants from Mainland China, this report attempts to provide a greater understanding of the existing practices and strategies in the production of ethnic press.

The survival strategies of *Dawa Business Press* are embodied in two aspects. In journalistic practice, it gratifies its audience with a mix of both Canadian and Chinese news that are most relevant to Chinese community. It offers a large amount of information in employment and education to address their preoccupations and creates a “warm fuzziness of familiarity” (Will, 2005) in terms of culture and entertainment contents. The editorial policy proves to be effective in view of the fact that its circulation has increased from about 5000 in 2001 to 25,000 in 2006 and the staff has expanded from a couple of people in the beginning to include 8 full time editors and journalists, some twenty sales, marketing and distribution personnel today.

Another strategy is related to its interrelations with the community. To sustain its growth and development, it is engaged in building mutual trust and affinity with community organizations, local businesses as well as government and politicians to acquire advertising revenues, news resources and readership. Whereas it effectively presents its credibility as a progressive force within the Chinese community, its close

involvement in different interests groups unavoidably cause biases in news collecting, reporting and representation.

Growing challenges of the ethnic press come largely from financial difficulties. Insufficient funding and permanent concerns for bottom lines have caused a range of issues of recruitment and personnel constraints, vulnerabilities to the influence of advertisers, and compromises in professional and journalistic standards. The situation is exacerbated by fierce competition between weeklies and dailies, old-established newspapers and newly started presses, print media and electronic media, online publications and paper sources. All of them are battling for a share of the ethnic consumer market.

Several recommendations have been proposed to support ethnic media. As shown by NAM and LPN, industry organizations could be established to partner various ethnic media in attracting national and regional advertising dollars. Media measurement agencies in the country should be mobilized to collect and provide verified audience and market data of ethnic media to advertisers so that they can compete with mainstream players equally.

Ethnic cultural businesses would benefit from the government's initiatives in support of their survival and well-being. The government should further acknowledge and understand their role, influence and impact in constructing multicultural communities, adjust its publishing policies and programs to increase their access to capital and funding, professional training and development as well as value of advertising in this sector.

The report contains limitations in developing a full-scale understanding of ethnic newspaper publishing in Canada.

(1) It primarily focuses on one Chinese weekly and introduce only one business model. Future studies might be able to expand to ethnic publications produced by other ethnic communities, as ethnicity will certainly introduce some particularities to the discussion.

(2) There is a clear need for better quantitative data on access and use of ethnic media by ethnic groups in the report. We have delineated news institutions' initiatives in satisfying their readership and advertisers, but the study of how readers evaluate their contents and advertisements and to what extent they are influenced by their exposure is minimal. A study to quantify how ethnic minorities consume ethnic media is imperative in terms of media planning, marketing reach and other strategic decisions.

In its 2005 release, Statistics Canada indicated that when Canada celebrates its 150th year of Confederation in 2017, there would be one non-white among every five Canadians (Mahoney, 2005). If this projection is right, the ethnic press might deserve more acknowledgement and research due to their socio-political impacts on the social fabrics and cultural identity in Canadian society.

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