

## The Analysis of 2007 APEC News Coverage on the ABC, CNN and Xinhua Websites

### L'ANALYSE SUR LES NOUVELLES DE L'APEC SUR LES SITES WEB D'ABC, CNN ET XINHUA EN 2007

CAO Jia-xue (Corresponding Author)<sup>1</sup>

TIAN Ze-zhong<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** This essay examines major issues of Australia, the United States and China concerned about in the 2007 APEC Summit held in Australia, and discusses the attitudes of these three countries towards to the 2007 APEC, by examining all the articles about 2007 APEC Summit from three major websites from these countries, ABC, CNN and Xinhua websites.

**Key words:** 2007 APEC Summit; ABC; CNN; Xinhua

**Résumé:** Cet article examine les grands événements de l'Australie, des États-Unis et de la Chine au Sommet de l'APEC 2007, qui s'est tenue en Australie, et examine les attitudes de ces trois pays vis-à-vis de l'APEC 2007 en examinant tous les articles sur le Sommet de l'APEC 2007 dans les trois grands sites Web de ces pays, ABC, CNN et Xinhua.

**Mots-clés:** sommet APEC 2007, ABC, CNN, Xinhua

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet, as one of the major mass media forms, is playing a more and more important role nowadays in disseminating information, advocating ideas, promoting products and providing entertainment. Compared with the TV, radio and newspapers, which are more confined to fixed timetables, patterns, styles, columns, cycles of publicity, the Internet is more instantaneous and flexible with time, providing more diversified and multimedia messages, and combining different media resources. Therefore, it now becomes the main source of information for many people and has attracted attention from almost all the major media bodies in the world to set up their websites, which are often backed up by local governments or financial institutions and, to some extent, reflect what their sponsors would like to

---

<sup>1</sup> CAO Jia-xue, College of Foreign Languages, Hebei Polytechnic University, 46 Xinhua Street, Tangshan, Hebei, China, 063009. E-mail: caokathyc@hotmail.com

<sup>2</sup> TIAN Ze-zhong, Department of Foreign Language, North China Coal Medical University, Tangshan, Hebei, China, 063009

\* Received 15 December 2009; accepted 2 February, 2010.

express.

Considering the role the Internet plays and the large amount of information it can convey, this paper chooses the Internet as the target media for the research. The purpose of this research is to examine the attitudes, concerns and expectations of different APEC member economies during the 2007 APEC Summit held in Sydney from 2nd to 9th September, 2007, by analyzing the messages released by three major websites which included the ABC, Australia, the CNN, the US, and Xinhua, China, all of which, to my knowledge, voice the views and ideas of their governments to some degree. The reason for my focus on these websites from these three countries is obvious. First of all, as the host country of the 2007 APEC, Australia would pay great attention to the meeting and, in return, would have a great expectation of the outcome from it. Then, as the superpower in the world, the US has played the crucial role in world affairs and presumably has a bigger say in the international community than any of other countries in the world. Finally, as a fast economic developing country and my home country, China has always been my heart felt place and attracts my attention and care.

## **1.1 Background information about APEC**

### **1.1.1 A Brief History of APEC**

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is an inter-governmental premier forum, which aims at promoting economic growth and prosperity, cooperation, trade and investments in the Asia-Pacific region and consists of 21 member economies, located in four continents, representing the most economically dynamic region in the world, with approximately 40% of the world's population, 56% of the world's GDP and 48% of the world's trade. The 21 APEC Member Economies include Australia; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Chile; the People's Republic of China; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Mexico; New Zealand; Papua New Guinea; Peru; the Republic of the Philippines; the Russian Federation; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; United States and Vietnam (APEC, <http://www.apec2007.org/apec.aspx?inc=ap/ap>).

The APEC Economic Leaders Meeting (AELM) is considered one of the most significant international summits in the world that brings the top leaders of many important countries together. In the AELM, leaders from different countries address and discuss issues of strategic importance to their own countries as well as to the region, and at the end of the meeting, the APEC Economic Leaders Declaration will be published to indicate the shared views of the leaders and set APEC's strategic directions for the next year (Australian Government, <http://www.apec2007.org/apec.aspx?inc=ag/ag>; APEC and Australia, <http://www.apec2007.org/apec.aspx?inc=aa/aa>).

In recent years, the APEC agenda has expanded to include key global issues including counter-terrorism, non-proliferation and health. As more and more major issues in the world are addressed by the top leaders from the United States, the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Russian Federation, Australia, Japan, Canada and other Asia-Pacific countries every year, the APEC Summit has attracted much more attention in the world and become a strategic forum, where leaders from different countries take the full advantage of the gathering to discuss issues concerning their own countries' benefits and development. (The Importance of APEC, <http://www.apec2007.org/apec.aspx?inc=aa/importance>).

### **1.1.2 APEC (AELM) 2007**

The AELM was held from 2nd to 9th September, 2007, in Sydney. Like other Member Economies who hosted APEC in their countries, the Australian government made a great effort to make sure of the success of the meeting. On the other hand, hosting APEC in 2007 provided Australia with an exceptional opportunity to target what they are looking for. As the host nation, Australia chaired most of the major meetings, set the annual themes and priorities, drafted the substantial elements of the APEC work program for the future direction of the APEC organization, and negotiated important trade and foreign policy goals to promote its exports, economic growth and prosperity (The Importance of APEC,

<http://www.apec2007.org/apec.aspx?inc=aa/importance>). What was more, John Howard, the Australian Prime Minister, was successful in persuading all of the other Member Economies to sign the agreement on climate changes, which is one of the greatest concerns for Australians, in spite of the fact that some countries may not like to do anything about the changes.

## 1.2 Key Research Questions

It is obvious that all members of APEC have their own priorities and concerns, as they are facing different economic, social and political situations. Although it was impossible for the common people to know what was being discussed during the Summit meetings, it would be interesting to analyze the news and reports released by the media from different member countries to learn about their major concerns, issues and interests.

Two research questions are raised for the present research:

a. What are the current major concerns of Australia, the United States and China and what are the attitudes of the three countries towards the 2007 APEC?

b. In what ways did the three countries convey their interests in the Summit and show their attitudes towards it?

It is hoped that by answering the questions above, I will have better ideas about what the three chosen countries of Australia, the US and China think of APEC, how they value other member countries, and what are their major issues and concerns, as well as their attitudes toward global economic, social and political problems.

## 1.3 Objectives

a. To examine major issues that Australia, the United States and PRC concerned about in the 2007 APEC Summit.

b. To examine the attitudes of these three countries towards to the 2007 APEC.

As the host country, Australia played an important role in setting the annual themes and priorities and driving substantial elements of the APEC work program. Therefore, to examine the issues it was concerned with is helpful to examine the hot issues discussed at the 2007 APEC Summit. As two big powers in the world, the issues which were of concern for the United States and the PRC can reflect their attitudes towards global economic and political changes. Thus the issues which these three countries were concerned about as well as their attitudes towards APEC aroused much attention, and reflected parts of the emphasis on the 2007 APEC and APEC's future concerns.

# 2. RESEARCH DESIGN

## 2.1 Methodology

Content analysis is employed in this study. The contents and numbers of released articles of the ABC, CNN and Xinhua websites (<http://www.abc.com.au/>, <http://edition.cnn.com/>, <http://www.chinaview.cn/>) are examined in the study, with the help of this research methodology.

Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of manifest content of communication, revealing the purposes, motives, attitudes and other characteristics of the communicators reflected in the contents (Rattikalchalalorn 2007, p4; Zoonen 1994) and is often used to deal with large quantities of media outputs. Therefore, the present study adopts content analysis to study statistically the news coverage of the three chosen media groups of the ABC, CNN and Xinhua websites, as manifest characteristics of media output, revealing the respective political, social and economic concerns and interests of Australia, the US and China .

## 2.2 Data Resources & Collection

All data resources are from the articles on the ABC, CNN and Xinhua websites. All the articles about APEC 2007 on these three websites are counted, and those released between September 2nd to 9th, 2007, when the AELM was in session, are categorized according to their contents. As the most influential media groups in these nations, to some extent, these websites can represent the attitudes of these governments respectively.

## 2.3 Research Instrument

This essay employs a coding sheet consisting of the four codes below:

### Codes of Analysis

There are 317 messages, reports and commentaries released by the ABC, CNN and Xinhua, when the AELM of APEC was in session during September 2nd to 9th, 2007, among them 214 were from the ABC, 28 from CNN and 75 from Xinhua, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Number of Articles about the 2007 APEC on These Three Websites**

Number of Articles about the 2007 APEC on ABC, CNN and Xinhua			
	<b>ABC</b>	<b>CNN</b>	<b>Xinhua</b>
02-09/09/2007	214	28	75
Total in 2007	476	29	91
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>44.96%</b>	<b>96.55%</b>	<b>82.42%</b>

Table 1 also indicates the total messages released by these three websites about the 2007 APEC and the percentage of information released during the Summit. (Note: The numbers were counted on October 20th, 2007 from ABC Search Results, CNN Search Results)

Tables 2, 3 and 4 indicate the number of articles released when the AELM of APEC was in session during September 2nd to 9th, 2007, the percentage which a particular topic or issue takes, and the rank of the important issues and concerns of Australia, the US and China, as reflected from the ABC, CNN and Xinhua.

**Table 2: ABC reports on APEC from 02-09/09/2007**

<b>Issues raised</b>	<b>No. of Articles</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Security and Traffic	95	44.39%	1
George W. Bush and the US	93	43.46%	2
Climate Change	62	28.97%	3
Hu Jiantao and China	51	23.83%	4
Trading	50	23.36%	5
Iraq	37	17.29%	6
Military & Human Security	23	10.75%	7
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	21	9.81%	8
Others	21	9.81%	8
Putin and Russia	18	8.41%	10

To be continued...

Continued

Issues raised	No. of Articles	Percentage	Rank
Energy Security	17	7.94%	11
WTO and Doha Negotiation	16	7.48%	12
Japan	16	7.48%	12
Howard and the Election	14	6.54%	14
Anti-War	14	6.54%	14
Mining	13	6.07%	16
Economic Growth	7	3.27%	17
North Korea	7	3.27%	17
General Information	7	3.27%	17
Taiwan	3	1.40%	20
Clean Development	2	0.93%	21
Education	2	0.93%	21

Table 3: CNN reports on APEC from 02-09/09/2007

Issues Mentioned	No. of Articles	Percentage	Rank
George W. Bush and the US	15	53.57%	1
Howard and Australia	8	28.57%	2
Security and Traffic	7	25.00%	3
Iraq	6	21.43%	4
Military & Human Security	2	7.14%	5
Hu Jian-tao and China	2	7.14%	5
General Information	2	7.14%	5
Putin and Russia	1	3.57%	8
North Korea	1	3.57%	8
Anti-War	1	3.57%	8
Others	1	3.57%	8
Economic Growth	0	0	
Trading	0	0	
WTO and Doha Negotiation	0	0	
Mining	0	0	
Climate Change	0	0	
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	0	0	
Energy Security	0	0	
Clean Development	0	0	
Japan	0	0	
Taiwan	0	0	
Education	0	0	

**Table 4: Xinhua reports on APEC from 02-09/09/2007**

Issues Mentioned	No. of Articles	Percentage	Rank
Trading	42	56.00%	1
Economic Growth	38	50.60%	2
Hu Jiantao and China	31	41.33%	3
Climate Change	29	38.67%	4
Energy Security	21	28.00%	5
WTO and Doha Negotiation	12	16.00%	6
Clean Development	12	16.00%	6
Military & Human Security	12	16.00%	6
General Information	9	12.00%	9
George W. Bush and the US	7	9.33%	10
Education	7	9.33%	10
Howard and Australia	6	8.00%	12
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	6	8.00%	12
Mining	4	5.33%	14
Security and Traffic	4	5.33%	14
Taiwan	4	5.33%	14
North Korea	4	5.33%	14
Others	4	5.33%	14
Putin and Russia	2	2.67%	19
Japan	1	1.33%	20
Iraq	1	1.33%	20
Anti-War	1	1.33%	20

The classification has been made according to the content of issues raised by the three websites. It should be pointed out that there may be more than one issues mentioned in one article or news report, which will be accounted for in terms of -the issues mentioned. Therefore, there are more issues than messages released. As has been mentioned previously, the purpose of the classification is to see what are the current major concerns, priorities and the areas of interests of the three countries.

### 3. FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Analysis of the Amount of News Coverage

It can be seen that, with 476 pieces of information on APEC, Australia ranked the first in terms of the

number of messages released both before and during the 2007 APEC Summit, which shows that, as the host country, Australia pays a great attention to the meeting.

In sharp contrast to Australia, CNN ranked the last, with a total of 29 sources of information and only 1 source before the 2007 APEC, which shows that perhaps the US was not very interested in the meeting and did not expect much from it. Comparing with the huge amount of information CNN releases everyday, the quantity of messages on the 2007 APEC was far too small to justify the proper concerns and interests of CNN toward the great event.

Finally, with 91 pieces of information, Xinhua ranked in the middle and showed a respective interest in the meeting.

In summary, the ABC paid much more attention to the 2007 APEC than CNN and Xinhua did.

### 3.2 Analysis of the Classification of Content of Issues

Generally speaking, the findings from Tables 2, 3 and 4 match very well with the priorities, major concerns and interests of the three countries.

#### The ABC Website and Australia

Table 2 shows what the ABC or Australia is interested in and concerned about. First of all, it is understandable that, as the host country of the 2007 APEC, the Australian government would be extremely cautious about Security and Traffic (Table 2), as the safety of the top leaders from 21 member economies, especially after the 911 terrorist attack of the world Trade Center in New York, counter-terrorism procedures and the safety of the American President George W. Bush, was the most important to the Australian government. All kinds of security measures were taken, including a special public holiday for local residents in Sydney to reduce the number of people going into the city by public transportation and road blocks to make sure of the safety visit and transfer of the leaders, making it very inconvenient for the local people in Sydney to travel into the city to work. That was why security and traffic ranked the first in the list of issues on the ABC.

Secondly, as Australia's biggest trading and the political partner, the US and its president George W. Bush had attracted a lot of attention and interests of the Australian government as well as the media, which was not surprising, as there are close links between the two countries and many Australians tend to look up to Americans in many respects. Then, as the major goal to achieve from the 2007 APEC for the Australian government, climate change ranked the third, which again was not unexpected, as climate change has been on top of the agenda for Australian people and has been talked about for a long time. What was somewhat unexpected for me was that China and its President, Hu Jin-tao, ranked the fourth on the topic list, which indicates that China is playing a more and more important role in the international community and, as the second biggest trade partner of Australia, China started to grab the headlines of the Australian media and attract the attention of the Australian people. In comparison with other two big member countries of APEC, i.e. Russia and Japan, which were ranked 10th and 12th in the ABC list, China is obviously taking the lead in expanding its influence on Australia as well as on the Asia-Pacific region.

To sum up, besides the inconveniency which APEC 2007 brought to the local people in Sydney, the ABC showed great interest in the two powerful countries such as the US and China, and expressed concerns about climate change and trading in the Summit, although the issues of Iraq, military and human security, greenhouse gas emissions as well as other political and sensitive issues such as North Korea and Taiwan were also discussed.

#### The CNN Website and the US

Table 3 shows what CNN or the US is interested in and concerned about. In contrast with Australia, CNN did not seem interested in APEC at all, as can be seen from the number of messages released and the ranking list in Table 3. As a major news agency in the world, CNN produces and releases a great number of news items everyday. With only 28 articles about APEC during the 8 days of the Summit and 1 message before the APEC Summit, the outputs from CNN about APEC seemed far too small to show

any real enthusiasm of the American media for the meeting. In fact, CNN mainly reported about the presence of the American President George W. Bush at the 2007 APEC. It also showed some interest in Bush's close friend, Australian Prime Minister, John Howard as well as the host country, Australia.

Similar to Australia, security and traffic during the Summit were the great concerns of the American government, as was expressed by the CNN, with the main concerns for the safety of the American President. As one of hot issues in the US, the Iraq issue ranked fourth in the CNN news coverage. However, unlike the ABC, the CNN showed no interest in climate change, trade and economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region.

#### The Xinhua Website and China

Table 4 shows what Xinhua or China is interested in and concerns about in the 2007 APEC Summit. As one of the major government sponsored media, Xinhua echoed the top priority of the Chinese government, i.e the trade and the economic development of the country, as their main issues, which ranked the first and second in the table of the list, and was followed by the reports about the Chinese President, Hu Jiantao. However, unlike CNN, Xinhua showed a great understanding to climate change, energy security and clean development, the three main concerns of Australian government, with the percentage of coverage of 38.67%, 28.00% and 16.00% and ranking of 4th, 5th and 6th in the Xinhua list respectively.

To sum up, the Xinhua's focus was on economic development, and at the same time, it also respected the main issues raised by Australia. Similar to the ABC, Xinhua did not highlight political issues, although it showed more concern about Taiwan's and North Korea's issues.

### 3.3 Comparison and Contrast of the Findings

Table 5 shows the top 5 rankings from the ABC, and the relevant rankings from CNN and Xinhua. It can be seen that, obviously, there are common and different concerns and interests of these three countries.

**Table 5: Comparison of the Rankings from the ABC, CNN and Xinhua**

Issues Raised	ABC Ranking	CNN Ranking	Xinhua Ranking
Security and Traffic	1	3	14
George W. Bush and the US	2	1	10
Climate Change	3	Not mentioned	4
Hu Jiantao and China	4	5	3
Trading	5	Not mentioned	1

It is interesting to note that the only common interest of the three media groups was Hu Jintao and China, which ranked 4th, 5th and 3rd by the ABC, CNN and Xinhua respectively. Unfortunately, the rest of issues which were regarded as important by one or two countries and could not be shared by the other countries. For example, security and traffic and George W. Bush and the US were important to Australia and the US, while Climate Change and Trading were important to Australia and China.

## 4. CONCLUSION

After the content analysis and statistical classification above, the two questions raised in the research proposal can be now answered as follows:

Generally speaking, the ABC and Xinhua showed more apposite attitude toward APEC 2007 than the CNN did, which can be seen from the total number of messages released by the three media groups, although as the host country, Australia attached more importance than China to the 2007 APEC. However, the US showed the least interest among the three countries and did not pay much attention to



the political, economic or trading issues in Asia-Pacific region.

There are common and different concerns of Australia, the US and China, although China showed more understanding of Australian concerns, while the US seemed more self-centered and focused on their own issues, with little interest in the concerns of other member economies. For example, for Australians, climate change is the top issue that they wished to persuade other APEC member countries to cooperate in the 2007 Summit, as its Prime Minister, John Howard, urged all the other Member Economies to sign the agreement on climate change. Although China had not assigned any agreement on climate change before the Summit, it understood why climate change is so important to Australians. Whereas, CNN did not mention any of the Australian concerns at all.

None of the three media groups put political issues in an important position during the APEC Summit 2007, which seems to predict that trading, regional and economic growth, as well as sustainable development will be the major issues for the next APEC Summit.

## REFERENCES

- Anon.. (2007). ABC search result, [online]. available from the ABC Web:  
[http://search.abc.net.au/search/search.cgi?collection=abcnews&form=advanced&query=apec&query\\_and=&query\\_phrase=&query\\_or=&query\\_not=&sort=date&meta\\_f\\_sand=&meta\\_a=&meta\\_s=&meta\\_t=&meta\\_d1day=31&meta\\_d1month=Dec&meta\\_d1year=2006&meta\\_d2day=21&meta\\_d2month=Oct&meta\\_d2year=2007](http://search.abc.net.au/search/search.cgi?collection=abcnews&form=advanced&query=apec&query_and=&query_phrase=&query_or=&query_not=&sort=date&meta_f_sand=&meta_a=&meta_s=&meta_t=&meta_d1day=31&meta_d1month=Dec&meta_d1year=2006&meta_d2day=21&meta_d2month=Oct&meta_d2year=2007). [Accessed October 20th, 2007]
- Anon.. (2007). APEC, [online]. available from the APEC Australia 2007 Web:  
<http://www.apec2007.org/apec.aspx?inc=ap/ap>. [Accessed October 1st, 2007].
- Anon.. (2007). APEC and Australia, [online]. available from the APEC Australia 2007 Web:  
<http://www.apec2007.org/apec.aspx?inc=aa/aa>. [Accessed October 1st, 2007].
- Anon.. (2007). APEC's Work, [online]. available from the APEC Australia 2007 Web:  
<http://www.apec2007.org/apec.aspx?inc=ap/work>. [Accessed October 1st, 2007]
- Anon.. (2007). Australian Government, [online]. available from the APEC Australia 2007 Web:  
<http://www.apec2007.org/apec.aspx?inc=ag/ag>. [Accessed October 1st, 2007].
- Anon.. (2007). CNN search result, [online]. available from the CNN Web:  
<http://search.cnn.com/search?query=apec&type=news&sortBy=date&intl=true>. [Accessed October 20th, 2007]
- Anon.. (2007). The Importance of APEC, [online]. available from the APEC Australia 2007 Web:  
<http://www.apec2007.org/apec.aspx?inc=aa/importance>. [Accessed October 1st, 2007].
- Rattikalchalalorn, Sripan. (2007). *Documentary Research*. Sydney: Macquarie University.
- Zoonen, Liesbet Van. (1994). *Media Texts and Gender. Feminist Media Studies*. London, Thousand Oaks & New Dehli: Sage Publications.