Local celebrity and TV personality Dong Qing, a former SMG newsreader and star of CCTV’s Chinese Poetry Contest, told the Shanghai TV Festival her new CCTV format The Reader “had no examples to borrow from,” although the format was developed in China with undisclosed “foreign experts” consulting.

According to some on the Korean side of the Yellow Sea, however, there are still issues with that “borrowing” – i.e. Chinese respect for IP. Now that Korean formats are denied entry into the People’s Republic, along with most other things Korean, there seems to be a return to copycatting in certain quarters.

One particularly blatant case happened this summer with iQiyi talent show Rap of China, seemingly a scene-for-scene duplicate of CJ’s series Show Me the Money. Another CJ format, celeb cookery show Youn’s Kitchen, appears to have also provided more than just inspiration for Hunan TV’s allegedly identical show Chinese Restaurant.

Chinese regulations designed to encourage original development have had some unintended, but perhaps predictable, consequences. The question remains, however, whether these formats will reach international markets. The ones based on copycats will in all likelihood result in legal action, no matter how low the chances of success in court.

But for those based on original IP, the signs are good. While the headlines have focused on China’s biggest format export to date, Star China’s Sing My Song – which has been licensed to VTV3 in Vietnam, for instance – there are other deals in place for Chinese IP for TV.

A US option has been inked by Small World IFT for Jiangsu Satellite Television format Super Combat Teams; Armoza Formats has picked up Jiangsu formats Celebrity Battle and I Can Do That; Keshet International is shopping Huace’s scripted format Dating Hunter; and Global Agency has bagged iQiyi talent format Is That Really Your Voice?

It remains to be seen whether these options and distribution deals result in anything going into production, however.

When countries try to encourage the growth of a format export sector, the focus is understandably on the creativity of the production sector. But the risk-friendliness of the local broadcasters is an equally important factor, as few international players will license a format that hasn’t been a domestic hit – as Turkey’s unscripted format export efforts have illustrated.

Still, things also look good in this area. Chinese broadcasters – driven either by regulators or the commercial imperative – have taken risks. China is sometimes an “early adopter” of international formats that then travel into other markets. Some international formats have had their global debuts in China, such as Keshet’s Manbirth, which aired on Beijing TV, and Global Agency’s Keep Your Light Shining, carried by Zhejiang TV.

These examples show that, despite regulatory pressure, China is still importing formats, with other examples this year including

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ZDF adds trio to Lineup

Distributor Lineup Industries has agreed a deal with Germany’s ZDF Enterprises that will see the Amsterdam-based company sell ZDF formats. Lineup, launched in 2014 by former Endemol and Sony executives Ed Louwverse and Julian Curtis, will shop ZDF formats including 4 For Family, Quiz Champion and The Game Begins. Alexander Coridess, president and CEO of ZDF Enterprises, said Lineup’s “extensive formats know-how and deep market knowledge” would help drive the formats’ “international market presence.”

Louwverse added: “ZDF has a reputation for creating and producing family entertainment with wide appeal and these new shows are wholly complementary to our existing distribution slate. We can’t wait to get working on these titles and believe they have significant potential.”

The Game Begins is a family game show that pits celebrities against a competitive team of children in various tasks, while 4 for Family sees three families work together to win a cash prize. Quiz Champion features challenges taking on five celebrity experts in a quiz battle that tests their knowledge of a range of subjects.