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Young Adults' Perception About the Prevalence of Virtual Idols in China

Authors

Dr. Fei Fan - BNU-HKBU United International College

Ms. Lin Fu - BNU-HKBU United International College

Ms. Liushi Guo - BNU-HKBU United International College

Abstract

Virtual idols, originating in Japan, is "a media performance which exists independently of the referent of any living performer" (Black, 2012, p.209). Later, virtual idols as computer-generated animation performers are introduced to China. In recent years, virtual idols are popular among Chinese youngsters thanks to their perceived interactivity and humanlike images and behaviors (Ji, 2021). Most existing studies focus on the history of virtual idols (Black, 2012), how emerging technologies contribute to the development of virtual idols (Guga, 2014), how Hatsune Miku as the first virtual idol changes Japan's online content creation (Kobayashi & Taguchi, 2018), and how digital femininity is developed and consumed by the application of virtual idols (Black, 2012). Overall, the extant studies emphasize the topic of virtual idols in Japan and the first virtual idol developed in Japan. However, there are few studies that have been conducted to analyze the popularity of virtual idols in China, particularly the young adults' response. To fill this research gap, our cross-sectional survey with 350 Chinese young adults was conducted in June, 2022. This is the first survey study to emphasize the young adults' view about virtual idols in China market.

The study found that social attraction and physical attraction of virtual idols as well as the perceived parasocial interaction between virtual idols and young adults positively determine young adults' attitudes toward virtual idols. Later, such positive evaluation of virtual idols also significantly affects young adults' willingness to purchase products related to virtual idols. Overall, female and male young adults have a similar perception of virtual idols. However, age does make a difference. Young adults aged 26-30 reported higher scores on virtual idols' perceived social attraction, parasocial interaction, attitude toward virtual idols, and purchase intention than those from younger age groups (e.g. 18-25).

The significance of the study is to extend celebrity studies to the context of virtual idols. This is also the first time to include parasocial interaction in virtual idol-related studies targeting the young adults in China.

Key Words

Journalism through the eye of the camera: How American audiences use fiction to bridge the journalism knowledge gap

Authors

Ms. Maxine De Wulf Helskens - Ghent University

Abstract

From Carl Bernstein to Lois Lane, since the beginning of film and television, journalists have been omnipresent in popular culture. And as many people never set foot in a newsroom and have little direct encounters with journalists, these fictional representations can significantly contribute to shaping the public image of journalism. In an era in which journalism is faced with corporate cutbacks, increasing charges of bias and disinformation and a diminishing trust in the news media, understanding how these representations shape the public image of journalism has become even more valuable. Therefore, this study set out to understand how audiences make sense of fictional representations of journalists in movies and television series. To do so, we conducted five in-depth qualitative focus groups with U.S. American journalism and non-journalism students. First, we found that the participants considered journalism in fiction movies and series to be represented one-sidedly as an exciting and fast-paced profession. They expressed the need for more diversity in representations of journalism and especially more complex narratives that go beyond using journalists to create conflict and represent the moral ambiguity that according to them is associated with being a journalist. We uncovered that the participants' longing for more diversity in journalism representations is connected to a longing for identification and information on two levels: a personal and a societal level. The personal level refers to the possibility of recognizing oneself in fictional journalistic characters and using these representations for information about the profession. As they have few direct experiences with journalism, they rely on the non-fictional news media they consume, their belief of what journalism should be, and the cinematic conventions that are used to assess whether fiction accurately informs them. The societal level refers to how they believe public opinion on journalism is influenced by fiction. They underline difficulties that might arise when trying to separate fact from fiction and consequently fear that the very one-sided representation of journalism might contribute to increasing the already low levels of mistrust in the U.S. news media, especially for audiences with lower levels of education, little experience with journalism and pre-existing negative beliefs about journalism. Last, the study revealed a gendered component to decoding journalism in fiction as the participants expressed concerns about the stereotypical representation of female and minority journalists as 'bitchy' and 'promiscuous'. Especially female and minority journalism students fear that these representations fortify existing sexist, racist, and homophobic beliefs about female and minority journalists which can limit their career opportunities. Here again, they stressed the need for more rounded and diverse representations that present a nuanced image of the obstacles that female and minority journalists face in the newsroom and help audiences understand their lived experiences.

Key Words

Can we still trust social media? Analyzing popular narratives of trust, accountability and anger in the European public sphere following the "Facebook Whistleblower" event.

Authors

Prof. Sander De Ridder - University of Antwerp

Abstract

Frances Haugen, a former data scientist at Meta, became known as the "Facebook Whistleblower" after leaving the company in May 2021, taking with her a collection of thousands of internal documents, which provided a window into the black box of the social media platform's operations. This resulted in a serious controversy, as Haugen revealed significant evidence indicating that the company's business model and algorithmic operations were compromising public safety for profit.

This contribution focuses on how the public debate following Haugen's testimony before the US Senate Committee of Commerce, Science, and Transportation that took place on the 5th of October 2021 unfolded in the European public sphere. The purpose of analyzing the public discussion surrounding this event is to gain insight into the different narratives and themes that circulate about this intensely mediated event.

A key narrative surrounding this controversy deals with the negative "effects" of social media on young people. The negative "effects" of social media on young people have been the subject of public and academic debate for over a decade. Studies have shown that concerns about the negative effects of social media have often been used to discipline young people's behaviors and intimacies (Korkmazer et al., 2020). Interestingly, however, Haugen's testimony seems to be shifting how controversies on social media are understood in the public sphere; from disciplining young people and their behaviors, to a public demand for accountability of social media platforms. Given the importance of this shift, the aim of this presentation is to explore to what extent social media platforms are held accountable by the public and how this public controversy may change people's trust in social media platforms and institutions.

The methodology for this research includes a digital ethnography (Pink et al., 2015) and data collection from two social media platforms; Facebook and Twitter. The material collected in the form of digital objects such as tweets, posts, and comments make it possible to track how the discussion of these issues develops and how public involvement is materialized through what Bruno Latour (2007) refers to as "actor networks".

The qualitative analysis of the collected materials allows us to identify different discursive strategies, narratives, and meanings. Two contrasting discursive strategies used to engage in the public debate: a constructive/positive approach and an emotional/negative approach. The first is focuses on change and the possibility for improvement based on the Whistleblower testimony,

while the second is translated into a loss of trust and even anger towards social media applications and big tech corporations.

A shift in the public communication about social media platforms is bound to be impactful. By looking at the online public engagement that surrounds this controversy, this qualitative study allows tracking the currently unfolding breakdown of trust in social media platforms, and to report about public concerns in a European context.

Key Words
Social media, public trust, popular narratives, digital ethnography, Europe

Motherboard - Android mothers' portrayal in popular culture

Authors

Dr. Ornat Turin - Gordon College of Education

Mr. Alon Zvirin - Technion

Abstract

Purpose

This study investigated the common characteristics of android mothers in contemporary films and television series. Exploring the image of an artificial parent was a means to investigate the ideological structures embedded in the portrayal of motherhood and technology. The research asked what beliefs underlie the construction of motherhood. It also asked how the myth of the good and the bad mother is woven into the narrative of human-machine relations.

Method

The research was based on close reading and content analysis of recurring features in ten popular contemporary figures, seven prominent television series, and three commercial feature films (Johnston & Swanson, 2003). Among others, we analyzed Lamia from the HBO series "Raised by Wolves", Maeve from "Westworld", Eto de Marzel from the Apple TV adaptation of Asimov's series "The Institution", and Anita from Netflix's "Humans".

Partial Findings

A. Most android characters present an aesthetic perfection of the female body: young, smooth skin, doll-like, very thin, and flat-chested. All android mothers are extremely attractive and possess considerable physical powers.

B. Android mothers often appear against the background of the extinction of humans and the eugenics project. They tend to destroy embryos and children with genetic defects.

C. Just as robots in stories and films develop identities, android mothers possess the consciousness that defies human expectations. The narrative of the emancipation of robots receives a feminist twist in the stories of android mothers. They rebel against men who consider them to be tools.

Discussion

Android mother figures serve to affirm that motherhood is unselfish, instinctive, and intuitive (Douglas & Michaels, 2004; Heffernan & Wilgus, 2018; Phoenix et al., 1991). The axiom of motherhood takes the form of unconditional loyalty and commitment, even if it is embodied in cables and electronics.

Two narratives are interwoven in android motherhood stories: the narrative of the machine's developed consciousness and the narrative of the obedient servant's betrayal. These storylines are

interconnected, resulting in a generic plot. Evolving sensibility produces an awakening, then a rebellion against the service roles humans have assigned to the androids.

An inherent tension arises between the good mother who strives to protect her children and the bad mother who punishes them and may even destroy them for their imperfections. Our analysis suggests the android mother is an allegory for technology and an ambivalent attitude toward it. The android mother has King Midas's touch. Everything glitters, but you cannot drink or eat it.

Key Words
Science Fiction; motherhood; Media representations; human-machine relations; Androids

The Short Video Spectacle: Dissolution of Truth and Construction of Power.

Authors

Ms. Wanquan Hao - Tsinghua University

Ms. Sanmei Wen - Tsinghua University

Abstract

On June 1, 2022, a final jury verdict was announced in the Johnny Depp v. Amber Heard case, finding both sides liable for defamation against each other. As of June 3, 2022, the videos under the hashtags #justiceforjohnnydepp and #justiceforamberheard on the short video platform TikTok alone have surpassed 20 billion views. The online opinion in the case has trended to be lopsided in favor of Depp. Outside of the courtroom, there was a moral judgment towards Heard on the Internet, interspersed with personal attacks, spoofs, and humiliations. The lawsuit, which dealt with serious issues such as intimacy and violence, feminism, and patriarchal social structures, turned into a social media farce. According to a spokesperson for Cyabra, an Israeli disinformation-filtering social search engine, nearly 11% of social media discussions targeting at this case are driven by fake accounts and bots, a level comparable to that of a major election campaign (Sillito, 2022).

In an environment where consumerism is prevalent and capital interests are paramount, many media organizations have put their social functions on hold (Huang & Guo, 2018). Coupled with the rise of self-media, attracting public attention to gain traffic has become the primary goal of information distribution. As a result, unverified and fragmented statements are widely disseminated on the Internet. In such situations, once the presumption of guilt is confirmed, carnivalesque condemnation and ridicule follow. The attacked person's reputation would suffer a lasting and profound loss, which is equivalent to a public execution in Guy Debord's society of the spectacle (Greer & McLaughlin, 2011). Because both parties involved are high-profile Hollywood stars, their reputations are particularly important to their careers, and the incident is believed to be connected to the still-emerging #MeToo movement, the trial process and outcome have received attention on multiple levels, and the heat continued to build.

In response to the Depp v. Heard case, this paper has reviewed the academic literature on media ecology in the post-truth era, referring to scholars' research on trials by media, media spectacles, and the construction of women's images in social media. With reference to the model of social semiotics and multimodal discourse analysis methodology (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006), this study analyzed the meta-functions of the short videos related to the case, which are representational meaning, interactional meaning, and compositional meaning. Since each side has its own version of the story, and both won and lost cases, the truth of the Depp v. Heard trial can hardly be known. Nevertheless, the social power relations established and reinforced by these short videos, which employ mimicry, metaphor, sifting, splicing, and contrasting techniques, are amenable to analysis

through critical discourse analysis (CDA), which is concerned with how the angle of telling can enact social power and dominance (Fairclough, 2001; Van Dijk, 1993).

To collect the data, the study searched the web version of TikTok for videos containing the hashtags #johnnydepp or #amberheard or #justiceforjohnnydepp or #justiceforamberheard or #deppvheard. A total of 28 non-duplicate videos with 5 million or more likes related to the Depp v. Heard case were selected. The highest number of likes for videos under the #justiceforamberheard tag was only 273,000, which did not meet the selection standard. According to the recommendation algorithm, this means that the videos under this tag lack recognition and influence, which implies that Heard is in an inferior position in the opinion of the short-video platform. In order to allow some time for the public discussion to settle down, the data was retrieved and collected one week after the mainstream media stopped following the verdict of the case, which is June 12, 2022.

In summary, using multimodal discourse analysis and CDA, this study attempts to answer the questions of how the Depp v. Heard case was constructed as a media spectacle, how Heard was symbolized and judged by the public on the short video platform, and what kind of ideology or social power relations this trial by public opinion reflected. By analyzing this extreme case, the study also hopes to contribute to research on the function and influence of short video platforms as a medium.

Key Words
short video spectacle, post-truth, social power, women's image,discourse analysis

Beyond Beta: Inhabiting the #planet of Generation Alpha

Authors

Dr. Miriam Rahali - London School of Economics and Political Science

Abstract

This research paper locates Generation Alpha at the epicenter of an exploding digital media landscape. Unlike previous generations, children today have far more media and entertainment options. Changes in the digital habits of youth - namely their access to and participation in online activities - have warranted concern from parents and advocates. Using the work of Harmut Rosa (2010) as a theoretical frame, this paper considers the way Generation Alpha's deep connection to technology has generated new understandings of what it means to be a 'child' in the digital age. This paper broadly explores the shifting shapes of socialization by asking how digital technologies accelerate and impose new norms for children's behavior, lifestyle, and self-presentation. Specifically, the 'Kidfluencer' (or child influencer) is used as a lens through which to understand the rapid evolution of traditional childhood socialization. Despite the increasing prevalence and importance of social media influencers in children's online environment, research on how influencing affects young children is still developing. The literature review weighs the adverse effects of influencer culture on children in order to illuminate the emergence of two problematic issues that are key for understanding the way technologies impose new norms and frameworks: parasocial relationships and embedded advertising. Empirically, I employ visual and discourse analysis to selected posts from the most popular kidfluencers. The outcome of this examination illustrates how the rise of self-entrepreneurship, catalyzed by digital platforms and embodied by the kidfluencer, raises new questions on the boundaries between commercial and entertainment content, the public and private spheres, and forms of domination. On the one hand, the analysis demonstrates how technological innovation engages with society in ongoing transformations, enlisting progress as a *challenge* to the future. On the other hand, an opportunity presents itself through the power of social media influencers to be harnessed to positive effect. Kidfluencers can use their unique position and platform to help young children make well-informed, conscious consumption choices both now and in the future. This paper concludes with a discussion on how to connect with Generation Alpha audiences in responsible and sustainable ways, and cultivate our collective capacity to build a path forward based on the virtuous use of technologies.

Key Words

Race Talk: Investigating Popular Narratives of Professionalism at Work

Authors

Ms. Mackenzie Agard - Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU)

Abstract

In 2021, The Micropedia of Microaggressions was created—the result of a collaboration between creative advertising firm Zulu Alpha Kilo, The Black Business and Professional Association, The Canadian Congress on Diversity and Workplace Equity, Pride at Work, and Toronto Metropolitan University's Diversity Institute. Divided into categories such as religion, race, gender and age-based microaggressions, the tool was designed shortly after George Floyd's murder in 2020 and the subsequent social justice protests held around the world. Community, and activism geared projects like The Micropedia are just one the of many examples of resistance to social and institutional discrimination on behalf of racialized and marginalized individuals. This instance is particularly interesting for how members of this marginalized community interrupted popular narratives surrounding race relations in Canada, exploring covert forms of racism as an extension (rather than a by-product) of more overt racist behaviour.

Despite its prefix, microaggressions are taking up a lot of space in current critical race discourse. Microaggressions are commonplace verbal, non-verbal, visual, and environmental affronts that, intentionally or not, communicate derogatory, prejudiced, or hostile insults to racialized people (Sue, 2010; Yosso, 2020) and more broadly to *culturally* marginalized groups. The latter amendment emphasizes how the power dynamics inherent in microaggressions reflect cultural norms and expectations. It is not just an individual agent whose behaviour has a marginalizing effect but the relevant dominant culture placing them in a position of power to do so. However obvious this may seem, the implication of culture, power, and social convention has be set aside in media conversations about everyday racism in North America. Instead, professional training as well as diversity and inclusion programs tend towards addressing microaggressions as interpersonal disputes. The ramification is that not enough work is being done to cultivate policies, training materials, and human resource standards dealing with microaggression as a socio-cultural problem. Identifying microaggressions is not enough; should professional environments want to thrive they will need to prioritize connecting personal biases back to socio-historical prejudices.

Utilizing critical race theory, intersectional feminism, and sociology as theoretical frameworks, my proposed presentation will directly address microaggression in the Canadian workplace as cultural phenomena—moving away from narratives that describe such events as psychological or inter-personal conflict. The guiding research question for this paper is as follows: How do Canadian cultural expectations regarding professionalism and/or meritocracy interrupt and evade engagement with authentic 'race talk' (Sue, 2013)?

Key Words

critical race; work; class; cultural communication; inclusion; sociology; intersectional feminism

Cultural Politics of US-based Streaming Services in Korea

Authors

Dr. Taeyoung Kim - Loughborough University

Abstract

This study examines how US-based streaming services have fundamentally disrupted the existing mechanisms for producing national television, focusing on the case of the South Korean (henceforth Korean) TV industry. For years, US-based streaming services have provided huge competition to local media industries worldwide, forcing them to contemplate implementing fundamental changes to help guarantee their survival. The former's growing presence has disrupted the latter's existing mechanisms for both production and distribution that have, in turn, been modified to collaborate better and compete with global forces. This has been the catalyst for often necessary and dramatic changes in cultural and telecommunications policies aimed at protecting domestic players within their respective marketplaces. Reflecting on the importance of this topic, many researchers have discussed the structural changes that global streaming businesses have already made to local markets (Lobato 2019; Lotz 2020; Straubhaar et al. 2021).

Whereas much of the focus of this work has been limited to the West, this research seeks to advance research in this area by focusing on the hitherto little-examined case of Korea, one of the most vibrant cultural production sites in the world. By examining how people involved in domestic television production recognise such changes brought by the entry of global streaming moguls, this study tries to answer the following questions: 1) how do Korean television producers understand the growing penetration of foreign streaming services in the market? 2) what are the impacts of global streaming services' entry on the domestic production environment and the genre characteristics of Korean television? Finally, 3) how do Korean media actors approach the entry of streaming services?

This research will be based on interviews with approximately 30 of the country's leading executives who have collaborated with foreign streaming platforms such as Disney+ and Netflix and their Korean counterparts Wavve and Tving. The findings will provide holistic insights into how local stakeholders have responded to the growing challenge of global streaming companies and their ongoing penetration of the Korean television marketplace and foster a wider understanding of the growing complexities of the global-local dynamics inherent in contemporary media production.

Key Words

Social Media Presentation of the Logic of the Post-Spectacle in Consumer Society: A Semiotic Analysis of User-Generated Content on Instagram

Authors

Ms. Ning Xu - Macau University of Science and Technology

Mr. Hongzhe Xiang - Macau University of Science and Technology

Abstract

Since the day that the concept of Spectacle was put up by Guy Debord, many scholars have tried to link the logic of the Spectacle with the society where they live, renewing Debord's classical theory in the context of different times. With the prevalence of consumerism today, the logic of the Spectacle is increasingly enhanced and apparent. Especially, social media platforms have brought an accumulation of images and signs to our world, giving a new look to the spectacular society and commodifying people's digital life. It is reflected in a common phenomenon that a growing number of people depict their desirable lifestyles and present their ideal persona in the virtual world with user-generated content. Our current time defines a research gap that how the Spectacle is perceived in today's visual-content-driving social media platforms. Thus, this research innovatively introduces two new forms of Spectacles in the digital world: personal Spectacle and post-Spectacle. By taking Instagram as an analytical illustration, this research finds that social media users try to express their sense of distinction with consumeristic UGC, and they try to construct a personal Spectacle of perfect based on public evaluation and social affirmation. Overall, we can see sampled posts in this study followed the deeper logic of consumer society and integrated deeper semiotic significance into one's construction of Spectacle.

Key Words

Spectacle, Consumer Society, Social Media, UGC, Semiotic Analysis.

Financialization of daily life through a stock investment app: A cultural analysis of Stockplus app by utilizing walkthrough method

Authors

Mr. Dongwook Song - Simon Fraser University

Abstract

This paper will critically analyze a Korean stock investment app, *Stockplus*, employing the walkthrough method. Newly-coined words such as "Bitu", "Yeongkkeul" and "Donghak Ant Movement" have been used in the public realm to describe the recent stock investment boom in South Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic. This stock investment boom, especially among young adults, was also a response to the unstable economic situations that prevented them from buying a house and raising retirement funds with wages alone. For this group of people, then, stock investment has been a practice directed toward achieving two goals that are nearly impossible based on wages alone.

One of the key sources of this phenomenon is technological advancement: the spread of smartphones and accompanying stock investment applications. The proportion of existing stock investors using Mobile Trading Systems was about 57% and 70% of new investors during the pandemic utilized their smartphones and stock investment apps instead of Home Trading Systems. Under these circumstances, people were encouraged or even forced to be financial investors during and after the pandemic. In this process, they personalize risk and attribute their success or failure to their economic strategy and individual capacities, concealing the unstable economic structure and conditions inherent in global financial capitalism.

In this context, the paper will examine how the interface of Stockplus, represents (visual) texts to convey intended use by utilizing the walkthrough method. Stockplus is one of the most popular apps for stock investment in South Korea, with more than 4.5 million cumulative users. The walkthrough method, developed by Light et al. (2016), was designed to explore an app's environment of expected use. The method draws on actor-network theory (ANT) and cultural studies to create theoretical connections "between an app's technical interface and discursive and symbolic representations" (MacLean & Hatcher, 2019, p. 5). Drawing on Latour's (2005) concept of mediator as a transformative non-human actor that can change the meaning and circumstances in a system, the method considers user interfaces and app functions as mediators.

The given critical communication studies in South Korea have focused exclusively on the media impact of the stock investment boom, not overlooking the critical issue of the financialization of daily life with the smartphone application. The core data source for this project is Stockplus. This is one of the most popular mobile apps for stock investment developed and serviced by the Dunamoo corporation. It launched in 2014 and has been used by 45 million people in South Korea.

Applying this walkthrough method to Stockplus, I will ask two key research questions: 'What are Stockplus' mediator characteristics?' and 'What is Stockplus' environment of expected use like?' By

carrying out a cultural analysis of its elements, functions, and everyday use, this paper aims to explore how the app can function as a mediator in financializing people's lives and constructing financial subjectivities. This will provide new insights into how a technological medium can aid the reproduction of global financial capitalism.

Key Words

Financialization of daily life, walkthrough, apps, cultural studies, mobile media

Revealing Gendered Ageism in Popular Culture: A Quantitative Content Analysis of Ageing Femininities in Hollywood Romantic Comedies (2000-2021)

Authors

Ms. Femke De Sutter - Ghent University

Prof. Sofie Van Bauwel - Ghent University

Abstract

In recent decades, there has been an increased focus on ageism and age discrimination in both academic and societal contexts, evident in the 1969 coinage of the term 'ageism' by Robert Butler to refer to "prejudice by one age group against another age group" (Butler, 1969, p. 243). The problem of ageism has been echoed in recent calls from celebrities such as Nicole Kidman and Jane Fonda to challenge the ageism of the Hollywood film industry. Despite this focus, academic research has largely neglected to explore specific forms of ageism and its intersection with gender in popular culture in general or film. As such, it is important to consider how these representations contribute to the public perceptions of age (Loos & Ivan, 2018), as they can play a role in our lived experiences of ageing (Gravagne, 2013), as well as our understanding of older characters in film (Loos & Ivan, 2018). Previous studies have highlighted a lack of diversity in the representations of older people in popular media, with older female characters often portrayed in a negative light or through limited, classical beauty standards of agelessness (Casado-Gual, 2020; Park, 2021). Furthermore, gender plays a crucial role in the representations of older characters, with older men frequently represented in a more positive way and mostly as main characters, while older women are more likely to be portrayed negatively or stereotypically (Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2017; Markov & Yoon, 2020).

This paper presents a quantitative content analysis of ageism in Hollywood romantic comedies, with the aim of gaining further insight into the representations of older female characters in film. We conducted a quantitative content analysis to explore the use of three positive and four negative stereotypes in relation to the ageing characters' roles, age, gender, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, and disability status. Our findings revealed that older female characters were most frequently portrayed through the negative stereotype of the 'shrew' or the positive stereotype of the 'golden ager'. Furthermore, there was a lack of diversity in these representations, with most ageing female characters being white, in their early sixties, middle-class, able-bodied, and heterosexual. Older female characters from ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, and with disabilities were largely absent. This research serves to emphasise the need for more diverse representations of older female characters in popular media, and the implications of ageist portrayal on societal beliefs.

Key Words

Romantic comedies, gender, ageism, representation

From Transnational Fandom to Creative Industry: Exploring Lolita Fashion in the Chinese Context

Authors

Ms. Jiayixiu Zhao - University of Leicester

Abstract

Lolita fashion is a kind of moderate Japanese youth subculture that first appeared in the 1970s and became popular in the 1990s. Its participants dress in anachronistic clothing that is laced with falbala and bowknots and supported by a petticoat, which aims to redefine girlishness, cuteness, and elegance. Japanese Lolita fashion, as a potentially short-lived fad that developed on the streets of Harajuku Tokyo, has thrived in China as a result of transnational cultural communication. In the late 20th century, Japanese animation aired in Chinese mainstream media laid the foundation for people to adopt the Japanese kawaii aesthetic. However, there is no such Harajuku for Chinese Lolita fashion. Existing literature has already pointed out the close connection between the diffusion of Lolita in China and the wide adoption of digital media. Currently, Lolita fashion has already become one of Chinese popular culture with millions of Lolita participants and thousands of Lolita brands in China. Aiming at Lolita fashion's popularity in China, this study argues that in order to better capture the Lolita phenomenon in China, we need to think of it as a creative industry rather than fandom.

The author conducted qualitative interviews and participant observation with 53 participants in 14 months under the guidance of feminist epistemology. In addition, the author reflects on her own experience as a Lolita participant for 9 years through auto-ethnography. According to thematic analysis, the primary data suggests that the formation and commercialization of the Lolita fashion creative industry are based on the Lolita online communities on various digital media platforms. Lolita-related content, including design, promotion, sale, after-sales, and the second-hand sale can be accessed by anyone interested in this fashion due to the openness characteristics of online communities. Moreover, the highly interactive mode of communication in communities also allows Lolita participants to involve in Lolita-related careers, such as brand owner, online customer service staff, physical store sales clerk, designer, dressmaker, handicraftswoman, model and Daigou. In other words, anyone can participate in the Lolita fashion creative industry, not only as a wearer and consumer but also as a creator and seller.

Chinese Lolita creative industry not only provides opportunities for Lolita participants to involve in the supply chain but also allows Chinese Lolita brands to create more than 25 different Lolita design styles. However, the author found the profit-oriented commercial model makes the Chinese Lolita creative industry gradually deviate from the original core of Lolita fashion. According to existing literature, by employing delicate design elements full of femininity, Lolita fashion resists the mainstream aesthetic discipline of the female curvy body and tolerates a variety of body shapes and genders. But the design of Chinese Lolita fashion shows the trend of smaller sizes,

mediocre design, and a decline in quality. It seems Chinese Lolita fashion is negotiating with mainstream fashion. In this case, Lolita participants need to accumulate sufficient Lolita-related cultural capital in order to construct their definition of Lolita fashion and identify related products.

This study has referential value for the study of other Chinese popular culture (such as cosplay, JK uniform, and Hanfu), Chinese youth consumption habits and aesthetic research. Besides the perspective of participants, future research on Lolita fashion may collect data from brands, designers and factories. In addition, future research may also employ quantitative analysis to explore the multimode texts inside the online community.

Key Words
Lolita fashion, Chinese youth subculture, creative cultural industry, online community

Shifting Sexualities – A critical multimodal discourse analysis on the notions of pornography and sexual normativity in Flemish news media

Authors

Ms. Leontine Hellemans - Ghent University

Abstract

Due to the digitisation and changes in media regulations, porn has become an intrinsic part of Western popular culture. Pornographic images have found their way into advertising, films, and music; a process also known as the pornographication of the mainstream. This cultural phenomenon carries the ability to inform thoughts and beliefs on sexuality, suggesting **a shift in sexual norms** of Western porn consumers (i.e., what is considered 'good/normal' and 'bad/abnormal' sexuality). The impact of pornography on normative notions of sexuality has been a polarised debate within both academic and public spheres, especially those concerned with young, male, and heterosexual audiences. Nevertheless, these discourses often neglect the **porn consumers' own point of view**. Up until now, dominant perspectives on pornography have been limited to quantitative approaches from within the media effects paradigm. Following an interpretative epistemology, I provide a **critical multimodal discourse analysis** (further referred to as MDA) on the positioning and meaning of pornography and sexual normativity in Flanders. The analysis considers local histories, critiques, and discourses, as most knowledge in porn studies is based on results from within the Anglophone academia. Technological and legislative evolutions regarding sexually explicit content vary across Western countries, implying different values attached to the concept of pornography (e.g., the prominence of the history of the Sex Wars in the US) (Paasonen, 2009). Therefore, the project aims to realise the first discourse analysis on pornography and sexual normativity within a Flemish context.

As a relatively new paradigm within discourse studies, MDA "extends the study of language per se to the study of language in combination with other resources, such as images, scientific symbolism, gesture, action, music, and sound" (O'Halloran, 2021, p. 249). The goal is to map a comprehensive interpretation of the dominant notions of pornography and sexual normativity in Flanders. In various other research fields, scholars have already pointed to media as an important source in representing hegemonic norms, which in turn may shape the scientific knowledge by directing certain hypotheses (e.g., Fleck, 2012; Oudshoorn, 2000). When the development of knowledge is shaped by cultural norms, it does not come as a surprise when both academic and public discourses on pornography are predominantly invested in negative influences on attitudes of audience members. Due to this media effects paradigm, we tend to overlook the full understanding of pornography in young people's everyday lives. Therefore, the outcome of this study is mapping the hegemonic notions on pornography and sexual normativity in Flemish news media and how this relates to the scientific research field. By implementing a nuanced and critical perspective, the goal is to contribute to a new paradigm through which porn can **also** be understood as a means for **exploring, developing, and embodying different kinds of sexualities**.

Key Words

Growing pains: the representation of seniors in children content

Authors

Ms. Linde Bossuyt - Ghent University

Abstract

Ageism is a very broad phenomenon that encompasses the stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination based on age. It can manifest itself in diverse ways and it pertains to all ages. This makes ageism unique, as it is one of the few forms of discrimination we all might experience someday. The term was coined by Butler in 1969 and has since its original conceptualization been used in many research domains. The focus of this paper will be on ageism towards seniors, more specifically regarding their representation in children's content broadcasted in Flanders. Research on representation of age, children content, and the Flemish context are still scarce, let alone when combining these three domains. Part of the lack of research on children content may be in line with a (western) societal perception that childhood is just a transition phase to adulthood, a phase in which children don't really understand the complex meanings communicated by the media, hence leading to a perception of children content as a less valuable form of content. However, television does provide children with symbolic imagery of how old people look and behave and co-constructs cultural meaning around age and ageing in general.

Previous research found a serious underrepresentation of seniors in children content. Besides the lack of representation, these characters often get portrayed in stereotypical or non-diverse ways, the latter both in terms of identity and the roles they are assigned. An example is the way older characters are solely 'used' as supporting roles for younger characters. The trope of the "wise old mentor", as well as the role of grandparents perpetuates the idea that the elderly only exist to support and serve ('young') others, having no needs or desires of their own.

This paper proposes the general research question of 'how often and how are seniors being represented in children television content broadcasted in Flanders?'. This research question will be answered through a quantitative content analysis. By means of an explorative literature review a codebook was constructed. The first subquestion addresses the number of older characters in the sample. The second component focuses on intersectionality and the present (crossing) identities that could be found in these characters. Lastly there is a focus on present recurring narratives and stereotypes.

This study examines the Flemish television landscape aimed at children between 6 and 12 years. Recent trends such as streaming services and online websites of content providers are taken into account beside the linear scheduling. Three local Flemish broadcasters, namely the public broadcaster *Ketnet* and two commercial broadcasters *Studio 100 Television* and *VTMKIDS*, as well as three transnational players *Nickelodeon*, *Cartoon Network* and *Disney Channel*, and two streaming services, *Netflix* and *Disney+*, are included. The programs were recorded during three months, namely August 2022, October 2022 and March 2023 as to account for the three

'programming waves'. This results in 14 days of each content provider, scattered in composed weeks. In the end 210 hours of content will be analyzed to give answer to the research question.

Key Words
Ageism, representation, children content, quantitative content analysis

Queer as Cute: Unpacking cuteness in contemporary gay teen drama series

Authors

Prof. Frederik Dhaenens - Ghent University

Mr. Ben De Smet - Ghent University

Abstract

Since the late 2010s, there has been an increase in teen drama series that revolve around a nonheterosexual teenager. Although there is a tradition of including a single gay character into an ensemble cast of heterosexual teenagers, Belgian series *wtFOCK*, Swedish series *Young Royals*, British series *Heartstopper* and American series *Love, Victor* all refuse to represent nonheterosexual teens as supporting and secondary characters and to treat the characters' homosexuality as a social issue heterosexual peers have to learn to cope with. Instead, they deepen the process of sexual identity formation and take their time to explore first crushes. What needs unpacking, however, is the series' common tendency to portray their gay male protagonists as *cute*. In Heartstopper, for instance, cute animated objects appear during scenes of romance, while in wtFOCK heterosexual characters perceive the gay leads as sweet, harmless and in need of care.

Following Ngai (2012), cute as a style generally refers to qualities we associate with children and/or the feminine or to anthropomorphic objects or animals, generally created to elicit affective responses. She highlights how "formal properties associated with cuteness–smallness, compactness, softness, simplicity, and pliancy–call forth specific affects: helplessness, pitifulness, and even despondency" (2005, p. 816). Such an argument echoes Harris' claim (1992) that cute objects are created to nudge consumers to adopt and care about them. However, whereas Ngai and Harris' reflections concern cute objects, we are interested in the practice of representing gay male teens as cute.

Specifically, we will identify which narrative and aesthetic practices are used to convey cuteness in the four aforementioned series and explore whether cuteness is used to frame gay teenagers as dependent and in need of 'heterosexual' care and/or whether cuteness is used to deconstruct benevolent stereotypes about homosexuality and hold a mirror up to heteronormative society.

Key Words

Cuteness; teen television drama; queerness; textual analysis

Algorithms as Facts and Fabrications: Ethnographic Stories of Factishes from the Costa Rican Caribbean

Authors

Dr. Ignacio Siles - Universidad de Costa Rica

Dr. Rodrigo Munoz-Gonzalez - Universidad de Costa Rica

Dr. Edgar Gomez-Cruz - University of Texas at Austin

Abstract

How do algorithms become and create facts? In this paper, we begin answering this question by theorizing algorithms as "factishes" (Latour, 1999), that is, "beings that we are compelled to describe as having been constructed [...] and simultaneously endowed with an autonomous existence" (Stenger, 2011, p. 4). Drawing on findings from ongoing ethnographic fieldwork that began in 2022, we examine how users of social media platforms in Limón, Costa Rica, experience facts through algorithms. Limón is a culturally diverse Caribbean region where a significant part of the country's black, Chinese, and indigenous populations live. The paper unfolds as a series of stories that depict mediations between Costa Ricans and algorithms through which people narrate their experiences with the algorithms of social media platforms, while algorithms express "what they want" (Finn, 2017). For this study, we developed a "ventriloquist" ethnographic approach that subjectivizes algorithms' voices by interpreting extant literature and the experiences of our interlocutors with social media (c.f. Cooren, 2012; Cooren & Sandler, 2014).

In these stories of mediations, we analyze the enactment of algorithms as three kinds of "factishes." First, data truths or the "trust in numbers" (Porter, 1995) entailed in contemporary processes of algorithmization. In this logic, social media are the natural center of people's actions; data are objective expressions of reality and thus provide access to facts; and facts enable people to improve their world. Second, affective facts in Brian Massumi's (2010) sense of feeling an (algorithmic) reality into being. We examine algorithmic personalization not as a claim that may feel like truth but as a broader "operative logic" in which claims and feelings find their certainty (Massumi, 2010). Third, mystic certainties. This is the belief in algorithms as the angels of the digital era, a form of divine power that can spiritually intervene in people's lives (Singler, 2020).

We contribute to the the understanding of how popular forms of communication become a part of diverse cultures by discussing the implications of thinking of algorithms as factishes. In the social media experiences of our interlocutors, algorithms bring facts into being inasmuch as they interweave–rather than oppose–both truths and fabrications; as they are both powerful traps and catchable prey; as they carry both mystic revelations and terrible advice; as they become both blessings and curses. We argue that algorithmic factishes allow enacting different realities by interviewing their different parts rather than keeping them apart. As the impossibility of purifying various states of things, factishes enable people to take positions in multiple realities.

Key Words

Algorithms, Social Media, Latin America, Central America Facts Affect Datafication

Recommendation Mechanism and Big Data in Amateur Filmmaking on Douyin: the future of social media self-produced shows

Authors

Ms. Wenjia TANG - University of Sydney

Abstract

Amateur shows, which refer to video content produced by non-professional users and uploaded to social media platforms using digital media as the only distribution channel, are generally short-form TV series, micro-films, micro-documentaries, etc. On Douyin (Chinese version of Tiktok), the most popular social platform among young people (Zeng et al, 2021), amateur shows are being supported by the platform itself with several supporting programmes, e.g., 'the Drama of Gravitation Programme' (juyou yinli jihua) launched in June 2022, therefore generated a new digital media production-distribution ecosystem. Compared to traditional producer media, amateur shows are most clearly characterised by their reliance on social media, using the platforms' recommendation algorithms and big data to develop production processes and distribution & marketing plans that are more efficient and responsive to viewers' aesthetic needs and changes in real-time (Hunter et al., 2013).

This article uses a qualitative approach to analyse the top three hot amateur shows on Douyin's list, through case studies, the interrelationships between search-generated data, the platform's recommendation mechanism, the producers, and the audiences of the shows will be illustrated. Additionally, the article is to survey whether this amateur production form of short video has the opportunity to become a new product of popular creative culture and then establish an alternative production and distribution system in communications with humans (audiences) and machines (algorithms). The research calls for a new theoretical framework that distinguishes amateur shows from regular TV shows and secondary creation as a more standardised and commercialised form of low-cost self-produced original content.

This study argues that the algorithms and data of the platforms on which amateur shows are based provide creativity and analytical influence in the production process of the cultural industry, and shape the nature of content to create new value in a two-way participatory process. Meanwhile, social platforms offer a broader base of audience participation in production, reception, and distribution, challenging the traditional decision-making mechanisms of the popular culture industry and providing new channels for the institutionalised production of non-professional self-made content.

The originality of this article is as follows: Firstly, as a mass-influenced form of entertainment media, amateur show is a category of UGC. However, unlike the traditional research of UGC's labour as a subject of gift economy (Collie & Wilson-Barnao, 2020), this research uses the perspective of user economy to understand the relationship between producers, platforms, and audiences of amateur shows. Secondly, this research introduces an understanding of the algorithm

structure (data processing actions, calculation methods, filtering conditions, etc.) and metadata (the show's tags, duration, genres, music, plots, etc.), focusing on the connection between social media and its product (Cervi, 2021) and suggesting how future creators can use the platform mechanism for real-time sharing and effective distribution. Therefore, it has implications for subsequent research and practice.

Key Words

Amateur show, Douyin, self-produced, recommendation mechanism, social media, user economy

Technifying happiness in Singapore: imagining resistance against algocratic articulations of well-being in Tiong Bahru Social Club (2020)

Authors

Dr. Pei-Sze Chow - University of Amsterdam

Abstract

This paper analyses the Singaporean sci-fi film *Tiong Bahru Social Club* (B. T. Tan 2020) and its imagination of a closed, urban community wherein inhabitants' activities and well-being are governed by algorithms and measured against a 'happiness index'. Filmed in and around the urban Art Deco enclave of Tiong Bahru, characters inhabit various spaces amidst 1930s Streamline Moderne buildings, whose design was a nod to the function and efficiency of the machine age. In this new machine age of the 2020s, the film portrays happiness as something that can be measured, optimised, computed, rationalised, standardised, practiced, and communicated via algorithmic processing, thereby shifting the responsibility of caring (for oneself and for others) from the human individual and community to the 'black box' of technological systems. Via this utopic community in which inhabitants voluntarily relegate the management of their well-being to extreme algocratic systems of social control and regulation, the film speaks directly to contemporary policy discourses in Singapore. In particular, the film's imagination of the Tiong Bahru Social Club can be read against the Singapore government's 'Smart Nation' initiative (2019), which seeks to integrate AI-driven technological 'solutions' into almost every facet of governance and everyday life.

In this paper I read the film's use of space and architecture as a conduit through which the impacts of technological change on society and the individual are negotiated. The way the film features characters navigating different urban spaces throughout the film — the paths they follow and the 'spatial tactics' (de Certeau 1984) they deploy – reflects Kenneth Paul Tan's (2008) rendering of the possibilities and limitations for made-in-Singapore film to critique and negotiate state discourses of power and progress in the small Southeast Asian nation-state. Through the lens of the 'one-dimensional man' in advanced capitalist-industrial society (Marcuse 1964) and the notion of 'fourthspace' (Kong and Woods 2018), this paper will explore the film's mediation of the social and political tensions inherent in care-by-algorithm as practiced in the film. The paper posits that while the film portrays a very Singaporean condition of the one-dimensional individual succumbing individuality and agency over one's well-being to state (algorithmic) control, it offers the fourthspace – the digital space where data is power – as a nexus of critical possibility for the individual to resist, regain agency, and ultimately, to articulate their own happiness.

Key Words

Gendered TV production. Or, why and how women work in media industries.

Authors

Dr. Tonny Krijnen - Erasmus University Rotterdam

Abstract

Gender and TV industries has been a hot topic of debate over the last few years. Fired up by #MeToo movement, actresses revealed the misogynist character of the film and TV industries. Some directors and actors were 'cancelled', while others faced being arrested based on very serious allegations. Audiences responded with disbelieve and shock. Yet, the existence of rape-culture in these industries is not surprising considering the long history of cases starting with Fatty Arbuckle's in 1921. As the Western TV industries' structures are built on those of Hollywood, similarities are visible, illustrated by the recent case of the Dutch version of *The Voice* in the Netherlands. Structural sexual abuse of young participants was exposed and the show was taken off air. More mysterious than the fact rape-culture is present in TV and film industries, are the reasons of why people, and especially women, keep working in an industry that actively discriminates them and in times endangers their lives. It is this question that this study focuses on. Why do women work in TV industries, and how do they navigate an environment that is hostile towards them?

This study aims to add an insider perspective to the current status quo on the relation between production and gender. The study at hand starts with a qualitative exploration of creativity and TV production. How is creating popular culture understood by the ones who create it? What does each team member contribute? What kind of boundaries are experienced? A second part of the study focused on gender. How is a creator's gender important in the production processes? To answer these questions, 15 members of one of the 'creative units' at Talpa Network (January 2020 and spring of 2023) were interviewed. The interviews were open and qualitative of character, using a topic list but no preformulated questions. Using an active interview approach, each interview was co-created by interviewee and interviewer (Holstein & Gubrium, 1999). All interviews were transcribed ad verbum after which they were subjected to a Foucauldian discourse analysis.

Results indicate a classic alignment between the concepts of 'creativity' and 'making things' - originally framed as 'masculine' and 'feminine'. There is distinct hierarchy between the ideators, who identified as male, and the more practical production team members, mostly identifying as female. The mystique around creativity of ideators is highly valued and the team is organized around those 4 team members who could be said to be the source of all creativity. Additionally, discourses on inspiration, and how even the smallest inspirational particles can be found everywhere, are geared to maintain the positions of ideators. Interestingly, it is not the, male, ideators who take up subject positions: it were other, female, team members that articulate

creativity and set boundaries for this articulation of creativity to flourish. In our conclusion we will discuss these findings in the light of production culture and its gendered power configurations.

Key Words
TV production, creativity, gendered power configurations

Global Platforms and Local Intermediaries in the Korean Wave

Authors

Dr. Kyong Yoon - The University of British Columbia

Abstract

The increasing transnational circulation of South Korean popular culture content, known as the Korean Wave or Hallyu, has benefited from the media industries' effective integration into global platforms, such as Netflix, Apple TV+, and Disney +. The Korean Wave phenomenon exemplifies the global platform-assisted growth of local media industries. As illustrated especially by the success of *Squid Game*, the global platform Netflix has played a crucial role in the South Korean media industries' production of quality content targeted at global audiences. Netflix has strategically explored and funded South Korean content, in order to build international and original catalogs, which contribute to expanding its global markets, including the South Korean market. Global platforms' investment in South Korean TV and film industries, which has increased in the 2020s, has rapidly reshaped the ways in which local media content is produced, marketed, signified, and consumed at global and local levels.

While US-based global platforms' effects on the Korean Wave have intensified, the increasing integration of local content into global platform infrastructures may not unequivocally benefit local media industries. The global platformization of local popular culture content involves complex meaning-making processes for various stakeholders – from content creators to global audiences. Among various stakeholders, this study focuses on local cultural intermediaries (e.g., South Korean critics, journalists, and fan communities) that contribute to the particular signification and valuation of Netflix-produced South Korean content in the country's media environments.

Drawing on a discourse analysis of scholarly and news discourses on the role of Netflix especially in relation to the Korean Wave in the South Korean media landscape, the study explores how local cultural intermediaries (Macguire & Matthews 2010) interpret, evaluate, and negotiate global platforms' increasing influence in the Korean Wave. South Korean cultural intermediaries have highly evaluated global platform-driven shows, such as Squid Game, for their global recognition. However, they also expressed their concerns about global platforms' control over local content and creativity, which is referred to as "platform imperialism" (Jin, 2013; Park et al., 2023). Indeed, South Korean cultural intermediaries have presented mixed views on the influence of global platform corporations in relation to the Korean Wave. This study explores how the global digital platform is signified in local contexts in several different ways – as a facilitator of global diversity, a potential threat to local cultures and industries, and/or a content-agnostic, data-driven mediator. By examining the roles and meanings of Netflix in the Korean Wave through the lens of local intermediaries, the study will contribute to addressing the global platformization of local cultural content and practices, which remains a lacuna in popular culture studies.

Key Words

The Platformization of Global Distribution Channels in the COVID-19 Era: Korean Perspectives

Authors

Dr. Dal Yong Jin - Simon Fraser University

Abstract

During the COVID-19 era, digital platforms, such as Netflix and YouTube, have increased their pivotal role in cultural production, which includes the production of popular culture, the distribution of cultural content, and the consumption of cultural products. In particular, in Korea, global OTT (over-the-top) platforms have vehemently invested in a few screen sectors, including broadcasting, film, and music. While they create their original programs, such as dramas, reality shows, and documentaries, they continue to license already-created cultural programs for their subscribers. Korean cultural creators have to work with these global OTT platforms, not only because of their massive financial benefits but also their global networks, which easily appeal to global audiences. Due to the increasing role of global digital platforms, the Korean cultural industries have had to work closely with them while shifting their business norms. This article attempts to analyze the transformation of the Korean cultural industries in relation to digital platforms before and during the pandemic. As distribution has become one of the most significant industries in the realm of cultural content, it focuses on the distribution sector in tandem with digital platforms, including Netflix. It analyzes the ways in which Netflix has transformed its business model from a distributor to a cultural producer, and therefore, it examines the implications in the Korean cultural industries. By utilizing institutional analysis and historiography in tandem with in-depth interviews with cultural creators, including film directors and drama producers, which were finished in the summer of 2022, this article also discusses future distribution trends and offers implications for media industry studies and popular culture.

Key Words

"Climb the Wall and Chase the Star": Platform Swinging and Social Capital Cultivation in Transnational Fan Practices

Authors

Mr. Wan Peng - Renmin University of China

Abstract

Introduction:

The rise of the social media has contributed to the globalization of fan culture. **Transnational fandom** and **transcultural fandom** are emerging issues. Influential fan studies books published in English include minimal discussion about the transnational dimensions of fan studies, such as non-Western media texts and their global fans. In the meantime, the existing transcultural study of Chinese fans either falls into the traditional topics of fan research, such as power, class, and affection, or lays more emphasis on the nationalist issues of Chinese fans.

Platform swinging refers to the behavior of users rotating between multiple social platforms. Fans need to constantly switch between different platforms in transnational star-chasing activities. However, in China, fans have a "wall" when participating in international star-chasing activities.

Fan researcher Bertha Chin focuses on the power structure of fan communities, arguing that fan leaders can gain power by accumulating **social capital**. However, in transnational fans' practice, especially in the case of "wall", the question of how fans accumulate social capital and establish order and power within the fan circle is rarely answered.

Based on the above gaps and the particularity of Chinese fans' transnational star-chasing, we propose the following questions:

RQ1: In the practice of transnational star-chasing, how do fans locate and use social media? How does its allocation strategy affect its star-chasing activities?

RQ2: How do fans cultivate their social capital in the practice of transnational star-chasing? How do they establish a power hierarchy within a fan circle?

Methodology:

This study primarily uses **virtual ethnography** and **in-depth interviews** to investigate how Chinese fans participate in transnational star-chasing activities. From September 2022 to January 2023, we participated in and observed the Weibo super topics of eight idols from Korea and the United States who have more than 200,000 followers. We conducted in-depth interviews with 15 fans who were deeply involved in transnational fan activities.

Conclusions:

Chinese fans have mixed emotions when it comes to the practice of transnational star-chasing. On the one hand, they have to obey international rules to pursue stars that restrict their behavior; on

the other hand, they have a superior contempt chain that emphasizes their own Chinese national identity. Although the existence of the "wall" of the Chinese Internet prevents Chinese fans from connecting with the international community, it gives rise to richer cultural practices.

Cross-platform practice: Chinese fans organize and mobilize on domestic social media platforms, and then go to international social media platforms for support and other activities (click farm, vote etc.). The use of the platform has become a part of media literacy. Those fans who can flexibly "climb over the wall to support idols" will become "opinion leaders", cultivating greater social and cultural capital. They will transfer the content of overseas social media to domestic social media platforms. The fan group will profit from its overseas idols.

Offline and online practice: Overseas fans transmit their activities in real-time through the form of "repo". Those fans abroad can quickly develop their authority, thus gaining more cultural capital.

Key Words
platform swinging, social capital, transnational fandom

The affective economies in imagining rural masculinities through danmu: a critical analysis of the Huanong Brothers' videos on Bilibili in China

Authors

Ms. shao shao - University of Amsterdam

Abstract

In 2018, the Huanong Brothers, two young Chinese rural men, rose to prominence on the internet with their casual digital documentation of raising, cleaning, and cooking (domestic) bamboo rats, which was met with widespread amusement. Their images, constructed as "the evil of the village" who take control of the animals' lives, became sites of memes in the numerous secondary reproductions via danmu, a subtitle system allowing users to post comments onto a video as it is playing, on Bilibili, a Chinese digital video platform with a predominantly young urban user base. However, following the outbreak of COVID-19, during which bamboo rat breeding is prohibited, the platform has witnessed a shift from laughter to tears, during which their images appear to be transformed into powerless victims of structural inequalities. Their online popularity then indicates the workings of affective economies that designate the bodies of imagined rural men, which are enabled by the platform affordances of Bilibili.

Affective economies, as argued by Sara Ahmed (2004), refer to the working of emotion through texts that shape the contours of social or bodily space. In digital environments, this process is facilitated by platform affordances with their expressible, sharable, consumable, and evaluable features (Borba, 2021; Karatzogianni & Kuntsman, 2012). Although the popularity of the Huanong Brothers seems to challenge the long-term disdain and revulsion attached to rural men in China, who are regarded with low literacy, backwardness, and a high crime rate (Lin, 2013), positive emotions or affect can also designate inside-outside boundaries, during which inequalities of power and access to semiotic resources come into play (Ahmed, 2004).

In this sense, this study aims to unravel the affective economies attaching to the Huanong brothers by asking: **how are laughter and tears evoked, produced, and circulated through texts via danmu before and after the COVID-19 outbreak? What rural masculinities are envisioned in these affective processes that may reveal or obscure the unequal divides between urban and rural, men and women, and humans and nature?**

The study chooses two videos published on bilibili by the Huanong Brothers before and after the covid-19 outbreak as the sample. The danmu texts in the videos are the main research objects. As Yang (2020) indicates, a danmu text can include content information (the content it talks about), movement information (whether it is moving or static for seconds), and visual information (the amount/position/color/size it appears). The research then employs thematic analysis, critical discourse analysis, and visual analysis to map out danmu's affective-discursive circuits.

The study can add to the research on diversity and creativity in terms of grassroots cultural content and audience expressions in Chinese contexts, especially around the inferior images of rural men.

Besides, the study connects platform studies with affect studies and thus contributes to discussions of digital affect.

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Key Words
Affect economies, rural masculinity, danmu, bilibili

The Birth of a Slack Icon: the Mediatization of Talent Shows in the Interactive Media Ecology

Authors

Dr. Li ZHI - Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University United International College

Ms. Duanduan Wei - Shanghai International Studies University

Abstract

In the last two decades, talent shows have become a popular entertainment genre on television and streaming media. With the prevalence of social media, the audience interacts with talent shows actively. On social media, the audience often adore the talented contestants, facilitating their rise to fame. However, sometimes, the audience has alternative interpretations of talent shows. They idolize the contestants with distinctive features but not those with excellent singing or dancing abilities. Establishing a theoretical framework with media events theory and the concept of carnival, this study investigates the audience's involvement with talent shows in the interactive media context. We focus on the audience's construction of the alternative discourse, and the show producers' responses. Choosing the popular talent show *Produce Camp 2021* streamed by Tencent Video in China as a typical case, we conduct a critical discourse analysis of the show and the audience's social media posts. We find that, in the mediatization of *Produce Camp 2021*, the audience shifted their attention from the talented and aspiring contestants to a lackluster contestant named Lelush. The audience created a social media carnival about Lelush, making him an unusual slack icon. Furthermore, we observe that the social media carnival about Lelush dwarfed the talent competitions streamed by the show producers. Intriguingly, the show producers, driven by commercial interests, co-produced Lelush's fame despite that Lelush's slackness disturbed the show's dominant narrative.

The narrative turn in *Produce Camp 2021* reveals the dynamics and intricacies in the creation of popular media events in the interactive media context. The audience takes an active role in the talent show through social media, hijacking the show for their own ends. Ordinary Chinese confront great difficulties in the pursuit of upward mobility. Denied the access of success, the audience was less likely to find the talent and achievement narrative appealing. Lelush, being mediocre, sluggish, and ambitionless in the show, stroke a chord with the disheartened audience, motivating them to idolize him. Moreover, in the construction of an idol of their own choice, the audience is diversified and even contradictory. The audience adored Lelush for his lackluster spirit mostly, but was also attracted by his authenticity, funniness and dashing look. They endorsed Lelush's attempts of giving up the chance of fame but voted for him to retain him in the show. Though the audience emerges as the viewer-cum-producer in the mediatization process, the show producers manage to take advantage of them for commercial gains. The carnival about Lelush initiated by the audience could be seen as part of the scheme by the show producers. The show producers were ready to redefine the talent show anytime by the logic of the market. In this sense,

the audience provided free labor to the show producers with their construction of Lelush as a slack icon. Then, the current case implies that the mediated center is still more occupied by the established media institutions in the interactive media ecology, though not the absolute domination like before.

Key Words

talent shows, idols, audience, social media, media events, streaming media.

Never Have I Ever Been Super Indian: Constructing Indian Femininity and recasting the "other"

Authors

Ms. Anuja Premika - UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD

Prof. Usha Raman - UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD

Abstract

Netflix comedy drama Never Have I Ever (NHIE) has been hailed as a disruptor in Western popular media for centring the experience of a brown teenage girl—Devi Vishwakumar—and her family, and accurately representing the perspectives of young, first-generation Indian American women. Creator Mindy Kaling built a writing staff composed mostly of children of immigrants, hoping to share "those stories of feeling 'other'" in a way that mainstream Western programming had rarely featured before. NHIE, however, was less favourably received by some Indian commentators, who criticised the show's failure to subvert stereotypes, its caricaturising of Indian culture, as well as the erasure of caste in the show's narrative. In this paper, we examine how NHIE constructs Indian femininity by studying the characterisations of Nalini Vishwakumar, Kamala Nandiwadal, and Nirmala Vishwakumar—Devi's mother, cousin and paternal grandmother respectively. As Indian women at different life stages, with varying degrees of assimilation to American culture and society, Nalini, Kamala and Nirmala become the sites for the show's representation of Indianness, and form the backdrop against which Devi's cultural identity is explored. We argue that in (re)telling Indian-American (IA) stories of otherness, NHIE internalises the White gaze, and recasts the Indian characters as the "others." Devi identifies as "all American," and performs this identity through the (not always active) rejection of markers of Indianness. As the show progresses over three seasons, the Indian women's growth and development as characters are tied to performing varying degrees of hybrid Americanised subjectivities. We explore the modes of Indian femininity portrayed by Nalini, Kamala and Nirmala through their expressions of kinship, transgression, and acculturation. Through textual analysis, this paper examines: how NHIE codifies Indian femininity, what tensions are created as this identity interfaces with Americanness, and how a new IA identity is constructed against the backdrop of this tension. The increasing visibility of South Asian characters in mainstream American (and global) popular culture may be seen as indicative of the growing acknowledgment of the presence of Asians in public, civic, cultural and professional life. It raises new questions around assimilation and integration, the lines between being and becoming American, and who remains decidedly Other. Drawing from scholarship in diasporic and feminist media studies, as well as other contemporary representations of Indians and Indian Americans in Western popular culture, we locate our paper within the broader discourse around (South) Asian representation, the cultural capital of "legible" South Asian subjectivities, and the future of representation as it relates to globalised media audiences.

Key Words

Capturing the ludic and the half-real: Understanding the practice of in-game photography

Authors

Dr. Aditya Deshbandhu - University of Exeter

Abstract

Photography as a medium has become more diversified and nuanced in the last century as scholars have both understood the medium's technological advancements and the radical possibilities it offers. The philosophy of capturing the quotidian has evolved too from Benjamin (1935) to Manovich (2016), as we have assimilated both the the medium's potential to democratize cultures or serve as a means of social engagement and aggregation. This paper seeks to extend that tradition by interrogating the act of photography in ludic/game environments. This is a practice, we argue, that makes photography a hybrid act as players use the aesthetic sensibilities from their non-ludic selves to both shape and capture moments from the ludic.

This proposed article showcases that the act of "snapping a click" acquires new possibilities depending on the context in which the image is captured and the perspective of the photographer. In the context of the newly emerging practice of in-game or ludic photography this means a melding of traditional binaries like the ludic and the non-ludic, or the non-fictive and the fantastical, as players deliberately exercise their agencies to capture moments from their half-real journeys (Juul, 2005). This study becomesincreasingly relevant in a contextual frame where clicking a worthwhile photo became challenging as mobility was restricted around the world forcing photographers to look inward and at the mundane for inspiration. This article explores the new meanings that in-game photography acquires as an act in the ongoing pandemic when travel, and leisure acquired new hybrid dimensions.

This study uses close reading of three games namely; Forza Horizon 5 (2021), Microsoft Flight Simulator (2020), and Cyberpunk 2077 (2020) to understand how they simulate, re-create, and render their realities while at the same time looking at the insights that can be gleaned from photographs captured while playing the games. The images from these games allow us to not just understand the contexts of gameplay and the underlying mechanics but also to interrogate the games as techno-cultural artefacts into which prevalent human practices and understanding are encoded. In the context of Microsoft's Flight Simulator, a game that uses geo-location data and satellite imagery to render a simulation of the world where players use a variety of aircraft to fly to and from existing landmarks, an in-game photo when captured becomes a complex cross-cultural product as it is imbued by both characteristics from the simulated and the non-simulated. Similarly, unique insights are will be drawn from the other two games in this study as we chart how machinic visions and human perspectives intertwine in ludic sites for hybrid photographic practices.

Finally, this paper argues that studying in-game photography allows us to use the act as an entry point into not just understanding how ludic practices shape the non-ludic and vice versa but also

view ludic imagery as the process of capturing a machine rendered image by using a machine rendered camera but from the "eyes" of a human beholder.

Key Words

in-game photography,

game studies,

hybrid photography,

photography in virtual worlds

Role performance and relationship reconstruction:Study on the emotional labor process of female playmates in games

Authors

Ms. Songrui Zhang - Chongqing University

Abstract

With the prevalence of consumerism in modern society, commercialization has penetrated into every link of human society, and even people's emotions can be symbolized to become the means and tools to obtain economic benefits.This kind of labor of manipulation and decoration of emotion reflects the trend of commercialization of human emotion and shows obvious gender attribute characteristics.

In recent years, the academic circle has been concerned about women's emotional labor. Most of the subjects are female workers in service industries such as air hostesses, maternity assistants and hotel waitresses. With the rapid development of information technology, online social networking has become an integral part of People's Daily life, and emotional labor also extends to the online service industry. Online hostess, online partner and other emotional labor occupation has also attracted plenty of attention of many scholars in the academic circle.

This paper focuses on the online emotional labor of women, selects the female game players as the research object, and combines the theoretical knowledge of emotional labor.After sorting out the literature, this study takes qualitative interview as the research method to analyze and study the image construction of female playmates in games, the performance strategy of sexual characteristics, the formation and construction of virtual relationships, and the concealment and remodeling of commodity relations.For those in the game industry, playmates, especially female playmates, are not only responsible for the output of games, but also for providing emotional services to consumers. At the same time, the content and nature of their work is very different from that of other game digital labor.

Through the detailed presentation of the complete emotional interaction between female playmates and players, as well as the classification and summary of the emotional role performance strategies of female playmates, this article will further reveal the complexity and particularity of the identity construction of female playmates in games.

Key Words

Inhabiting Children's Television Around the Planet: Seven Decades of Transformations

Authors

Dr. Yuval Gozansky - Sapir Academic College

Abstract

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Based on extensive worldwide research, built together from local histories of children's television from all continents, the proposed paper analyzes similarities and differences in the evolutions of children's television. Using cultural theories of Pierre Bourdieu (1993/ 1984), it examines how diverse children's television producers have defined their child audiences; examines the changing nature of children's programming and the tension between local and public productions vis-a-vie global media conglomerates; and the impact of commercial competition and new digital technologies on the respective fields.

Looking at the histories of children's television from *Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Ecuador, Germany, India, Israel, Italy, Kenia, Netherlands*, and the *United States*, reflect the social, political, and economic struggles that have shaped media history since its beginnings and until the third decade of the twenty-first century. Based on *technological* developments, such as methods of getting content through and devices for watching it, children's television has also been affected by changes in local and international every-day life. These include *political* shifts – with dictatorships, socialists, and democratic regimes, and even periodical political changes within a country, like populist or social-democratic periods; *ideology* – the relations between the state and the media; *economic* – cultural industries with their opportuni-ties and risks, affecting creativity and laborers; *cultural habitus* – with trends variously affecting content creation; and the evolution of *perceptions of child-hood* affecting the way adults view children audiences.

The paper describes and analyzes various cross-national cul-tural changes in children's television, raising questions and pointing to patterns of change and continuity within it (Hesmondhalgh, 2012). The analysis takes two directions: media history perspective that discusses both "incentives and responses within a phase of general social transformation" (Williams, 1974, p. 11), or, in other words, looking at similarities and differences in comparable time frames along these seven decades. The second is a thematic analysis that looks at diverse challenges of operative communication issues across countries and underlines what could be understood from their trajectories.

The paper's findings include a discussion of the tension between public, private, and educational children's television; political impacts on children's television; technological disruptions; the perception of childhood: children's television itself as a unique cultural form; trends and formatting shifts; pressures towards the creation of local as opposed to global contents; and the possible future of quality in children's television.

Key Words

Netflix and the Ethos of Diversity

Authors

Dr. Benjamin Han - Tulane University

Abstract

In the streaming era, the industry lore of cultural specificity informs the production of original content, aiming to capitalize on a more authentic representation of different national cultures, further inflected in the ethos of diversity and progressiveness. In particular, cultural specificity speaks to theories of hybridity, authenticity, and racial subjectivities in the reception of global media and culture. Drawing on discourse and textual analysis of Netflix original series, such as *So Not Worth It* and *Narcos*, I argue how cultural specificity as a particular representative facet of national culture interacts with diversity ethos to shape the distribution and reception of Netflix original series while simultaneously revealing how the platform's aspiration to create culturally specific original content contributes to the othering of media from different national markets. In doing so, I explore how Netflix's desire for cultural specificity in its original series continues to underscore creativity through the lens of hybridity as a symptom of Western cultural power.

Key Words

I'm a Royal – Get Me Out Off Here! – Cultural Politics of Harry and Meghan

Authors

Prof. Lothar Mikos - Filmuniversität Babelsberg

Abstract

Since the spring of 2021, beginning with the interview with Oprah Winfrey, Meghan Markle and Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, have been regaling the public with stories of their lives and their relationship with the British Royal Family. With the Netflix series "Harry & Meghan", mistakenly called a documentary by some journalists, and Harry's autobiography "Spare", the couple dominated the headlines of the tabloids, the feature pages of serious newspapers and various formats on television at the end of 2022 and the beginning of 2023. The game of new firm versus old firm was opened in a one-sided manner. The other side largely let the attacks go nowhere. Harry and Meghan stage their lives away from the royal family but refer to it again and again. In doing so, they do not find their own identity beyond the disassociation from the British royal family. They know how to stage themselves as victims, both, of the old firm and of the British media. In this way, they provide an adolescent narrative pattern of detachment from the parental home. By revealing intimate details of his life, Prince Harry crosses the line from classic royal court reporting to trash TV.

Harry and Meghan's activities can be seen as an example of the shifting boundaries between public and private. At the same time, this highlights the mechanisms of a subject-centred public sphere, in which the lives of celebrities are illuminated down to every private corner. They conduct politics on their own behalf and use the various forms of media to do so. They use their cultural and social capital to supposedly self-determine traditional media (books and television), new streaming platforms like Netflix and social media for their own purposes. Unfortunately, they tend to gamble away precisely this cultural and social capital.

The paper situates Harry & Meghan's activities in the context of current theories of the public sphere, which address the change of the public sphere under the conditions of digitalisation and globalisation, as well as in the context of the popular discourses as well as in the context of social theories of distinction and theories of identity.

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Key Words

Harry, Meghan, Popular Discourse, Public Sphere, Private, Attention Economy

Transform Global Pop Culture and Produce Local Taste: Take the marketing of overseas popular stores by China's WeChat subscription accounts as an example

Authors

Mr. Hangeng Yang - Fudan University

Abstract

In recent years, overseas stores such as %Arabic, Popeyes, Niko and... have taken China by storm, gaining popularity and following of a wide range of consumers in China's first-tier cities, with some stores opening with queues of up to 3 hours or more, and consumers actively sharing their own consumption experiences on social media. How did these overseas stores become cult favorites and provide opportunities for consumers in first-tier cities to show their tastes after entering China, especially since the firewall makes it difficult for Chinese consumers to access overseas information directly? Given the limited involvement of professional media in this process, this paper focuses particularly on the role played by marketing accounts on Chinese social media platforms, represented by WeChat subscription accounts.

This study uses discourse analysis of marketing articles on a series of WeChat subscription accounts, as well as in-depth interviews with consumers who consume at relevant stores and share content on social media. Meanwhile, in order to verify whether the marketing messages were exaggerated or distorted, respondents who lived abroad and knew the stores being marketed well were invited to read these articles and receive in-depth interviews, and we also reviewed relevant materials such as news reports from overseas media.

This study tentatively finds that these marketing accounts use the advantage of being 'structural holes' to control the visibility of information about these overseas stores in a context where many Chinese publics do not have direct access to overseas information and use overseas social media, play a role in rewriting the situation of these overseas stores and transmitting it to domestic consumers. Specifically, these marketing accounts are trying to portray these stores as representatives of popular and fashionable lifestyles overseas, particularly willing to highlight the Instagram fever of these stores and they demonstrate this with screenshots of posts made by influencers overseas on platforms such as Instagram. These contents articulate the desire of these consumers in the first-tier cities in China to use domestic social media to manifest their lifestyles and connect with the global pop culture trend though their access to overseas information is limited, completing the production of a global/local cultural distinction. In this process, consumers continue to use the overseas fashion trends described by these marketing accounts to construct local tastes in Chinese urban life and gain cultural capital by actively sharing content related to their own consumption experiences on social media. However, many of these marketing accounts' messages also use emotional rhetoric to exaggerate the real situation in overseas stores, creating a

bias in the transnational communication of pop culture. These messages and the associated tastes are also queried by respondents who know the actual situation of these stores overseas.

Key Words

Subculture in Chinese mainstream media news: a longitudinal semantic network analysis of Dangai media representation

Authors

Ms. Jianing Zou - University of International Relations

Ms. Haiqing Deng - University of International Relations

Abstract

Danmei refers to a unique cultural phenomenon that depicts fantasy gay romance in Chinese. Dangai is a genre of film and television adaptions based on Danmei, in which the LGBTQ plotlines in Danmei works are abridged. Film and television companies often take the roundabout approach to attract the consumers of Danmei, circumventing censorship of homosexuality in entertainment works in mainland China (Ng Eve and Li. Xiaomeng, 2022). Dangai works have not only gained huge success in the Chinese market but have also successfully circulated among other countries. With the further flourishing of Dangai, the mainstream media has also noticed these originally niche products.

In China, news production has been brought under the control of the administration and the mainstream media has become the 'organization of public opinion guiding' of authority (Rui Bifeng, 2009). In the context of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', China's media market has formed a pattern that is overly dominated by official mainstream media (Xia Qianfang, 2004).

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) has proposed that media tends to incorporate and commoditize subcultures (Stuart Hall, 1975). Conversely, the constructionist has argued that negative media coverage keeps subcultures thriving, while positive coverage is the 'kiss of death' (Thornton, 1996).

The main aim of this study is to investigate the representation of Dangai in the Chinese mainstream media. However, most of the existing research on Dangai and media is qualitative and there are not sufficient quantitative studies based on relevant news reports.

Therefore, our research mainly focuses on the following three aspects: First, what are the major content of the coverage of Dangai in Chinese mainstream media and what are its tendencies? Second, how the coverage has changed over time? Third, do these findings differ from existing academic research?

This study conducted a semantic network analysis of 91 pieces of news related to Dangai on the news websites of three mainstream media, *People's Daily*, *Guangming Daily* and *China News,* from 2019-2022.

The study shows that: (1) At first, mainstream media coverage of Dangai was ambivalent and partly consistent with the CCCS predictions for the domestication and cooptation of youth cultures. In 2019-2020, Dangai was mostly associated with concepts related to the film and television

production industry and Chinese Culture, praising Dangai for its contribution to the circulation of Chinese culture and economic benefits. (2) Such positive reports gave new meanings to Dangai. Contrary to the "kiss of death" view, Dangai flourished. (3) Similar to the CCCS, dominant ideology influences the mainstream media's definition of Dangai. In 2021-2022, since the injunctions against danmei was issued by Publicity Department, CCCPC, reports became more associated with other controversial subcultures and the concepts of official ideology. (4) In both positive and negative reports, the media deliberately ignore or criticize the queer transgressiveness of Dangai, turning it into a standardized mainstream culture or censoring it outright. The prediction of cooptation is compatible with constructionist views in a way.

Key Words

Dangai, popular culture, subculture, media representation, nationalism, semantic analysis

Mediatization of Dual Relationship: How does Audience Perceive and Donate to Virtual Streamers

Authors

Ms. Zhiyue Song - School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University

Prof. Qiaolei Jiang - School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University

Abstract

Based on the Japanese Animation-Comics-Games (ACG) subculture, virtual streamers (usually called virtual YouTubers or VTubers), virtual 2D or 3D avatars voiced by humans, are gaining popularity in East Asia (Lu et al., 2021). However, it remains unknown how audience perceives VTubers and engages in live streaming practices. Given that the development of live streaming technology has brought about the mediatization of human social interactions and relationships, this study focuses on patterns of viewers' donations and tips to VTubers and attempts to understand the association between their perception and donation.

This study is based on data collected from in-depth interviews with 24 viewers of VTubers in China. All of them have been watching VTubers for at least three months and used to donate to them. The interviews were conducted remotely through voice calls or text messages in August and September of 2022.

First, this study examines the influence of the live-streaming platform on audience's practices. We focus on Bilibili, the largest online community of VTubers in China, and discover that the platform intends to construct an economic-driven intimacy between VTubers and audience through its interface and rules. Then we distinguish audience's donation into three categories: gifting, physical consumption, and interactive consumption. For those gift-givers, they donate to VTubers to reward their talents and labors, revealing a fan spirit that asks for nothing in return. However, such a product intimacy based on one-way donation is always unstable if VTuber is regarded just as a tool to provide content and performance, which gives rise to the patterns of physical consumption and interactive consumption.

The emergence of the so-called "captain gift" provided by VTubers on Bilibili is a unique phenomenon in Chinese VTuber industry. The gift serves as an important driver and even determining factor for those physical consumers to donate to VTubers. Although the practical value of the gift they receive is not worth the price of the captain, the gift, as a symbol of VTuber, has emotional value beyond sales value. It also brings audience comfort that they get something in return for their costs, which fundamentally sustains the transaction between audience and VTubers.

Since the interaction between VTubers and audience partly embodies features of emotional labor, the donation of those interactive consumers can be regarded as both compensations for emotional demand and maintenance of intimate relationships. Although the audience attempts to seek pure

and equal relationships, such a persona intimacy is usually commodified by the platform and guilds. We finally pointed out that the combination of economic and intimate relationships is influenced by both technical characteristics of live streaming and operational logic of the platform.

This study provides empirical explanations of how Chinese audience perceives and donates to VTubers. Significantly, this study introduces the theory of mediatization to understand this phenomenon. We focus on the influence of a particular live-streaming platform on audience's practice of engagement and donation. It yields valuable conclusions about how the audience constructs and maintains their relationships with VTubers through different types of donations.

Key Words
mediatization, live streaming, platform, donation, virtual YouTuber

Exploring the imaginaries of feminist activism on Instagram

Authors

Dr. Sofia Caldeira - CICANT, Lusófona University

Abstract

Digital media and social media platforms, amongst them Instagram, have often been seen in an utopian light as a potential space for political and feminist action (e.g. van Zoonen, 2011), especially in light of wide-reaching movements like #MeToo. Yet, Instagram is also an inherently commercial platform, where entertainment and aestheticised content tends to dominate (Leaver, Highfield & Abidin, 2020). These at times conflicting understandings, orientations, uses, and expectations can help to frame how feminist activisms take shape in this platform (Keller, 2019), but also the dominant cultural imaginaries associated with them.

This paper aims to explore these Instagrammable feminist imaginaries. This exploration is grounded on the qualitative analysis of two sets of complementary features on Instagram: persistent Instagram posts shared under feminist hashtags (N= 294 posts, 101 unique users) and ephemeral Stories (N= 2282 posts, 52 unique users). It uses as an entry point the practices of Portuguese Instagram users engaging with feminist or tangentially feminist content – an under-explored national context, currently undergoing a moment of political polarisation that is reflected in its social media landscape. Following the informed consent of participants, this data was manually collected between 2021 and 2022. These posts and Stories were qualitatively analysed combining close reading, qualitative textual analysis, and the use of digital methods to explore overarching patterns.

Exploratory findings illustrate how the expansive nature of Instagram allows feminist or political topics to be presented or encountered alongside personal, humorous, or mundane content, with this experience of context collapse at times leading to tensions or conflicting messages. While many of the accounts sharing on feminist hashtags tended to have a more focused feminist nature, the seemingly informal nature of Stories often led to juxtaposition of different issues. Furthermore, feminist concerns can become enmeshed with Instagrammable aesthetics (Caldeira, De Ridder & Van Bauwel, 2020). These can be reiterated in carefully crafted Instagram slideshows that summarise complex political issues in accessible and quickly readable visualisations (Dumitrica & Hockin-Boyers, 2022). While not all Instagram users create their own feminist content, affordances like re-sharing posts through Instagram Stories allow for the wider circulation of these aestheticised slideshows. Both re-sharing and the ephemeral content afforded by Instagram Stories enables emerging modes of political expression, allowing reticent users to participate through small acts of engagement (Picone et al., 2019), or facilitating "below the radar" practices (Artieri, Brilli & Zurovac, 2021) that can minimise risks of backlash. This paper thus explore how ephemeral and persistent, original and replicated content can co-exist and interact on Instagram feminist practices, complicating Instagrammable feminist imaginaries and their political potential.

Key Words

Instagram, feminisms, everyday politics

Mandating queerness or safeguarding heteronormativity? Normative pluralism in public service media remits and LGBTQ+ representation

Authors

Dr. Florian Vanlee - Ghent University

Abstract

Unlike most US TV programming, many popular Western European programs are produced by public service media (PSMs) – who are expected to pursue different goals than purely commercial ones (Ibarra et al., 2015). Rather than (exclusively) prioritizing profitability, PSMs must navigate particular demands expressed by the remits (cf. management agreements) outlining their mission (Kerrigan & Vanlee, 2022). They dictate what governments expect of PSMs in a given timeframe, and prescribe overarching goals they should set for their activities while simultaneously upholding an arm's length principle to ensure PSMs' autonomy. Apart from setting technical (e.g. digitization efforts) or organizational (e.g. pursuing international co-productions) agendas, remits typically define certain socio-cultural ambitions. Often, these mandate attention for demographic diversity and a pluralistic stance on political issues, to ensure that members of the public may identify with 'their' PSM. So PSMs must consider how particular representational choices relate to their mission (Donders, 2021). Consequently, the role PSMs have and continue to play in many Western European countries in introducing the LGBTQ+ community to domestic mediascapes is couched in how their remits invite certain representational frameworks (Vanlee, 2019). Even though these preclude explicit directives on how sexual and gender diversity ought to be addressed, they nevertheless outline general, normative principles PSM productions should abide to (Horsti & Hultén, 2011). This raises questions about the ways in which PSM remits inform certain representational logics concerning the LGBTQ+ community, and the extent to which these invite heteronormative or queer approaches to sexual and gender diversity.

Building on a literature review, this study first establishes that PSM programming defies historical narratives on US LGBTQ+ televisibility – notably by featuring sexual and gender minorities in various genres (including children's content) since the 2000s, construing them as everyday aspects of contemporary society and mostly avoiding 'stereotypical' imagery. A subsequent discourse analysis of the previous and present remits of three Western European PSMs (N=6) – Ireland's RTE, Flanders' VRT and the Netherlands' NPO – demonstrates how they face two interlinked imperatives. On the one hand, they must abide by non-discrimination principles, dissuading them from demonizing, mocking or otherwise harming LGBTQ+ people. This links up with operational demands on PSM responsibilities – like the expectation to attend to viewer complaints, or the adoption of accountability mechanisms. On the other hand, remits articulate prescriptive discourses on 'diverse representation' and 'inclusivity'. These encourage PSMs to reflect normative, generally progressive convictions about 'proper' portrayals of sexual and gender minorities, and to counteract historical mis- and underrepresentations. Together, the study shows, these demands require PSMs to actively engage with and reflect on normative discourses about LGBTQ+

representations, involving various relevant stakeholders in the process. This distinguishes the PSM context from that generally addressed in LGBTQ+ media studies, and invites a different praxiological outlook for LGBTQ+ media scholarship.

Key Words

Queer media studies

LGBTQ+ representation

Public service media

Western Europe

Streaming and Queer Diversity: A qualitative study into the Negotiation and Articulation of LGBTQ+ identities on Spotify

Authors

Mr. Ben De Smet - Ghent University

Prof. Frederik Dhaenens - Ghent University

Abstract

Music streaming services like Spotify increasingly mediate how music is consumed, experienced, and shared (Hagen, 2015). If music, as DeNora (2000, p. 74) argues, is "a technology of self", then Spotify definitely is too. Spotify affords users to discover and curate music and, at the same time, to construct and curate a public profile and build a network of friends/followers so that intimate identity work and self-construction coincide with social identity work and impression management (Goffman, 1959).

For LGBTQ+ people, Spotify can be a site where one can make sense of their identity, find role models, create a sense of community and belonging, and negotiate how to articulate a music and sexual identity. However, Spotify's algorithm-driven and commercially inspired affordances provide both opportunities and constrains/risks and users can make use of them in very diverging ways.

While a considerable body of research has examined the relations between music and queer lives, little is known about the role of music streaming within these relations. Therefore, we conducted twenty-four in-depth interviews with LGBTQ+ Spotify users to understand the relations between LGBTQ+ identities, music, and music streaming. What does it mean for LGBTQ+ people to engage in discovering, enjoying and curating music on streaming services, both intimately/privately and socially/publicly?

The interviews, displaying a wide range of music practices and views on music and identity, showcased the following five trends and mechanisms:

- Profoundly and actively thinking and talking about music is hard and something few people are familiar with;
- Spotify is simultaneously experienced as private and social, which comes with some intriguing paradoxes;
- The social meanings of music for identities and intimacies are diverse and meaningful;
- The social meanings of music for LGBTQ+ identities are equally diverse and meaningful;
- LGBTQ+ identities are too elusive to fully grasp, but that might be precisely why they are so valuable and meaningful, and why they are so meaningfully mediated by the equally impalpable music.

It is clear that music is "used as a means by which we formulate and express our individual identities" (Hargreaves et al., 2002, p. 1), but these negotiations do not follow clear, predictable

paths.[FD1] The impalpable and ever-changing nature of both music, new media, and identities makes it difficult and often undesirable to actively dissect or define the relations between music and LGBTQ+ identities, but affectively, personally, and socially they are as meaningful and prominent as ever before.

Key Words

Popular Music

LGBTQ+ Identities

Identities

Music Streaming

Audiences

Cyberpunk Cities in China: Fantasy Theme Analysis of Localized Cyberpunk in Pictures of a Douban Group

Authors

Ms. Yifei Li - School of Journalism and Communication, Renmin University of China

Ms. Yunran Zhao - School of Arts, Renmin University of China

Abstract

Cyberpunk, originally a subgenre of science fiction derived from the New Wave movement of the 1960s and 1970s, has greatly influenced popular culture. Cyberpunk has the main focus on a combination of lowlife and high tech in discussing the impact of advanced technology on society and individuals. Cyberpunk appreciates technological developments, but concerns about the proliferation under a near-future context.

Cyberpunk is an imaginative extension of contemporary technologies and culture, it is influenced by real-world metropolises like Hong Kong and San Francisco, blurring the line between reality and imagination. People who are interested in cyberpunk have themselves developed reality-based fantasies and recognized similarities between their real-life living environments and near-future cyberpunk cities described or visualized in cyberpunk works, and the chain-out of their imagination in the groups formed by the same interest influences other members' imagination of cyberpunk cities. When group members recognize similarities between real-life cities and cyberpunk cities, further share the imagined association, and see real-life cities as cyberpunk cities in the group, it will influence the fantasies of cyberpunk cities of other group members. And when more group members participate in the co-construction of such fantasies, some more stable fantasy themes will be formed within the group.

Co-constructing fantasies of real-life Chinese cyberpunk cities within online groups is a practice in the process of localization of cyberpunk in China. Based on fantasy theme analysis, the paper studies all the related pictures posted in the group "Y2K/Cyberpunk/2000s/Futuristic" with over 30000 members on the popular Chinese social media Douban from July 8th, 2020(the day the group was created) to March 17th, 2022(data collection date) and investigates the following questions: What fantasy themes about cyberpunk cities are presented and what localized cyberpunk aesthetic features are shown? What are the similarities and differences between fantasy themes of general cyberpunk cities and localized cyberpunk cities in China? What are the reasons for the differences?

Through the analysis of posted pictures, five major fantasy themes including near-future high-tech cities, punk lowlife cities, traditional Chinese and high-tech mixed cities, cities in mist, and socialist dystopias are shown, which indicates that real-life Chinese cyberpunk cities' images maintain a visual consistency with the general aesthetic style of cyberpunk, but also present different characteristics and fantasy themes in the localization and chain-out process. Factors including rapid development and urbanization since Chinese economic reform, traditional Chinese culture, and

socialism collectively contribute to the construction of Chinese fantasy themes of cyberpunk cities. Moreover, the paper notices the weakening of political metaphors and the enhancement of the entertaining side, possibly due to China's authoritarian background and the focus on visuals.

In conclusion, the fantasy themes of cyberpunk cities in China capture the urban landscape, reveal the mentality of its residents, present a unique blend of cultural elements, and remain true to the philosophical concerns of cyberpunk. This study also provides insights into the localization of cyberpunk in China and offers a unique perspective on cyberpunk's changing nature in a rapidly developing and culturally diverse world.

Adoring a Star as an Incomplete Participatory Activity: How Do Participation Gap Marginalize Fan Practices of the Digitally Disadvantaged Youth in China？

Authors

Ms. Ying Qin - School of Media and Communication, Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Dr. Fang Wu - School of Media and Communication, Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Abstract

The boom in digital platforms has empowered fans to give meaning to texts through production and consumption, making fan culture a participatory culture. In China, digital platforms including social media, video-on-demand services, and music platforms, empowered fans in the industry-text-audience triangulation. Fan-led discourse influences the production of content in the cultural industry (Fung, 2019). Producers dynamically adapt the content of their programs to the themes and narrative patterns that interest fans, encouraging fans' participatory consumption in favor of the commercial performance of the producers and the digital platforms. However, not all fans are equally invited into the mutual negotiation between the industry and the audience. It is fans of higher social-economic status and better digital literacy who hold the power of fan discourse. The fan practices of digitally disadvantaged youth have received little attention. This study, therefore, attempts to focus on how this group develops its fan practices and how they perceive their relationship with the cultural industry.

This study was conducted using a semi-structured qualitative interview method. We interviewed 12 young fans, 10 females and 2 males, from rural China who had late access to the Internet. They aged from 16 to 25 years old, and their parents were mostly engaged in manual labor. We also conducted participatory observation with some of the young people in a village in western China to understand their daily fan practices.

Results reflect that the lag in the acquisition of digital skills prevents digitally disadvantaged fans from penetrating the core field of fan practice. They are confused and struggle to understand the terminology and rules governing fan practices on digital platforms. For instance, using a specific format for posts or comments that are favorable to the idol is nonproficient for them. Instead, they choose to hand over their social media accounts to professional fans and entrust them to carry out fan practices. They are gradually becoming indirect participants and marginalized by specialized fan practices.

Also, their lower socio-economic conditions exclude them from the core audience of the cultural industry. It is straitened for them to purchase merchandise endorsed by stars, tickets to idol meetings, and virtual gifts. Only fans who purchase these commodities can express their affection and appeals by voting for idols in shows. They were marginalized by the commodified industry-fan-idol relations because they were identified as powerless and incapable of contributing to the

commercial value of their idols or material benefits to the cultural industry. Fan culture as a participatory culture has led to a "participation gap" due to digital and economic disparities.

In the plight of being doubly marginalized, they have developed their own decentralized forms of participation. They are more likely to use social media platforms where the rules of fan practice are relatively relaxed and browse content reproduced by professional fans. Although it is awkward to be neither producers nor consumers, they create alternative ways to entertain themselves.

This study aims to give more attention to the cultural participation of digitally disadvantaged youth. By focusing on the youth's specific activities of adoring stars in the context of the digital divide, we explored the impact of digital literacy on participation practices and how they respond to the marginalization in turn.

The "Knowledge Landscape" of Subculture Studies: a knowledge graph analysis based on the WOS Core Collection (1998-2021)

Authors

Mr. Yushan Liu - Communication University of China

Dr. Gege Fang - Tsinghua University

Dr. Xiaoxue Zhang - Tsinghua University

Abstract

In the pluralistic and dynamic cultural environment and communication context, the phenomena of subculture is constantly emerging in people's sight. As a result, it has become one of the hottest topics of social concern. Based on 2,399 articles about subculture studies from 1998 to 2021 in the Core database of Web of Science, this paper applies CiteSpace to conduct co-word analysis and co-occurrence analysis, including the analysis of publication volume, keyword co-occurrence, author and mutation word.

In this paper, the core collections of literature in the comprehensive online literature database Web of Science (WOS) in the United States are data sources. First, selecting "Social Science Citation Index" for the citation index. Set the theme to "subcultur*" (* means word-cutter, which means that the searched literature contains subculture & subcultural); Second, setting the document type to "article OR review"; Third, changing the language to English and placing no restrictions on publication date. After that then, they were exported according to download_1-500 and other naming methods. Through screening and searching, a total of 2,399 literatures were obtained (including 2,319 research articles and 80 review articles). The data was last updated on October 1st, 2021.

Knowledge map shows the relationship between the development and structure of scientific knowledge related to a certyehain keyword by establishing a knowledge domain. Meanwhile, it also presents many implicit and complex relationships such as network, structure, interaction, intersection, evolution or derivation among knowledge units or knowledge groups in the form of a visual image and serialized knowledge pedigree (Chen et al., 2015). In this paper, CiteSpace 5.8.R1, a visualization application software developed by Professor Chen of Drexel University in the United States, works as the tool to analyze the literature visually. Its main functions are author cooperation analysis, keyword co-occurrence analysis, organization cooperation analysis, author co-citation analysis, literature co-citation analysis, etc., which could analyze and mine the achievements of different periods in literature through rich analysis means such as clustering (Chen, 2006).

The results of the study show that first there is no close relationship between core author groups in subculture research.

When analyzing the country situation of subculture research, this study selects the time span from 1998 to 2021, and the time slice is set as one partition every year. Specific parameter settings: first, selecting "country" in Node Types, second, setting 10% in the sub-option "Top N%" of selection criteria, finally, choosing "path finder" in pruning, where the font size represents the number of publication sent by different countries, and the connecting line represents the cooperative relationship between different countries.In the national cooperation network (see Figure 2), N=9, E=10, and density = 0.2778. It figures that the number of data nodes in the network is 9, while the number of connections is 10, which indicates that there is less cooperation and contact between different countries in the field of subculture research. Otherwise, the research on subculture is mainly concentrated in the United States, while the research on subculture phenomenon in China still at the initial stage.

Secondly, as far as the subject is concerned, the overseas subculture studies shows obvious interdisciplinary nature. In the research of subculture, the subculture phenomenon is often explained by combining the relevant knowledge of psychology, journalism and communication, and sociology, such as the criminal groups that are concerned by foreign scholars.

Thirdly, the subculture studies in the west started with the concern for a certain social group, with certain humanistic care. In fact, there are also some social floating groups in China, but few scholars have studied this group from the perspective of subculture.

The subculture research presents evident characteristics of interdisciplinary research. Finally, the content map of subculture studies could be summarized as studies of adolescents, gender, identity group and the Internet. The research on subculture phenomenon is mainly based on qualitative research methods, such as network ethnography, in-depth interview and grounded theory, or conceptual research, while the quantitative research on subculture phenomenon is lacking, which provides new ideas for the later subculture studies.

Key Words
Subculture; Knowledge graph; CiteSpace; SSCI; Co-occurrence analysis

The Joke Who Got Elected: The mediated spectacle of Donald Trump in 1980s and 1990s screen culture

Authors

Dr. Patrick Jones - Northeastern University

Dr. Beck Banks - University of Oregon

Abstract

A now infamous Simpson's episode from the year 2000 entitled "Bart to the Future," predicted a future where Donald Trump had been president and left the country with a "budget crunch." After Trump's surprising victory in 2016, Simpson's writer, Dan Greany said the episode was a "warning to America" and that a Trump presidency "just seemed like the logical last stop before hitting bottom." However, the Simpsons were not alone in predicting a Trump presidency. The first season finale of the NBC show *Suddenly Susan* featured a fake magazine cover that depicted Trump against a hot pink background with a tag line that said, "Our Next President?" While these examples may seem prescient in retrospect, they also demonstrate that by the end of the 1990s, Trump's image had become pervasive in American media as joke, myth, and memory.

According to IMDB between 1989 and 2004 (the first year *The Apprentice* aired), Trump made 20 cameos in movies and tv and countless other appearances on talk shows and pro wrestling events. However, Trump's presence in the media was not limited to cameos and appearances. He also existed as an icon within the zeitgeist of 80s and 90s pop culture, symbolizing ruthless financial dealing, extravagant wealth, and philandering. For example, throughout the run of the NBC show *Just Shoot Me!*, Trump is continuously evoked as the financial rival of Jack Gallagher, the editor and owner of *Blush Magazine*. In another instance, in a 1991 episode of *Designing Women*, Julia Sugarbaker calls Donald Trump to inform him that "We no longer care who he dates."

What can Trump's presence in 80s and 90s film and television tell us about his resonance and resilience as candidate, president, and political demagogue? In this paper, we draw on literature from memory studies and television studies, to examine who Trump was imagined to be by 80s and 90s film and television. From this analysis, we draw out the genre Trump was most often associated with (comedy films, sitcoms, and kid's films) and contend that his association with comedy and kids softened his image transforming him from a womanizing elite to a palatable joke. We then argue that several elements of Trump's image first solidified in this era including his association with wealth and status regardless of his actual financial aptitude, his "boys will be boys" misogyny, and his innate prowess as an individual.

Key Words

Trump, Memory, Television, Film, Class, and Gender

Picture-Perfect Romania: The Everyday Construction of the Nation on Instagram

Authors

Dr. Delia Dumitrica - Erasmus University Rotterdam

Abstract

This presentation engages with the intersection between social media and nationalism, asking how everyday social media use contributes to the (re)production of the idea of the nation. With the internet, more and more social actors become involved in the (re)production of nations and nationalism: "on the Internet, not only are 'the citizenry' […] daily reminded of their national place in a 'world of nations', as Billig (1995, p. 8) explains, but also the citizenry themselves remind themselves and each other of this national place" (Szulc, 2017, p. 66).

Focusing on Instagram as a platform for visual self-presentation and documentation of everyday life, the presentation presents the results of a qualitative content analysis of a set of N= 100 posts collected across the two most popular hashtags referring to Romania. These hashtags include a combination of country name and a relevant descriptor such as the flag emoji or a positive term conveying affection. Posts for each of the the two hashtags were harvested on a random day (without any national significance) in August 2021 using 4KStogram, then further randomly sampled (i.e., every 10th post up to a sample of 50 posts per hashtag). A deductive-inductive qualitative content analysis codebook was developed capturing the contents of the post, as well as explicit references to nationally-significant tropes. Captions were analyzed separately, with an eye to hashtag frequency and nationally-significant tropes.

Preliminary findings suggest that the posts construct Romania as a pristine natural beauty, with idyllic rural settings and historic landmarks, equally addressing internal and external (explicitly European) audiences. While this picture-perfect image reflects the platform vernacular (Keller, 2019), it ironically rehearses stereotypical Western social imaginaries about Eastern Europe which are re-appropriated as a selling point by Instagram users. Furthermore, as a form of everyday nationhood (Fox, 2017), clustered Instagram posts present themselves as an expression of a shared national imaginary, normalizing the nation as a lens for perceiving the world around us. As Instagram users collectively construct a picture-perfect of the nation, they selectively draw from and further legitimize broader discourses of nationalism.

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Key Words
everyday nationalism, internet nationalism, Instagram

Non-binary depiction in TV fiction. Dan (HIT, RTVE), the first non-binary character of Spanish TV as a study case.

Authors

Mx. Vítor Blanco-Fernández - Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Dr. Isabel Villegas-Simón - Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Dr. María T. Soto-Sanfiel - National University of Singapore

Abstract

Non-binary characters are not only still under-represented in popular media (González-de-Garay et al., 2022) but in need of academic attention. To fill in such a gap of knowledge, this study aims to assess non-binary representation in TV fiction through a case study: the character Dan from the Spanish TV fiction *HIT* (RTVE, 2020-today). *HIT* is a coral teen drama portraying today's Spanish youth. Dan appeared in season two (2021), describes themself as explicitly non-binary and uses they/them pronouns. They are the first (overt) non-binary character in Spanish TV fiction being the "first of its kind" phenomenon, which Cavalcante (2017) considers paramount in mainstream culture. Moreover, since there is not a settled Non-Binary Studies field, both broadly speaking and communication-oriented, this research also contributes to an emerging field.

The study is drawing on previous literature on LGBTIQ+/Queer Media Studies (Griffin, 2018), especially on Trans depictions (Capuzza & Spencer, 2017). Transnormativity is a particularly useful concept: a non-cis character finds it easier to appear on the screen if they fit the binary gender roles. The study reframes transnormativity to ask which traits must the non-binary character fulfill to fit in a generalist TV fiction. To answer it, it conducts a qualitative two-level exploration, combining content analysis and discourse analysis. First, it replicates Capuzza and Spencer's (2017) qualitative content categories for trans characters (visibility, identity, character relevance, embodiment, and social interaction). Second, it applies the categories of the critical discourse analysis of LGBTIQ+ blockbuster characters proposed by Sánchez-Soriano and García-Jiménez (2020) (construction of the character, lexicalization, propositional framing, and focus). All the authors analyzed the series twice by themselves and later jointly compared and confirmed their preliminary observations.

Main conclusions allow to establish three main axis which inform Dan's non-binary depiction. 1) *Dualism*: a bi-polar understanding of non-binary reality, affecting not only gender identity and expression (non-binarism as a combination of characteristics situated at the extreme poles of traditional masculine and feminine conceptions) but also public vs. private spaces, youth vs. adulthood, pragmatic vs. sensitive; obscure vs. clear, showing vs. hiding, among others; 2) *Confusion*: while Dan is entirely sure and affirmative about their non-binary gender identity, their social environment is confused about it, which is manifested on the constant questioning and negation of their non-binarism throughout all the series, and 3) *Excellence* is the only path to social acceptance: only specially talented, skilled and extraordinary non-binary people deserve social

integration (i.e., Dan as an artist, as an ethical person, as a brainiac, as an angel). Furthermore, the paper proposes a list of traits found in Dan's depiction. These traits may work as an analytical template applicable in future research on non-binary characters.

Smells Like Teen Streaming? Netflix's Teen Originals and the transnationalisation of a genre

Authors

Ms. Axelle Asmar - imec-SMIT, Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Prof. Tim Raats - imec-SMIT, VUB

Prof. Leo Van Audenhove - imec-SMIT, VUB

Abstract

"More people deserve to see their lives represented on screen, including young people (...). Coming of age happens to all of us no matter who you are or what your background is, and we've tried to reflect that in our series for young audiences, including On My Block, Atypical, and the upcoming shows I Am Not Okay With This and Never Have I Ever, among others".

— Brian Wright, Netflix Vice President of YA/Family Original Series

Generally limited to short formats and meagre budgets, the teen genre has been enlivened in the recent years. In 2022 HBO's *Euphoria* (2019-present) became the most tweeted show of the decade, spurring an entire meme culture around its central characters (Spangler, 2022). The success of *Euphoria* (2019-present)*,* but also series such as *Skam* (2015-2017) or *Sex Education* (2019-present), makes teen television an increasingly popular genre (again). Surfing on this renewed popularity, Subscription Video-On-Demand (hereafter SVOD) services are increasingly investing in the production of teen series. Spearheading this revival, Netflix quickly established itself as the leading platform for the genre. Although the streamer built its dominance by boosting prestige dramas such as *House of Cards* (2013-2018)*,* it gradually expanded its catalogue towards the teen genre in a bid to attract young audiences. Interestingly, whereas most SVOD services have produced their teen originals series within the purview and conventions of American television, Netflix is the only platform (so far) to have exported the genre outside the western world. With shows such as *Blood and Water* (2020- present) in South Africa, or *Jinn* (2019-present) in Jordan, the teen genre is increasingly becoming transnational (Jenner 2021).

This transnationalisation of the teen genre, we surmise, is infused with and part of Netflix growing emphasis on diversity (i.e. sexual, gender, linguistic and ethnic diversity). Indeed, following the publication of its first diversity report, the streamer has committed itself to be a driver of inclusion for underrepresented communities in film and television industries. To this end, Netflix is putting a strong emphasis on inclusive storytelling and content that reflect audiences, especially young audiences (Sarandos, 2021). Expanding the scope of previous research on the cultural power of streaming platforms (Lotz, 2021), the research question guiding this contribution, namely '(how) Is Netflix diversifying teen series?', allows us to examine how the streamer fuse its diversity strategy with its teen programming to attract young viewers.

This qualitative research is based on a textual analysis of Netflix's teen originals trailers with a focus on the thematic scope and narrative structures of Netflix's teen series trailers. Conceptually, this article is framed by theories of media industries (Havens & Lotz, 2017) and cultural studies (Hall, 1997) with an emphasis on the complex practices of domestication and cultural exchanges that have come to define Netflix as a global cultural experience. At the methodological level, inspired by film studies (Benshoff, 2015) and visual ethnography (Pink, 2013; Rose, 2016), this contribution is based on a trailer analysis of Netflix full original teen series—that is series fully commissioned by the streamer (Afilipoaie et al., 2021)—released between 2015-2022 (N=80). Trailers are part of what Gray (2010) terms paratexts: they introduce audiences to texts and thus frame the interactions we have with, and the meanings we construct around television texts. Importantly, the analysis of trailers does not intend to capture the broad narrative and thematic scopes of the series they accompany; instead, Netflix's teen original trailers allow to explore *what* Netflix wants audiences to see, and *how* the streamer intends particular texts to be read. As such, the trailer analysis stresses the following aspects:

Narratives: How are aspects of sexual, gender, ethnic, linguistic diversity represented?
Theme: What contemporary issues come to the fore?

We conclude that Netflix's teen originals series serve as a useful framework to examine how content produced and distributed by Netflix embodies and creates 'flexible geographies' (Treadwell, 2022) — cutting across genres, (trans)national borders, televisual conventions- and cultural politics. We contend that, more than a mere diversification of its catalogue, Netflix has managed to encapsulate different dimensions of diversity within the teen genre as part, on the one hand of its transnational strategy of expansion; and on the other hand, its cultural approach. Based on our analysis, we highlight four dimensions of Netflix's transnationalisation of the teen genre which emphasize the considerable cultural power exerted by the streamer and the circulation of its texts.

Key Words
Netflix, diversity, popular culture, teen television, young audiences

Spanish adolescents' perspectives of LGBTQ+ characters in scripted series

Authors

Ms. Esmeralda Vazquez - Universitat Autònma de Barcelona

Dr. María T. Soto-Sanfiel - National University of Singapore

Abstract

The world has recently been witnessing an increasing amount of representation of young and adult LGBTQ+ people in the media (Dhoest & Simons, 2012) and a growing number of LGBTQ+ writers and producers are interested in creating such contents (Sender, 2012). At a social level, these representations are useful for informing audiences about LGBTQ+ matters (McInroy & Craig, 2017) and also provide realistic, non-stereotyped LGBTQ+ depictions that might counteract homophobic discourse and hostility towards the LGBTQ+ community (Masanet, Ventura & Ballesté, 2022).

Depictions of LGBTQ+ people in traditional media have progressively become more positive, with queer characters now being portrayed in a similar fashion to non-LGBTQ+ ones (Dhoest & Simons, 2012; McInroy & Craig, 2017) and LGBTQ+ aesthetics being incorporated in such representations (McInroy & Craig, 2017). However, there are still problems with the representation of younger LGBTQ+ people (Amat et al., 2020; McInroy & Craig, 2017). Indeed, adolescents lack visible, varied, and multidimensional LGBTQ+ media role models, particularly because such identities are so complex, diverse and multifactorial, and not all LGBTQ+ individuals experience them the same way (Amat et al., 2020).

Increased LGBTQ+ representation has not been accompanied by sufficient research, either on the impacts of such depictions on young LGBTQ+ audiences (Dhoest & Simons, 2012; McInroy & Craig, 2015, 2017) or on heterosexual cisgender adolescents. Today's adolescents develop their identities in the midst of immense social and technological changes while increasingly relying on the media to learn, connect and play (Dhoest & Van-Ouytsel, 2022). Although they identify with a wider range of more inclusive identity labels than previous generations in different cultural contexts (Dhoest & Van-Ouytsel; 2022; Persson et al., 2020), they still need information and close personal referents (Amat et al., 2020), especially with regard to sexual and gender diversity in order to reduce LGBTQ+ phobia (Pichardo et al., 2009) and foster greater visibility and social acceptance (Amat et al., 2020). Coherently, this research also contributes to the existing knowledge on the relationship between adolescents and fictional LGBTQ+ characters and their need for representation. Specifically, it aims to inform production studios and audio-visual industries about the attitudes of the so-called "missing audience" (Davison et al., 2020) by observing adolescents' opinions about the representation of LGBTQ+ characters on series distributed by digital platforms and regular TV channels. It also expands on recent preliminary studies of young people's responses to LGBTQ+ representations (Dhoest & Van-Ouytsel, 2022; McInroy & Craig, 2015, 2017). The study tries to find an answer for the following research questions: What kind of LGBTQ+ representations do Spanish

adolescents prefer and like to consume in the audio-visual fiction realm, particularly on fictional series; and What are the attitudes of Spanish adolescents towards existing Spanish representations of LGBTQ+ adolescents in such products?

Data was collected through four online focus groups (FGs). A convenience sample was recruited via a snowballing technique using social networks. Participants were 20 late adolescents aged 16-21 (Mean$_{Age}$ = 18.5) from diverse urban areas of Spain distributed into 4-7 person FGs. They were all students, albeit at different educational levels (i.e., college, high school, vocational training). Ten identified as cisgender (6 female and 4 male), two as transgender (1 male) and eight as agender. Regarding sexual orientation, six did not have a clear idea or just said they were part of the LGBTQ+ community, five identified as bisexual, three as pansexual, three as heterosexual, two as gay, and one as asexual. A thematic analysis (TA) was applied to the verbatim transcriptions of the responses to identify patterns within them (Mieles, Tonon & Alvarado, 2012).

Main preliminary results show that adolescents from Spain demand more varied, diverse, and realistic representations of LGBTQ+ people, and particularly transgender, non-binary and bisexual youngsters (Amat et al., 2020; McInroy & Craig, 2015, 2017). Also, that despite the increased presence of LGBTQ+ adults and adolescents in the media, these depictions often cause them discomfort, regardless of sexual and gender identity, due to being stereotyped, unrealistic, romance-sex oriented, driven by inclusion quotas, unvarying and always showing such people partying (Dhoest & Simons, 2012; Sender, 2012; Masanet et al., 2022).

As a preliminary conclusion, this research provides a clearer picture of the values, conceptions and worldviews of young Spaniards in the 21st century. This is important because adolescents, and particularly LGBTQ+, actively use media representations for identity building, personal development, self-concept (Craig & McInroy, 2014; McInroy & Craig, 2015, 2017) and communicating with others.

Key Words
lgbti, gender studies, adolescents, serials, lgbtq+ characters, queer production studies

Influence of parasocical interaction and celebrity identities on social media endorsement: the moderation role of product placement

Authors

Dr. Wanqi Gong - Guangdong University of Foreign Studies

Dr. Shubin Yu - BI Norwegian Business School

Ms. Wenqing Ye - Guangdong University of Foreign Studies

Abstract

Celebrity endorsement has become increasingly prominent on social media. Social media allows for a closer and more personal connection between celebrities and their fans and varied forms of product placement. Therefore the present study aims to examine the impact of parasocial interaction (PSI) and product placement on celebrity endorsement effectiveness within social media context, including attitude towards the advertisement (Aad), brand attitude (BA), and purchase intention (PI), as well as the mediating role of brand recall. Results from an online experiment indicate that parasocial interaction had a positive effect on Aad, BA, and PI. The influence of PSI was found to be stronger when product placement was prominent and when sponsor cues were present. The study also revealed that brand recall played a mediating role in the relationship between parasocial interaction and endorsement outcomes. These findings have important theoretical and practical implications for marketers and advertisers. Theoretically, the results provide a deeper understanding of the mechanisms behind the impact of parasocial interaction in celebrity endorsement, and offer insights into the moderation role of product placement. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of considering the selection of celebrity endorsers and the positioning of products in advertisements.

TRANSNATIONAL FANS REACTIONS TO TRANSNATIONAL CULTURAL PRODUCTS: COMPARE CHINESE FANS OF KOREAN TV SERIES AND AMERICAN TV SERIES

Authors

Ms. Yijiao Wang - University of Nottingham Ningbo China

Abstract

Cultural globalization is playing an increasingly important role in cultural development, including the transnational flow of cultural products, which is a very popular cultural phenomenon (Lee, 2015). Cultural flow is a good example to explain the complexity of cultural hybridization whose complexity has also aroused the debate on cultural proximity and cultural homogeneity (Ryoo, 2009). This paper examines the extend of these two concepts in the flow of cultural goods across nations. Aiming to explore the extent to which cultural proximity and cultural homology are important in the acceptance of transnational cultural products, this study focus on the transnational fans. They are vital stakeholders in the flow of transnational cultural products, due to their dual role as consumers and reproducers (or re-disseminators) (Jenkins, 2012).

By comparing the interests of Korean and American TV series fans in China, this paper pays attention to and analyses the influence of cultural similarities and differences on fans' reception. The online focus group was used in this study. 20 participants who are Chinese fans of Korean and American TV series participated in the study. The interest, focus and cultural interpretation of the transnational fans have been interviewed and discussed. The results of this study show that under the background of cultural globalization and the integration of digital media, transnational fans seem to be getting rid of the shackles of national identity then gathering together to become global pop culture fans with common artistic aesthetics and values.

First of all, both American and Korean TV series fans have emphasized that diverse narrative themes and tortuous narrative modes are the most attractive to them. Secondly, Korean star strategy still plays an important role in attracting fans while American TV has established a close and lasting relationship between fans and characters, which make fans empathize with the characters. In addition, the art design in multinational TV dramas has attracted the attention of fans, which is a new discovery of this study. Fans mentioned that they paid attention to the actors and actress clothes and make-up, scene arrangement, props and special effects, which had been neglected in previous studies on the audience or fans of multinational TV series. Finally, when interpreting the culture in the drama, Korean and American drama fans not only mention the family culture similar to that in Chinese real life, but also the open gender culture in American drama and the unique social culture and Korean material culture in Korean drama. It can be seen that fans do not only pay attention to the cultural similarities, but they tend to interpret the common concepts of modern society and distinct differences in culture as well. The elements that value of fans eventually return to the drama itself, not their cultural background. This paper claims

that cultural proximity is not a definite and significant factor in luring international followers, and it's possible that cultural homology in foreign cultural goods is the real driver of adoration of international fans for them.

Does "Self-Discipline" Really Bring "Freedom"? : Gender and body metaphors on digital fitness platform

Authors

Ms. Runxuan Tuo - Tsinghua University

Ms. Han Yu - Tsinghua University

Abstract

In recent years, there has been a new wave of healthy lifestyles. More and more people choose online fitness at home instead of going to the gym. Online training has stimulated the adrenalin in the body of all ages, providing a new emotional venting for city dwellers. It has become a fashionable trend and conversation piece of interpersonal interaction. However, fitness has also brought body shame and anxiety. Because of society's idealized perception of beauty, women depicted in mass media are slim and slender (Jett et al., 2010). This unrealistic ideal and male gaze also lead to excessive body dissatisfaction, weight concerns and eating disorders among young women.

In today's society, there seems to be an underlying consensus to cater for the social media standards of "beauty". However, such gaze and discipline can contribute to the alienation and isolation of people, making them willing to suffer the exploitation of capitalism in a seemingly sweet life (Guy Debord, 1981). Foucault(1979) emphasizes the destructive power of the gaze theory and believes that latent power was hidden behind the system of technological means to manipulate and discipline the human body. Based on the gaze theory, the study believes that digital platform produces content around the "gaze" of the body and objectifies users' practices, constituting a critical media landscape.

As the most significant fitness application with an extensive audience base in China, Keep App fits the needs of our study. Not only does it cover a wide range of fitness courses from China and worldwide, but the community function of the platform usually displays users' fitness journals, healthy recipes, and before-and-after photos of weight loss. Like popular hashtags such as #Fitspiration on Instagram, "self-discipline gives me freedom" is the most reflective hashtag for their consumers. However, the binding of "self-discipline" and "freedom" seems to indicate another implication: If you do not exercise, you will lose your freedom.

Using Keep App as an observational field, this study conducted a combination of participatory observation and online ethnography to focus on how the technological gaze is embedded into fitness applications. The collection of empirical materials began in August 2022 and ended in February 2023. The first stage was to learn the setting mechanism of the Keep App and understand the order of users' bodies. The objects of observation are basic information such as content delivery from the Keep App and user-posted content in the online community. After determining the research questions, the second stage was completed through online recruitment and random sampling within the Keep community. Users who successfully lost weight (significantly decreased

body fat percentage) or got in shape (significantly increased muscle mass) were screened. To explore gender issues, 10 female and 10 male interviewees were selected for in-depth interviews.

The study draws three conclusions as follows. First, regarding gender issues, most women have already left the aesthetics of "white skin, young age, and size zero body" under the gaze of traditional Chinese patriarchal society. However, the female groups are still disciplined by the popular belief that "self-discipline represents freedom" under the gaze of technology and have become invisible digital labour in social media. In addition, the study found that the "two-way gaze" is present in the digital fitness area. As a member of fitness users, men also experience different degrees of anxiety and stress about their figures (especially muscles). However, compared to women, men are generally less demanding of their body shapes than women.

Furthermore, the sports and fitness platform in the digital age uses technical logic to cover up the negative impact on the body with the discourse of freedom, health and self-discipline. Digital platforms have not become a liberating force. Instead, they have tamed people's original diversity and definition of healthy life through complex technological gaze and social discipline, finally making people their own "monitors". Thus, what appears to be a healthy life leading to liberation and freedom turns out to be a new form of physical discipline.

Finally, this study finds that the technological gaze has become a new watching power. In the future, the complex relationship between social structure and power behind digital fitness will be more worthy of people's attention because the desire for fitness often reflects users' social relations and status. As a popular lifestyle, fitness represents the aspiration of class advancement. Under social discipline, healthy life labels are often associated with a successful life. People are also shaping their character setting of social identity by posting healthy lives on digital platform.

Key Words
technological gaze; digital fitness; body; gender

Chorusing national self passionately: Entertainment celebrities' patriotic reposting and fandom deliberation in China

Authors

Ms. JIAYUE MA - Renmin University of China

Ms. Min Ge - Renmin University of China

Abstract

Stardom in China is critical in globalizing entertainment industries, whereas insufficient attention has been gained to its intersection with neoliberal market ideology and political traditions. Previous research on 'ideotainment' suggested that celebrities in China were an integral part of cultural-moral governance to consolidate national belonging. It is common for celebrities to repost patriotic weibo. These 'positive-energy' acts would be calculated into platform's rankings of celebrity status.

The 'micro-celebrity' culture has been greatly cultivated in China. Celebrities publicly sell their seemingly authentic, intimate self-brand, which is a kind of emotional labor. The mediated persona is also performing everyday nationhood and circulating the national sentiment, pushing celebrities into the mixed arena of promotion markets and public sphere. Celebrity's national self faces the social responsibilities attached to moral halo and the censorship targeting patriotic standpoint.

Therefore, this study asked:
RQ1: What are the characteristics of Chinese entertainment celebrities' construction of national self?
RQ2: How do national sentiment circulate through the celebrities' reposting practice?
RQ3: How do fandom and the public get involved in the celebrities' national self discourse?

RQ1 coded the selected celebrities' patriotic reposting weibo (N = 2932) in 2 dimensions: self-branding strategies and national identity theme. RQ2 used the LIWC to identify texts' emotions and word usage. Linear regression models were run with the LIWC results as dependent variables and the content analysis results turning to dummy as independent variables. RQ3 conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 15 fans or netizens who have initiated discussions about celebrities' patriotic reposting.

Affiliation to mainstream media (54.1%) is the most frequently performed national self construction strategy, followed by self status promotion (28.7%). While positive in 'affect', 'positive emotions' and 'sad' words, the effect of affiliation to mainstream media reverses in 'cognitive processes' and 'cause' words. And emotional words in original texts are positively associated with that in celebrity reposting texts. It indicates stars' enthusiastic embrace of moral calling and commercial exploitation from official discourse with high consensus, or lack of critical thinking.

Celebrity reconfigures its recognized commercial personae via attending and marketing national propaganda programming.

In terms of national identity, 41.1% are about national trauma, consisting of catastrophes, wars, and epidemics. Political agenda, social education, and national pride take up 26.3%, 15.9%, and 6.6% respectively. National trauma is positively associated with both 'death' words and 'achievement' words. It echoes the traditional narrative of nationalism that turns suffering to celebratory discourse of state capability and re-legitimacy.

The interviews showed that celebrity's national self image encourages civic engagement in a playful way. Celebrity gossip, which seems to be free from bureaucratic forces, reinforces social education and national sensibilities subliminally. However, threatened by platforms chasing data traffic and fandom utilizing moral argumentation to repackage ultranationalism claims, consumption of celebrities reveals political immaturity.

We make two contributions. First, it investigates Chinese entertainment celebrities' general patterns of self-branding and involvement in ethno-nationalism, and its embedded affective atmosphere of banal nationalism. Second, it captures the complex interplays of celebrity affective labor between ideotainment, fan activism, and cultural citizenship, which actually regulate the circulation of national emotion in online platforms.

Key Words
Chinese celebrity, national identity, self-branding

Distorted emotional labor: an ethnography of a commercial live-streaming assistant anchor group

Authors

Mr. Rongyi Chen - Communication University of China

Ms. Shike Lin - Communication University of China

Abstract

Commercial livestream for selling commodities is gradually becoming the preferred promotion channel for businesses in the post-epidemic era (Wei & Zhang, 2021). Unlike Alibaba's pioneering selling model centered around the introduction of merchandise, companies such as TikTok and Kwai have developed a selling-style merchandising model centered on inciting viewers' emotions. This model relies on inviting stars to create a large number of IPs to promote quickly. In this model, a large number of assistant anchors are introduced to the livestream. This is a new professional group who will have no names in the show, and rarely even show their faces. In most cases, they use exaggerated voice and body language to interact with the anchor, while also physically carrying out the display of information and the "punishment" of anchors.

Based on a 12-month digital ethnography, this study aims to examine the underlying logic of operation in the livestream room through the lens of emotional labor and to analyze how this group builds trust between the audience and anchors and buys with fervor through distorted emotional labor.

Hochschild first introduced the concept of "emotional labor", which means "employees need to manage their emotions for pay and perform following the organization's demands for facial expressions and body language" (1983). She argued that capitalist commodification has entered the realm of human emotions, turning human emotional states into commodities for sale. In Dong and Ye's argument, the group of show anchors is a typical group of online emotional labor. They need to create intimate relationships between themselves and their audience to convert them into commercial value (2021). The assistant anchors, on the other hand, carry out a completely different model, where they need to create an emotional link between the anchor and the audience through emotional labor.

The assistant anchors have to put in excessive effort beyond the scope of their job duties. Many assistant anchors are "slaved" to show their talents and shout in the studio as required by the anchor. At some point, they also need to withstand the abuse of the anchor and the reprimand of the audience. This is a typical "ritual" of emotional release. But they are not allowed to explain themselves in the studio, and instead are required to praise the anchor's "correctness" and "hard work". In daily life, this is a challenge to human rights, but in the special environment of the live studio, these behaviors are normalized.

A significant number of the assistant anchors need to stand on the opposite side of the anchor, to be the "common enemy" of the anchor and the audience, and to perform arguments. Most of them are deceiving the audience, but this act can build a trusting relationship between the anchor and the audience. In the creation of the interactive relationship between the anchor and the audience, the assistant anchors are not allowed to be part of these relationships or show their personal emotions. They become purely a perceptible fuel for the rhythm of the shopping frenzy.

Key Words
emotional labor, commercial live-streaming, assistant anchor

Relationship Development or Emotional Attachment? Understanding fan motivation for interacting on fan platform

Authors

Ms. zhaoyang li - State Key Laboratory of Media Convergence and Communication, Communication University of China

Ms. Anyi Xin - The Institute of Communication Studies, Communication University of China

Ms. Ruoxi Zhang - The Institute of Communication Studies, Communication University of China

Abstract

Background

During the COVID-19 pandemic, online fan platforms have become a new way for idols to interact and stay connected with their fans, particularly those overseas. These fan platforms create a utopian space that gives fans a more personal sense of fulfillment and increases their attachment to their idols.

One of the most iconic platform services is "Dear U Bubble", launched by South Korean entertainment company SM Entertainment in 2018. This platform allows fans to chat with their idols in a private setting, and by 2021, it had amassed 120 million users, with the majority of them being young overseas women. Bubble has become a novel way for K-pop idols to connect with their global fans.

Objective

This study aims to investigate the usage patterns and psychological dynamics of Bubble users by exploring the following questions:

(1) Why are fans willing to pay for the idol communication service provided by Bubble, even though they are aware that it is not a genuine one-on-one interaction?

(2) What are the key factors that influence fans' decisions and actions? What impact do online fan platforms, such as Bubble, have on the idol-fan relationship?

Research methods

This study mainly employed an in-depth interview method with 13 Bubble users. The topics discussed included idol attraction, information acquisition, relationship building, emotional satisfaction, reality avoidance, and usage experience. The total accumulated interview transcripts amounted to over 200,000 characters. Moreover, the observation method was used as a supplementary tool to the interview content.

Findings and conclusions

(1) **Idols are the most crucial element that attracts fans to use Bubble. Even though Bubble cannot offer a true private chat, fans still feel that they have been brought closer to their idols.**

The daily communication content sent by idols also satisfies fans' curiosity and voyeuristic tendencies.

(2) **The relationship formed in Bubble has filled the void of offline relationships caused by COVID-19 in fans' real lives.** Additionally, due to its long-term subscription, this type of chat has become a regular part of fans' daily lives.

(3) **Most fans prioritize the feeling of intimacy gained from Bubble over developing real, intimate relationships.** The intermittent, intense pleasure that it provides gives fans the illusion of intimacy and true emotional fulfillment.

(4) **This virtual and private communication provides fans with more ownership and freedom, as well as constant, positive feedback from their idols without requiring much effort or expenditure. This creates an emotional bubble that allows them to momentarily detach from reality;** however, this illusion of intimacy can also lead to confusion between the virtual and the real for some users, thus becoming a hindrance to real-life interactions.

Discussion

Bubble employs a progressive entitlement granting system, whereby the longer a user pays for continuous use, the more extended the length of messages they can send to their idols. This model significantly increases the cost of abandoning the service for users, making them appear to enjoy greater rights and benefits, thus creating a "passive addiction" to the business model.

Key Words
Fan platform; K-pop idol; Virtual relationship; Emotional fulfillment

Constructing 'Belgitude': a casestudy of Jacques Brel on constructing national identity in Belgium

Authors

Ms. Hanne Van Haelter - Ghent University

Abstract

This paper will consider the pivotal figure of Belgian chansonnier Jacques Brel, who dominated the Belgian music landscape in the 1950's and well after. The case of Brel perfectly illustrates how popular music can help shape identities in general and national identities in particular. Ever since the emergence of the Belgian nation in 1830 up until today, ideas of a Belgian and Flemish national identity have co-existed over time (Willems, 2014) and tensions between the Dutch-speaking Flemish region in the north and the French-speaking Walloon region in the south have been present. Brel navigated this terrain as he deliberately also alluded to the complex and multi-layered tensions between the Dutch-and French-speaking by, inter alia, calling Flemish nationalists '*Flamingants*' (Weyn-Vanhentenryck), while simultaneously referring to himself as a 'French-speaking Fleming'. On top of that, he used the term '*Belgitude*' to emphasize 'his sense of Belgian ethnicity' (Tinker, 2002). In so doing, Brel tapped into the inherently ambiguous and sometimes contradictory nature of Belgian national identities and the historical, socio-political divide between the two language communities.

This paper examines the lyrics of Brel's songs as well as the surrounding public debates; through the lens of '*Belgitude*'. Firstly, a textual analysis of the lyrics of his songs that can possibly contribute to identity formation unravels how he himself ambivalently both engaged with and challenged dominant discourses surrounding national identity in Belgium and how his work contributes to everyday, banal expressions of national identity (Billig, 1995). Secondly, by performing a discourse analysis on a relevant sample of Dutch and French newspaper articles about Jacques Brel -written during his most active period: 1954-1978-, we investigate the dominant media discourses surrounding his persona. Accordingly, we shed light on how Brel was often claimed and instrumentalized by different media organizations to consolidate national identities. As both the textual affordances of Brel's oeuvre as well as the critical reception of it illustrate Anderson's (1991) claim that nations are, in fact, nothing more and nothing less than 'imagined communities', this paper contributes to the understanding of the often understudied discursive role of music in this process of 'nation building'. Moreover, zooming in on the complex case of Belgium, we further explore how the concept of '*Belgitude*' has manifested itself specifically in the context of popular music.

Key Words

Wandering between Authenticity and Virtuality: Understanding the Imagined Affordances of Virtual Idol A-SOUL in China

Authors

Ms. Junru Wang Zhao - School of Media and Communication, Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Dr. Fang Wu - School of Media and Communication, Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Abstract

The virtual idol is a genre of computer-generated media stars. Apart from VOCALOID Hatsune Miku, a singing synthesis engine and virtual singer, and Virtual YouTuber Kizuna AI in Japan, there emerges a new form of virtual idols in China—avatar-based virtual idols. This type of virtual idol is realized by binding a real girl to a fictional 3D character through real-time motion capture; the girl's real identity and appearance are invisible to the public according to the contract. An avatar-based virtual idol is a complex existence with both human and non-human parts. Using the conceptual framework of imagined affordance, the present study attends to this complexity and explores how this complexity and fans' perception of it shape the relationship between virtual idols and fans.

This study takes A-SOUL, a Chinese girl idol group powered by ByteDance, as an example to explore the imagined affordances of virtual idols in China's context. A-SOUL's five members are set to live in a fictional city Zhijiang and gather to become idols. These 18-to-19-year-old girls have appearances in a Japanese anime style, and different characters and talents. On Bilibili and Douyin platforms, they do live streams featuring variety shows, video gaming, as well as singing and dancing performances with sophisticated camera movements and stage sets. Since its debut in November 2020, A-SOUL has become a phenomenon icon in China with more than 12 million followers on the two platforms.

Nagy and Neff (2015) constructed the concept of imagined affordance as emerging between the materiality of technologies, mediated experiences, and affective processes, which offers a systematic research approach to human-technology interaction. Therefore, this paper adopts the framework of imagined affordance to study the interactive mechanism between A-SOUL and its fans. There are two specific research questions: What are the imagined affordances of avatar-based virtual idols? How do avatar-based virtual idols and their fans get connected from the perspective of the materiality of virtual idols and the imagination of fans?

Through qualitative empirical methods of online participant observation and semi-structured interviews with 15 fans of A-SOUL, the present study indicates three main categories: perceived affordance, interactive affordance, and emotional affordance, respectively characterized by technological embodiment, shared space and time, and empathy. For perceived affordance, fans imagine the avatar-based virtual idol as an entity in which the authenticity of the actress and the virtuality of the character are bonded together, which has a dual effect on the idol-fan interaction. The interactive affordance helps build a mixed reality out of the digital representation, leading to emotional realism. However, when humanity contradicts the virtual technology (like the virtual idol

crying without tears), the emotional affordance may bring about context collapse, or evoke fans' empathy for the human being behind the technological body.

This study proposes three imagined affordances of avatar-based virtual idols through a case study of A-SOUL, a new techno-culture phenomenon in China, and illuminates the role of imagination in shaping the mediated experiences during virtual idol live streaming. The connection between virtual idols and fans is not only associated with the cute aesthetic but also with the imagined affordances—possibilities for the actresses and fans to discover authenticity from virtuality through the imagination. Findings help us understand why virtual idol live streaming attracts a wide range of audiences and provoke thinking about the relationship between humans and post-humans in the digital age.

Trickle-down or bottom-up? A network agenda-setting study of sustainable fashion on Chinese social media.

Authors

Ms. Rui Ding - Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Ms. Shiyu Tang - Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Abstract

The development of mobile Internet has enhanced the iterative speed of social media in the production, exchange, and dissemination of fashion content based on user relationships. In contrast to the traditional interpersonal and mass communication methods of fashion issues, the way fashion issues are communicated in the social media environment has not been sufficiently empirically studied. This study uses " network agenda-setting" as the research framework to investigate the agenda setting effect of sustainable fashion, a popular fashion concept in the field of fashion, on Chinese social media Xiaohongshu. Studies on fashion communication have centered on two approaches: trickle-down and bottom-up. In brief, a trickle-down approach is caused by imitation and class divisions resulting in the elite as fashion leaders. The bottom-up approach emphasizes the process of ordinary people working together to construct a collective taste as they discover the potential of fashion.

In the era of mass media, trickle-down approach dominates the fashion communication process, however, as new media evolves, fashion leaders and ordinary people are interacting and communicating conveniently and quickly on social media platforms. The Internet has broken the traditional trickle-down approach, while leaving room for the public to co-construct fashion discourse. In the new media environment, how sustainable fashion issues are transferred among different actors and the degree of mutual influence between fashion leaders and the public are the main concerns of this study. Research differentiated Xiaohongshu accounts into general users, influencers, and organizational accounts. Using network agenda-setting approach, the following three hypotheses were formulated through empirical data.

H1: Among sustainable fashion agendas, the agenda network of general users accounts is positively correlated with the agenda network of organizational accounts and individual influencer accounts.

H2: According to the trickle-down logic, the agenda networks of organizational accounts (H2a) and individual influencers (H2b) positively influence the agenda networks of general users accounts of sustainable fashion in the sustainable fashion agenda.

H3: According to the bottom-up logic, the agenda network of the general users account of sustainable fashion positively influences the agenda network of the organizational account (H3a) and the individual influencer account (H3b) of sustainable fashion.

T he results of the study show that the agenda setting of sustainable fashion mainly follows a trickle-down approach, but organizations do not have significant influence on the agendas of individual influencers and general users, while individual influencers have significant influence on general users. This suggests that the construction of sustainable fashion issues among decentralized social media platforms is influenced by the rules of the platform and the way the platform is organized. Individual influencers are familiar with the platform characteristics and establish the effect of group-based convergent agenda setting compared to organizational accounts.

Key Words
fashion communication, sustainable fashion, social media, network agenda-setting.

When Chinese Films Win European Film Awards: Cultural Discount, Communication Accommodation, and Glocalizaiton

Authors

Ms. Yueqi Li - Northwest University in China

Abstract

Introduction：

Cultural discount has been widely used to describe the phenomenon that when a cultural product was introduced to a different culture, it would have a diminished appeal to local audiences.. The Communication Accommodation Theory mainly explains why and how parties make active adjustments to embrace certain cultural norms, values, and habits in cross-cultural communication. Recent studies have shown that globalization has transitioned to global localization (i.e., Glocolization), that is, conforming to international standards and adapting to local culture are equally important in the communication process. From this perspective, cultural discount and communication accommodation can be seen as the result of the glocalization . The three major film festivals in Europe, also credited as the three major film festivals in the world, are the most authoritative, famous and influential film festivals among the international A-class film festivals, namely: Venice International Film Festival in Italy, Cannes International Film Festival in France, and the Berlin International Film Festival in Germany. Since the end of the 1980s, Chinese filmmakers have made attempts to bring Chinese films abroad, seeking international exchanges and global fames and, consequently, some of them have been acknowledged at the international film festivals. Over the past 30 years, dozens of Chinese films have won awards at the three major European film festivals. Based on a joint theoretical framework of cultural discount, communication adaptation theory, and glocalization, this paper discusses the themes, narrative characteristics and historical trends of the award-winning Chinese films in the world's three major film festivals through content analysis and discusses the communicative strategies and features of the award-winning film during their ”getting out.” The study found that, on the one hand, the award-winning films present a clear glocalization strategy in terms of their choices of themes, arrangements of narrations, and reductions of cultural discounts through active communication adaptation. On the other hand, this strategy caters to a Western elitism which is based on biased assumptions and may be associated with negative consequences . We further explore the research implications and future directions.

Key Words

cross-cultural communication, Chinese films, cultural discount, communication accommodation, glocalizaiton

A Triply Articulated Approach to Domesticating Netflix

Authors

Ms. Nicole Stewart - Simon Fraser University

Abstract

Netflix is the dominant television streaming platform, challenging linear television, viewing practices, and established concepts of the medium (Jenner, 2018). This study looks at how users tame Netflix using domestication theory – a social shaping theory (Mackenzie & Wajcman, 1999; Hynes & Richardson, 2009; Berker et al., 2006; Wajcman & Jones, 2012) that highlights how communication technologies integrate into everyday practices in the domestic sphere (Silverstone et al. 1992; Silverstone, 1994; Silverstone & Haddon, 1996; Berker et al., 2006). Triple articulation is integrated into the moral economy framework of appropriation, objectification, incorporation, conversion, and externalization (Silverstone, 1994; Brause & Blank, 2020). Triple articulation includes object (e.g., devices, Netflix), text (e.g., Squid Games, Paw Patrol), and context (e.g., media-rich environments; living room versus bedroom cultures) (Courtois et al., 2011; 2012).

The project follows how 50 households, totalling 151 participants ages zero to 73, tame 'television' (e.g., Netflix, Disney+, cable) using domestication theory (Silverstone et al., 1992; Silverstone, 1994). Using ethnography, the research methods include semi-structured interviews, home tours, a biography of each household's Netflix (profile and shows), and a one-day recorded media audit to assess spatial-temporal aspects of 'television' consumption.

The study illustrates the content streaming platforms appropriated by households, user practices around profile personalization, and seven account typologies such as standard; profile sharing; sharing an account, split payment accounts; external Netflix account; sharing across geographical boundaries; and no Netflix subscription. A visualization depicts 'favourite' Netflix shows across each age range. Additionally, spatial-temporal patterns illustrate that children eight and under prefer to spend time in communal spaces (e.g., living room) versus children over the age of nine, who are more prone to bedroom cultures. This trend is impacted by the media richness or lack of media in a bedroom or environment (see Courtois et al., 2011).

Key Words

Performing a New Type of Intimacy Experience in China: A Case Study of the Douban Group "I had a Crush Today"

Authors

Ms. Ding Liangqi - School of Journalism, Fudan University

Dr. Zhijuan Chen - Communication Unviersity of China

Ms. Ye Zi - School of Journalism, Fudan University

Abstract

Over the past decades, China has witnessed a transformation in people's perceptions of intimacy. Fewer and fewer Chinese young people choose marriage or late marriage, while the divorce rates in China have been increasing. And the younger generation has more diverse concepts and practices in terms of intimacy. In the early years, some of them started to experiment with open relationships. In recent years, some of them have begun to perform a new type of intimacy, which is "only having a crush, not falling in love" with the person they like. And they share their stories on social media, which they find very handy and enjoyable. The practice is becoming increasingly popular among young people in China, but the related research is scarce.

This study aims to fill a research gap by conducting a case study of the Douban group "I had a crush today" (hereafter referred to as the "crush" group). The "crush" group was established on September 29, 2020. The establisher is a young woman named Hang Yu. She is a senior user of Douban. Till January 15th, 2023, the "crush" group has reached more than 180 thousand members, who have posted countless crush stories and engaged in a great number of discussions about crush stories. According to Yu, the members of this group are mainly young people of generation Z, with a female-to-male ratio of 7:3. The group allows members to post speeches, browse and participate in discussions while maintaining the principles of anonymity, decentralization and freedom.

The study explores the reasons for the members to choose to "only have a crush but not to develop a romantic relationship" and share their crush stories in the "crush" group, as well as how their choices and sharing practices reinforce or resist mainstream discourses and practices regarding intimacy. The methodology includes 6-month online observations and in-depth interviews with 15 members. The period of online observation lasts from August 2022 to January 2023 and all the interviewers are female and have posted their crush stories and participated in discussions in the group.

Results show that there are three main reasons why the members share their crush stories in the "crush" group. First, the crush group not only provides members with a space for expression, but also provides them with emotional support. Second, they assumed having a crush is a wonderful life experience, and sharing this experience with others brings them happiness. In the meanwhile, the momentary beauty of a crush is immortalized through sharing. Third, they believe that sharing empowers themselves, and they can also gain satisfaction through positive feedback from others.

By choosing crushes rather than developing romantic relationships and stories telling and experience sharing, the members of the "crush" group create an online public sphere and establish alternative discourses to mainstream discourse about intimacy, thus new forms of intimacy take into being.

It should be noted that members of the "crush" group are more committed to heterosexual love arrangements and romantic relationships, which to a great extent results from the traditional patriarchal culture and deep-rooted misogyny. Post-feminist discourses emphasize women's feelings and empowerment, and neoliberal discourses attach importance to personal choice, risk management and entrepreneurship, which have provided them with weapons to rationalize their choices and sharing practices.

Key Words
intimacy experience; crush stories; Chinese young people

What does Stand-Up Comedy Tell Us about Communication Resilience Processes? A Discourse Analysis of Chinese Rock & Roast 5

Authors

Ms. En Huang - School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University

Prof. Kai Kuang - School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University

Abstract

Resilience has gained the interest of communication scholars in a wide range of areas. According to the communication theory of resilience (CTR; Buzzanell, 2010, 2019), people reintegrate from disruptive events and construct a new normal through five interrelated processes, one of which is constructing alternative logics. Studies demonstrated the importance of humor in this process (Kuang et al., 2022; Wilson et al., 2021) and found its significant role in resilience building (Lillie et al., 2021; Lillie et al., 2018; Olah et al., 2022). However, the impact of humor in the communication resilience processes has yet to be thoroughly examined in Chinese contexts. By using *Rock & Roast*, a popular stand-up comedy show and an essential form of popular culture in China, this study explored the relations between humor and "constructing alternative logics" through discourse analysis.

Method

Twenty-one texts were selected from the latest (2022) *Rock & Roast Season 5* as the subjects of this study using purposive sampling, and most of them (fourteen texts) were related to young people's work and daily life, thus were chosen to be the focus of this study.

Data were analyzed using Gee's (2004) guide for discourse analysis. Specifically, he provided seven construction tasks and six investigation tools (e.g., image worlds, contextual meaing). Based on the purpose of this study, the first and the sixth task were chosen to analyze data, focusing on building "significance" and "connections" respectively.

Results

Results indicated that the identity of most comedians is the same as the audience - they are employees who work for companies for the most of time. Besides, it is the fact that the comedians share a similar employee's image world with the audience that makes they are easier to relate to each other, thus making the comedians' speeches more impactful.

Guided by the sixth task, results indicated that the comedians used different contextual meanings, absurd social language, intertextuality, and different image worlds to construct alternative logics. Anthropomorphism, metaphor, and differentiated conceptual aggregation were also employed to create humor and provide unexpected logics.

In addition, this study found associations between constructing alternative logics and other communication resilience processes, including crafting normalcy, affirming identity anchors,

maintaining and using communication networks, and foregrounding productive action while backgrounding negative feelings.

Conclusion

Through the discourse analysis of stand-up comedy texts, the study enriched understanding about constructing alternative logics through popular culture artifacts such as stand-up comedy shows. It delved into the connections of constructing alternative logics and other processes. Findings of the study complement previous resilience studies, confirm the potential of stand-up comedy texts as anticipatory resilience, and provide possible ways for people to use humor to enact resilience. Importantly, this study also laid the groundwork for subsequent empirical studies that test the associations between exposure to stand-up comedy and resilience enhancement.

Key Words
communication resilience processes, humor, stand-up comedy, discourse analysis

"Activist Influencing": A Critical Investigation into Instagram Commodity Activism

Authors

Ms. Edith Hollander - University of Texas at Austin

Abstract

Over the last decade, social media influencing has grown into a multi-billion dollar industry that dominates cultural production and has thus profoundly affected culture, social existence, and practices of selfhood and identity (Hund, 2023). An increasing number of individuals have begun to exercise influencer content production and monetization techniques toward the pursuit of shared social goals. While influencing has been an object of scholarly enquiry, little attention has been paid to how it may act as an ideological paradigm that shapes how politics is experienced and practiced. This study explores the political discourse of such actors, whom I term "activist influencers," in relation to how the self-surveillance and commodification processes involved in influencing shape contemporary forms of civic engagement and public political discourse. To do so, I deploy a critical discourse analysis of ten queer and feminist influencer Instagram accounts.

This study engages the conceptual framework of commodity activism to examine the internal logic of activist influencers' discourse. Commodity activism describes a form of hyper-individualistic, consumer-based politics particular to the neoliberal era that grafts "philanthropy and social action onto merchandising practices, market incentives, and corporate profits" (Mukherjee & Banet-Weiser, 2012, p. 6). Commodity activism suggests that political dissent is inevitably transmuted into empty signification when adopted in commercial activity, yet also illuminates new civic communities and practices through which political agency is expressed. With this approach, I performed a critical discourse analysis of the textual and visual components of the posts (N=50) of ten American and British influencers whose accounts were dedicated to discussions of intersectional feminism, size-justice, anti-racism, sex positivity, disability activism and queer liberation. Accounts were selected purposively to represent a range of political topics and offline careers and were limited to those who self-identified as using their Instagram communications for explicitly political purposes.

My analysis finds that activist influencers promote collectivist thinking and critique power on a structural level, but simultaneously retained an encoded neoliberal focus on the individual by proposing politicized self-improvement as praxis, which was captured by their use of the term "unlearning." I argue for "unlearning" as a philosophy that describes the politics particular to influencer activism and which refers to conducting the personal "work" to rid oneself of oppressive socialization, assuming that internal therapeutic activity alone subverts power structures. This practice involves internal and external modes: marginalized people must discard limiting self-beliefs while oppressors must self educate in order to cease harmful interpersonal actions. Critically, these therapeutic political modalities are amenable to sale of self-improvement goods

that influencers pose as facilitators of internal dispositional transformation, such as: dilators for pelvic pain management, gender-queer inclusive clothing, and sex-positive coaching services. The findings of this study suggest that the effect of the influencer industry on political communication surpasses a simple commodification of political discourse, but actually introduces an alternative philosophy of social change that envisions a collective movement of introspection and which requires further investigation.

Key Words

Social Media Influencers, Commodity Activism, Neoliberalism, Critical Discourse Analysis

Coffee houses as a new urban landscape in China: Platform-mediated gentrification and the role of Xiaohongshu

Authors

Ms. Anqi HUANG - University of Macau

Abstract

This study engages the increasingly significant role of digital platforms in co-constituting the fabrics of cities and urban life and the sociocultural aspect of platform urbanism by investigating platform-mediated gentrification in China. The focus is on how coffee as a business and culture emerge and immerse in the everyday urban experience and the urban landscape through the mediation of social media platform, specifically Xiaohongshu.

The coffee industry in China has been celebrating the 'great leap forward (*da yue jin*)' (Xu et al., 2021) in the past few years. As the industry expands at an unprecedented speed regarding the amount of green coffee beans imported, the number of shops, the growing popularity, etc., coffee as a business and a part of urban culture has become increasingly unneglectable. The consumption of coffee in contemporary China did not start as a mainstream practice, but relates to the aspiration for a western, bourgeois, and elitist lifestyle, which has soon become far less marginal as it is dominating much more social space (Grossberg, 1997), both physical and virtual. Xiaohongshu, a social media platform in China with growing prominence and known as the combination of Instagram and Pinterest, plays a significant role in the evolution of coffee culture and the way coffee businesses gentrify the urban landscape.

Digital platforms are a new urban institution that accumulates and leverages data generated within the platform ecosystem and itself, thereby facilitating the reproduction of neoliberal urbanism as platform urbanism (van Doorn, 2022), which has been demonstrated as they become the new vector of gentrification and facilitate the aestheticization of urban renewal (Leszczynski & Kong, 2022). This study investigates the role played by the Xiaohongshu and the complexity of the platform's mediation in the production and communication of emerging urban culture. By researching the gentrification initiated by coffee businesses in the city of Guangzhou, this study examines the agency practiced by business owners in enhancing the value of rented properties and reaching customers by leveraging the affordances of the Xiaohongshu platform. It then discusses platform-afforded aestheticization as a key facilitator in these gentrifying practices, which is expressed through a *wanghong* (Internet influencer) replication logic (Zhang & Li, 2021) in the production of space and culture. *Wanghong*, perceived widely as an adjective that captures popular styles prevailing through the Internet, is not an explicit aesthetic but a process of aestheticization where experiences online and offline converge, influence, and determine each other, and individuals grow into certain habits of representing their place-based and taste-setting behaviors motivated by the platform. Finally, the type of gentrification this study investigates is fundamentally afforded and sustained by the digital platform, in which the agency of users and the

governance provided by the platform interact and demonstrate a mode of platform urbanism (Barns 2019; Leszczynski 2020). Putting gentrification under the platform urbanism scholarship, this study hopes to further examine how digital platforms intervene and influence urban life and its physical and sociocultural structures.

Key Words

Platform urbanism, urban regeneration, gentrification, aestheticization, coffee, social media, Xiaohongshu

Co-created fantasy and "BE aesthetics" as resistance against reality: A study of cohesion and resistance of Chinese CP fandom after "Bad Endings"

Authors

Mr. Zhengxin Liu - China Agricultural University

Abstract

CP (character pairing) fandom refers to the fan activity of "shipping," i.e., pairing two characters, and gaining pleasure from their virtual or real romantic relationship, which has become increasingly popular among Chinese youth community (Zhou et al., 2022; Gonzalez, 2016). As a kind of online fandom, CP fandom is inextricably linked to the rise of new media technologies (Burkhardt et al., 2021). Within CP fan community, a term called *BE* ("bad ending") is used to indicate the fading, breaking up, or other undesirable circumstances (e.g., "house collapse", *tafang* in Chinese, which means idols experiencing unpleasant endings such as being officially banned due to negative news) that happen between paired characters.

Theoretically, *BE* signals the dysfunction of CP fandom's realistic reference, undermining the group's internal stability. **Understanding CP fans after the occurrence of *BE* can shed more light on the relationship between fan fantasy and reality, which is a topic that has received less attention in the CP fandom study at the moment.** In this sense, this study aims to explore, after *BE*, (a) how CP fans reconcile the contradiction between the rupture of reality and the perpetuation of virtual fantasy, (b) how CP fans, on behalf of subculture, form a confrontation with the "official view" (represented by mainstream media) and traditional dominant narratives.

Guided by the questions, the study, after ethical consideration, conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with 30 CP fans who experienced *BE*. The key questions include: how did they adapt to the lack of realistic materials and the continuation of shipping willingness, how did they keep on shipping creation through media technology after *BE*, etc. The questions were designed to present the full picture of how CP fans, after *BE*, step from fantasy to reality and then resist mainstream culture.

As a result, it was found that *BE*, a shock from reality, wasn't accompanied by the demise of corresponding CP fans. Instead, they were still active in their virtual world through social media by mechanisms of **(1) user-generated content, (2) emotional realism, and (3) digital consumption**. In general, CP fans, after *BE*, create tensions between official media and maintain intra-group cohesion through their co-created fantasy, which echoes the symbolic convergence theory that explains "how groups of individuals reach a shared reality through communication" (Littlejohn et al., 2021, p. 280).

Further, the attitudes of Chinese CP fans after *BE* wasn't necessarily negative or neutral. Interestingly, some fans held a "positivity" that came from the mentality of believing that **BE was**

more representative of "true-to-life" emotions and life's normality, which they called "*BE* aesthetics." This response reflects the textual confrontation between CP fans and the "happy ending" pursued under the traditional Chinese narrative framework.

The value of this paper is that it not only understands how fans mediate between self-identity, agency, and digital survival in the face of realistic stimuli, but also presents how fan culture bridges the gap between the real and the virtual, and accomplishes subcultural resistance through media technology when the dominant narrative squeezes its space for discourses.

Key Words
CP fans, shipping, bad ending, *BE* aesthetics, symbolic convergence

Amul Girl's India: Constructing a National Memory in Advertisements

Authors

Ms. Namita Gupta - Doctoral Student, Institute of Communications Research, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Abstract

This study examines the role of advertisements as popular and mundane sites of construction and consolidation of everyday nationalism in public memory. In this project, I study India's longest-running print advertisement campaign to examine the representation of the country's post-colonial modernity in its topical advertisements.

Since 1966, Amul, a dairy cooperative established in the wake of Indian independence, has been using a series of topical advertisements centered on a female girl child to address contemporary issues of national and international significance. The advertisement campaign furthers the brand's image as a grassroots rural movement rooted in the anticolonial and anti-elitist moment through its aim of female empowerment. Fixed into the unobtrusive and banal background of public life in the country through their presence on billboards, social media feeds as well as corners of national newspapers, these advertisements comment on a range of issues in politics, entertainment, business and economics. As popular texts that escape scrutiny and censure even during controversial periods, they reconfigure notions of nationalism, gender and belonging to create a new notion of 'Indian' encapsulated in its female brand mascot.

In this essay, I examine the strategic employment of a female child to produce critical social commentary while using the duality of femininity and childhood to escape censorship and criticism in its dealings with controversial issues. Through a close reading of language and visuals in various advertisements from the Amul archive, I analyse the company's representation of gender and modernity through this mascot, paying particular attention to erasures and complexities of this gendered 'brand' of a national identity, at once rooted in production of a social memory, collective identity and capitalist interests of brand-formation.

Commenting on issues from contemporary news cycle, the advertisements position the brand as the voice and the 'taste' of the populous. The essay asserts the significance of these banal sites of archiving and memory production to the project of nation-building and practicing citizenship. However, as I delineate in the paper, the constructed memory of the everyday in these advertisements is highly selective and dominated by the issues that concern the middle-class at any moment. While advocating for empowerment and agency of rural women, the ideal performance of citizenship that the Amul girl ultimately depicts is that of an urban, educated Indian who can access the different modalities and knowledge structures that the advertisements select.

Examining advertising as popular media objects, the study extends the literature on the processes of banal commemoration and production of national identity in advertising. The study also extends

the discussion on gender in India through its examination of modern Indian femininity that is aimed to be at once of the rural Indian producers and urban consumers.

Key Words

Social memory, advertisements, gender, nationalism, print media, India.

The flattery for recognition: How Chinese stand-up comedians reshape the politics of cultural recognition

Authors

Dr. Daniel Cao - School of Journalism & Communications, Shanghai International Studies University

Abstract

[Research Purpose]

Contrary to Axel Honneth's "struggle for recognition", this study considers how Chinese stand-up comedians "flatter" China's ideology and social structures for cultural recognition.

[Theory and Methodology]

According to the politics of recognition theory, the course of history is a developmental process of conflict and an ever-expanding relationship of recognition. Yet, some powerful national systems where political and economic fields are monopolized tend to stifle struggle through negotiation. Consequently, social culture adapts to the status quo and serves the mainstream ideology. Inspired by the theory, this research content-analyzes over 1,800 minutes of stand-up comedy shows produced by Xiaoguo Culture (China's most profitable stand-up comedy company) to investigate that

[Research Questions]

(1) What are the flattering strategies comedians use for cultural recognition?

(2) What are the editorial mechanisms of the strategies?

(3) What drives the desire to assimilate into prevailing ideologies and social structures?

[Results]

The results show that

(1) self-mockery and referential, "punching down" rather than "punching up"; undisputed topics of satire and multi-social class networking are the key strategies of gaining cultural recognition;

(2) The mechanism is operated by the program team and the chairman who invite practitioners from different fields to perform as stand-up comedians, and the editorial members who dock and write manuscripts for practitioners. Behind the operating structure, there is an operating logic of balancing self-expression and professional-expression to be culturally recognized by mainstream ideology and social structures;

(3) To ensure the sustainable profitability of the stand-up comedy industry; to gain recognition from mainstream culture rather than rejection; to influence social norms and enhance the inclusiveness of Chinese popular culture are the driving forces to win cultural recognition.

[Discussion and Contribution]

(1) Based on the empirical material, it is reasonable to doubt whether Axel Honneth's "struggle for recognition" still has explanatory power for popular culture in non-capitalist countries like China. Inherited from Hegel and Mead's "struggle" idea that only through fighting and struggling could one be recognized by society, Honneth believes that confrontation is the primary way to gain cultural recognition and reduce inequality.

(2) However, what he ignored is that outside the capitalist social structure, there are socialist countries in which cultural struggle or confrontation is integrated into the mainstream social structures as the country owns overwhelming dominance including politics, economics, ideology, and, of course, (popular) culture. Due to censorship-based rewards and punishments, there is little room for cultural practitioners to struggle but instead pledge obedience.

(3) Located on an alternative lens for cultural recognition, this study argues that beyond the hostile gap between structurally-determined 'subcultural' and culturally-oriented 'post-subcultural' theories, there exists a negotiation between popular culture and social structures that represents a new paradigm for popular culture studies.

Key Words

Understanding Customers' Blind Box Purchase Behavior: The Roles of Utilitarian and Hedonic Value

Authors

Ms. Rui Song - City University of Hong Kong

Abstract

As a new consumption phenomenon in recent years, buying blind boxes is popular among many young people in China. Blind box companies, such as POP MART, promote consumption by combining online and offline marketing. This research will study factors driving consumers' blind box purchase behavior by examining their hedonic value, utilitarian value, and associated intellectual property (IP). A questionnaire survey will be used to collect data from 200 blind box consumers and the results will be analyzed using multiple regression. The results will show whether the utilitarian value and hedonic value in the form of adventure, social, gratification, idea, and role are positively correlated with blind box consumption. The results will also indicate the impact of IP co-branding on consumers' purchase of blind boxes.

Hedonic value is defined as the value a customer receives based on the subjective experience of fun and playfulness (Babin et al., 1994). Arnold and Reynolds (2003) identified six dimensions of hedonic shopping motivation: Adventure, Social, Gratification, Idea, Role, and Value. These dimensions that are connected with experiential and gratification aspects of shopping and can help explain a consumer's psychological motivations in shopping. Since blind boxes are rarely discounted or promoted, the value dimension is not within the scope of discussion in this research, other dimensions and its corresponding hypothesis will be explained in detail below.

According to McGuire (1974), "adventure shopping" describes how an individual seeks novelty and needs stimulation to escape from boredom. It refers to shopping for adventure, and the feeling of being in another world (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003). Buying blind boxes is a kind of surprise consumption, which can be regarded as a spiritual consumption to pursue the quality of life (Sun & Song, 2021). Hence, the desire for adventures, which includes surprise consumption, drives blind box purchase behavior. Therefore, I propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Hedonic value is positively related to blind box purchase behavior.

H1a: The desire for adventures is positively correlated with blind box purchase behavior.

"Social shopping" refers to the enjoyment of shopping with friends and family and bonding with others while shopping (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003). A blind box is essentially a social product, as it is a new generation of social currency (Ji, 2020).

H1b: The desire for social bonding is positively correlated with blind box purchase behavior.

"Gratification shopping" involves shopping for stress relief or shopping to alleviate a negative mood. Hence, gratification shopping can create a positive feeling, which can make consumers feel better or give themselves a special treat (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003). The pursuit of blind boxes reflects young people's mentality of partial escape from real life and their demand for self-utopia, including their expectation of returning to childlike innocence and imagination of emotional companionship (Zeng, 2021).

H1c: The desire for psychological gratification is positively correlated with blind box purchase behavior.

In Arnold and Reynolds's (2003) study, the purpose of shopping is to keep up with the trends and new fashions and to catch up with new products and innovations, which are interpreted as "idea shopping" (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003).

H1d: The desire to follow the latest trend is positively correlated with blind box purchase behavior.

"Role shopping" is considered to be one of the hedonic value dimensions, which revealed the satisfaction of shopping for others (Ribeiro & Carvalho, 2010). Blind boxes are often chosen as an ideal gift. Blind boxes are suitable for young groups to exchange presents, because of their small size, moderate price, and unique shape (Zeng, 2021).

H1e: The desire to use blind boxes as gifts is positively correlated with blind box purchase behavior.

Utilitarian value is defined as the value that a customer receives based on task-related and rational consumption behavior (Babin et al. 1994). Beyond the six hedonic value dimensions studied by Arnold and Reynolds, Kim (2004) analyzed the dimensions of utilitarian value based on "Achievement" and "Efficiency" as utilitarian shopping motivations.Blind boxes are hot topics and have high transaction premiums on social platforms and second-hand trading platforms (Ji, 2020). In addition to making profits with blind boxes, many people also choose to gain some benefits on social media.Based on the above, many consumers will buy blind boxes based on rational needs. Therefore, the above hypothesis is generated:

H2: Utilitarian value is positively related to blind box purchase behavior.

Key Words

Blind Boxes, Purchase Behavior, Hedonic Value, Utilitarian Value, IP

Affecting Virtual Singers: Emotional Connection and Empathy of Chinese Youth

Authors

Ms. Xin Lin - School of Journalism and Communication, Renmin University of China

Abstract

The development of digital media technology has gradually blurred the boundaries between tech-objects and living-objects, and the Chinese Virtual singer (Vsinger) Luo Tianyi is one of the texts that represent the border between them. For her fans, the digital youth, Luo Tianyi is not only a vocal instrument, but also an individual with emotional self and have an active emotional connection with her. Based on in-depth interviews with 45 digital youth (28 fans and 17 producers) and online ethnographic observations, this study focuses on the material practices and affective experiences of digital youth in the process of writing the pop culture text of Luo Tianyi, and explores how affective connection are born out of objects.

The study found that the group of digital youth of this paper have experienced emotional trauma, which is the emotional basis for the creation of an affective experience. The rupture of real interpersonal relationships has led them to try to regain communication with objects, using the Vsinger as an extension of their relationship and a mediator of socialization, and the two are embedded in each other's life history, so that the digital youth's writing essentially realizes the transformation from object to self, not only to sustain the artificial life of Luo Tianyi, but also to continue their own lives. Secondly, based on the practice of embodiment of the disc as an inscribed medium, the digital youth construct an ontological imagination of Luo Tianyi in time, space and body; and through the transformation of relationships and the performance of objects, Luo Tianyi completes the transformation from "commodity object - cultural product - intimate character" and the transition from the virtual world to the real world. Finally, in the circulation channel of the song, Luo Tianyi plays the role as a messenger carrying meaning and forming a triadic relationship with producers and fans. The digital youth both act as transmitters and construct Luo Tianyi as an imaginary listener, but this dialogue of "self-talk" is one-way and incomplete, and the imagination of the other from the cultural community actually bridges the gap between the circulation of meaning and "resonance".

Based on the above discussion, this paper attempts to connect the existing theories of materiality and affect theory. Affective experience arises from material substrates and the writing of objects, and is dissipated by the rupture of materiality; in the process of affect, the Virtual singer, a mediated technological object, has the potential to produce subjectivity and even to be perceived as an organism.

Key Words

Virtual singer, Luo Tianyi, digital youth, materiality, affect theory

Borders and Boundaries in culinary identities: Discursive content of Bengali Foodka Series YouTube channel

Authors

Ms. Naznin Sultana - Doctoral candidate, Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad, India

Abstract

This paper explores the topographical culinary boundaries in the discursive content of Bengali YouTube food channel *Foodka Series* in the context of growing right wing politics in India. The channel, which has been started by popular radio jockey Mir Afsar Ali, food blogger Indrajit Lahiri and entrepreneur Sunando Banerjee in 2017, experiments acoustic and visual narratives of food with travel depicting the gastronomic journey of two protagonists *Foodka* (foodie uncle) and *Bhaipo* (nephew). Atfirst, this paper attempts to understand the concepts of "Border" and "Boundary" through critically engaging with "self" and "other" in the context of identity line. Then the findings of "Kolkata Ramzan Special", "Iftar with Foodka and Adnan at Zakaria street", "Kolkata Durga Pujo special Buffet" and "Exploring Meghalaya" videos show how Bengali intersectional culinary identities (depending on gender, class, caste, and religion) have been asserted and assigned around different geographical spaces. Zakaria street in Kolkata is shown during *Iftar* (the meal eaten after the sunset) in Ramzan month with the visuals of Nakhoda mosque, the sound of *Azaan* (the call of prayer) and middle-eastern music to assert the Bengali "Muslim" identity. On the other hand, Durga Pujo special episodes use musical instruments *Khol* and *Kortal*, which are popularly played during the *Kirtan* (major practice in Hinduism) and differentiate "vegetarian" and "non-vegetarian" food by associating with *Epaar Bangla* (this side of Bengal or West Bengal) and *Opaar Bangla* (the other side of Bengal or Bangladesh) respectively to emphasize the heterogenous Bengali "Hindu" identity. Likewise, they use different tactics to illustrate "pork" cuisines as North eastern food. Intersectionality of identities plays an important role in culinary culture and inversely, culinary culture produces meanings and identities. These identity creation strategies are examined through Derrida's (1982) concept "*diffe´rance*", which helps to conceptualize the process of forming identities through the structures of signification, where the meaning is deferred through the play of signs, concepts and symbols in the network of signification.

This paper further exemplifies the strategies of YouTubers to negotiate and resist the predominant nationalistic culinary borders to proclaim varied Bengali gastronomic intersectional identities in their videos as "everyday form of resistance" (Ong, 1991) while facing aggressive online hate. This affirms the argument of Banerjee (2014) that borders as significant markers of nation formation that creates identities and communities demarcating the boundaries of cultural practices and signifying belongingness. In one instance, the content creators have received death threats while portraying "beef" eating in the "Ramzan special" episode, as beef is not part of the "predominantly Hindu *Bhadralok* meal code" (Das, 2015). To investigate the representational signs and symbols used in the videos and the online responses received from the audiences, this paper

uses multimodal transcription and text analysis framework developed by Baldry & Thibault (2006). Along with that, in-depth interviews with the YouTubers help to explore their perspectives on content creation strategies.

Key Words

Listening alone, listening together and always listening: Branded competition for user experiences of international and local music streaming services

Authors

Prof. Miao-Ju Jian - National Chung Cheng University

Abstract

The rise of music streaming services is not only a platformization of cultural production (Nieborg & Poell, 2018), but also creates a new type of commodity and competition for digital music. Music has become the data (Negus, 2019), music on streaming platforms is not the product with price (Fleischer, 2017). As several literatures argues, the real commodity sold on platforms is music streaming services, which is also the branded experience (Morris & Powers, 2015; Hracs & Webster, 2021). In other words, the technological transformation of the music streaming platform has not only changed the music industry, but also brought new consolidation and competition to the global and local music consumption culture. With the advantages of capital and technological innovations, the global and international music streaming service brands, such as Spotify and Apple Music, have brought strong competitive pressure and challenges to local service providers. How do international services attract regional and local users? And how local and regional music streaming services compete with international brands?

Past research on music streaming has emphasized the emergence of digital platforms and powerful algorithm recommendations. However, little attention has been paid to the competition between international and local platforms, and there are even fewer comparative studies on users' music streaming brand experience. This study combines platform characteristics and industry data analysis, as well as qualitative audience research. The purpose of the study is to explore the different market competition strategies of Spotify, Apple music, Youtube music and KKBOX, the four major music streaming platforms in Taiwan, as well as the different local user experiences and evaluations. The study selected Taiwanese subscribers who mixed the four major brands, and conducted 10 focus group interviews with a total of 40 users.

This study found that compared with the customized and personalized playlists emphasized in previous literature, that is, the experience of "listening to yourself", Taiwanese users are mainly younger generations, and they also care more about the experience of platforms with social functions. They like to share with friends, want to know what others are listening to, and want to "listen with" other people. This study also found that international and local music streaming platforms do have different branded competition models. International brands have more powerful recommendation technology, market share, unique content advantages, and brand synergy advantages. Although the local brand (KKBOX) was established as early as 2005, it is still full of crises. It needs to continuously strengthen its advantages in popular music content in the region, develop other products and services, and emphasize social media that interacts with users

to improve offline services. Finally, regardless of international or local brands, there have been new changes in their competitive strategies in recent years. From competing for new subscribers in the past to how to retain users, and adding podcast products, expanding from a music streaming platform to a sound platform, which allowing users to "keep listening, always listening".

Key Words

music streaming platforms, music streaming services, branded experience, competition, user

The leader, the warrior and the geek: non-normative gender portrayals in the teen dystopia The 100

Authors

Dr. Maddalena Fedele - University of Barcelona

Dr. Maria-Jose Masanet - Faculty of Information and Audiovisual Media. Universitat de Barcelona.

Dr. Margarida Carnicé Mur - University of Lleida

Abstract

Teen series (Davis and Dickinson, 2004; Ross and Stein, 2008) are serialized fictional programs focused on the lives of teen characters, and targeted at a young audience, for whom they develop social and socializing functions (Fedele, 2011) and offer aspirational models (Masanet and Fedele, 2019). Previous studies have highlighted the perpetuation of a stereotyped gender representation in these series, through heteropatriarchal and heteronormative models (Lindsey, 2015; Van Damme, 2010).

On the other hand, recent studies point to the proliferation and great popularity of dystopia for adolescent and youth targets (Urraco Solanilla, 2021; Valiati et al., 2021; López Vargas, 2014), especially as for popular sagas, such as The Hunger Games (Lawrence, 2012-2015), that pose, along with metaphors of great contemporary challenges such as the climate emergency or inequality, also a new paradigm of female heroism (Gilsa, 2012).

The main aim of this study, which is a part of the R&D& Innovation project 'Transgelit', is to analyze the portrayal of the female protagonists of the popular dystopian teen series 'The 100' (Rothenberg, 2014-2020), which has aroused the interest of the academy, with studies that have looked at the gender perspective (Schubart, 2018) and the LGBTIQ+ perspective (Bridge, 2018; Guerrero et al., 2017).

The methodological design consists of a close reading (Brummet, 2019; Castelló, 2008), a method widely applied by Cultural Studies and, specifically, in the analysis of series (eg: Araüna, Tortajada and Willem, 2018; Fedele and Masanet, 2021; Masanet, Ventura and Ballesté, 2022). The analysis focused on the characters of Clarke, Octavia and Raven, specifically on their features, actions, plots and narrative structures.

The results point to the portrayal of active characters, heroines who are built as leaders and guides, who break with the traditional stereotypes of teen series, being, respectively, a leader, a warrior and a 'geek', notwithstanding the perpetuation of certain normative canons of beauty. The series is built on the narrative pattern of the founding of a new homeland, led in this case mostly by women, but in a post-apocalyptic and dystopian context that makes it impossible to build a better world. Even so, the three protagonists fit the model of the 'final girl', since they manage to survive the end of the world on multiple occasions, and end up returning to a regenerated Earth with their new family, their group of friends. Therefore, the narrative structure that best explains their

narrative arcs is the heroine's journey (Murdock, 2020 [1990]; Frankel, 2014), since they first integrate into a new life, with a possible romantic love that they lose, establish a maternal-filial bond with their mentors, fall into the abyss by losing love and/or losing themselves becoming monsters, to finally redeem themselves and return to humanity thanks to self-acceptance or love for oneself and the familial love of a non-normative and non-traditional family.

In conclusion, the possibilities of the dystopian story are highlighted as a space to escape heteronormativity and build complex female characters and more egalitarian representations.

Key Words
teen series, dystopia, the 100, gender perspective, close reading

#CryTok: Exploring the portrayal of crying on TikTok and the redefinition of emotional labour in social media

Authors

Ms. Maria Castellvi - Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Dr. Mercè Oliva Rota - Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Abstract

The main aim of this paper is to better understand the #CryTok phenomenon, i.e., TikTok videos where users, mostly girls, appear crying in front of the camera. In this paper, we argue that these contents disrupt the imperative of positivity and redefine the emotional labour practices that have prevailed in social media for the past decade.

Several scholars have pointed out that social media platforms such as Instagram have traditionally been defined by a carefully curated aesthetic that privileged happiness and positive emotions (Marwick, 2013). Influencers and social media content creators are expected to carry out a particular form of "emotional labour" (Letho, 2022) that involves managing and displaying positive emotions as part of their job. In particular, they must express happiness and show passion for "doing what they love" (Duffy & Wissinger, 2017), as well as portray a perfect life in which they seemingly "have it all" (Duffy & Hund, 2015).

Nevertheless, in the last few years, a growing number of social media content creators have challenged this imperative by showing themselves crying, sad or grieving (Berryman & Kavka, 2018), a shift that the outbreak of the pandemic and a general climate of distress has exacerbated. For example, the video posted by influencer Emma Chamberlain titled "Recovering from a meltdown LOL" or the trend of sharing "crying selfies" adopted by celebrities like Bella Hadid. These efforts to dismantle the so-called social media forced positivity or fake happiness coincide with the rise of TikTok as a new platform characterised by "sociotechnical features" (Eriksson, 2021) that boost spontaneity, re-elaboration, the notion of work-in-progress and imitation (Boffone, 2022; Zeng & Abidin, 2021). In TikTok, crying plays a progressively prominent role: celebrity TikTokers and regular users frequently appear in tears, openly speaking about their mental health; playful viral trends and challenges proliferate where users show themselves crying to a song or are asked to "fake crying"; we can use several filters that give the appearance of weeping or follow tutorials of "crying makeup" that help us achieve a sorrowful post-cry appearance.

Thus, this paper aims to answer the following questions: a) How is crying portrayed on TikTok? b) What role does gender play in this portrayal? c) In which ways does this representation interact with TikTok's "sociotechnical features"? To fulfil these aims, we have analysed a sample of 100 videos published between February 2020 and December 2022, using the hashtags #CryTok (13.5M views), #SadTikTok (2.9B views) and #Crying (13.6B views). The dataset has been selected using a TikTok scraper tool and according to engagement criteria (i.e., views, likes, shares, and comments) and analysed using thematic analysis.

Our study shows that TikTok is a fruitful terrain for the expression of vulnerability and unpleasant emotions that didn't fit in other social media platforms, but also for the portrayal of crying as a performative act, becoming an aesthetic in itself that furthers the process of exploitation and commodification of emotions by social media platforms under the logic of the attention economy.

Key Words
social media, emotional labour, TikTok, negative affect, cry, gender

Warm experts in the era of short videos: Chinese ageing content creators perform labour on Douyin

Authors

Mr. Yongjian Li - Erasmus University Rotterdam

Abstract

Ageing in popular culture used to be depicted as a time of decline, characterized by physical decline, loss of independence, and a decrease in social status. This representation can perpetuate negative stereotypes and contribute to ageism. More recent depictions in popular culture are challenging these stereotypes by portraying ageing as a time of growth, wisdom, and continued personal development, in parallel to the emergence and development of digital technologies and various mediums. This shift in representation can help to break down harmful ageist attitudes and encourage society to view ageing as a positive aspect of the human experience and encourage and attract more older people to start adopting digital technologies.

As of December 2021, the scale of elderly internet users aged 60 and above in China reached 119 million, among which 84.8% show their keen preference for video (including short videos) formats (CNNIC, 2022). Douyin, the Chinese equivalent of TikTok, a short video platform with multiple affordances such as vlogs and live streaming, has become a rapidly growing and increasingly prevalent social media application (Zeng & Abidin, 2021). Douyin attracts numerous older users and enables many of them to create content and share their daily lives to share their experiences, connect with others, or pursue a creative outlet in their retirement years, among which plenty become influencers gained much attention and internet traffic (Yu and Zhao, 2022).

Short video platforms, such as TikTok, have had a significant impact on how ageing is represented in popular narratives. On these platforms, older individuals can showcase their creativity, humour, and talents, challenging traditional representations of ageing as a decline. The viral nature of short videos also means that these positive representations of ageing can reach a large audience and help to shift societal attitudes towards ageing. User-generated content (UGC) created by older influencers and their digital behaviours are inextricably linked since social media platforms aim to give older users more autonomy over their voice, exposure, and online personas (Craig et al., 2021). In contrast, most elderly internet users are still facing diverse challenges along the whole process of browsing content and even creating their own (Li and Alencar, 2022).

In such circumstances, newly emerging elderly influencers start to serve as online 'warm experts' (Bakardjieva, 2005 & Taipale, 2019) and adopt vlogging to provide support and coaching to their elderly peers and followers and to show them how to adapt to the current digital era and develop their we/self-media. Older influencers can be seen as "warm experts" in that they bring a unique perspective and a wealth of knowledge and embodied experience to their peers and followers. As influencers, they can offer insights and advice on a range of topics, from health and wellness to

family and personal life issues and events and digital technology skills and tricks. Their wisdom and life experience make them relatable and trustworthy to their audience.

To update Bakardjieva's (2005) and Taipale's (2019) framework, I use 'warm expert 3.0' to refer to the older influencers as platform workers who provide coach and training as affective labour for other new elderly fresh users on Douyin. By examining the teaching and sharing vlogs of Chinese ageing influencers on Douyin, this paper attempts to scrutinize how older vloggers negotiate the intersections of affective work, warm expert identity, and platform labour in the form of vlogs. These vlogs demonstrate how mobile media as online digital tools enable the learning and sharing of platform workers' digital exploration and exploitation.

Drawing on thematic analysis, I purposefully sampled 30 videos from five older influencers with their posts hashtagged with #老年人自媒体扫盲班 (We-media literacy class for the elderly) as a case study to examine their warm expert practices on the platform Douyin. Following the intriguing research question: What features and activities characterize elderly vloggers as warm experts? I come to two preliminary findings: (1) Chinese older creators share collective emotions, living experiences, and valuable suggestions of digital integration with the peer audience and respond to the negative attitudes towards ageing and ageism (2) Chinese older influencers as warm experts use Douyin to transform their affective labour to foster a culture of support and care, which encourages the elderly in adopting and adapting to smartphones and mobile media. Specifically, this paper examines the mediating role of mobile social media in learning-teaching practices within the online community and proposes an updated concept of platformed warm expert 3.0 to summarize elderly (self)representations and ageing narratives in popular culture in the digital era.

Key Words
Warm experts; Douyin; Vlog; Digital labour; Active ageing

Commodification of an urban space through branded entertainment: The case of Memories of the Alhambra

Authors

Ms. Emma González del Tánago Romero - Erasmus university Rotterdam

Dr. Sergül Nguyen - Erasmus university Rotterdam

Dr. Tonny Krijnen - Erasmus University Rotterdam

Abstract

After the opening credits in Korean end, we see the maker of an AR game, Jung Se-Joo, speaking on a public phone in an unrecognizable street, who suddenly sees something which frightens him, and without a second thought, flees. In the next scene we realize we are actually in Granada, Spain, following a Korean plot and cast and the viewer wonders: why is a K-drama set in a European country? What kind of image or brand is communicated about Granada, which is so far away from South Korea in general? In this study, the question of how K-dramas act as a marketing tool for city branding of (European) cities is explored in the series Memories of the Alhambra as a case in point.

Why is this explored? Mainly because symbolically, a TV series can act as a powerful agent for destination image, as they are filmed in a specific location that may be recognizable to an (international) audience and can therefore contribute to the creation of a city brand and the selling of place (Oh, 2018). K-dramas have been an important driver in entertainment and tourism industries as cultural exports and marketing campaigns embedded in popular culture. Next to K-pop, they have taken an important share in the video-on-demand platforms attracting viewers worldwide. However, despite the growing academic interest in city branding of South Korean cities in K-dramas (e.g., Oh, 2018, Chae & Sun, 2013), little research has explored how exactly K-dramas are involved in creating destination images for other cities abroad, how they use various product placement (PPL) strategies and commodify the urban space.

This article examines how the Korean drama Memories of the Alhambra (2018) promotes the city of Granada in Spain through the incorporation of Granada's landscapes, economy and cultural aspects as a part of the serie's narrative plotline. A qualitative audio-visual content analysis was performed to reveal the patterns used to construct a city brand image for Granada. The results show that Granada was portrayed as exciting, mystical, with a rich cultural and historical background and attractive to foreigners. This image of the urban space is a construct, however, and hence may not represent reality (Oh, 2018). By analyzing a Korean drama's capacity to act as a marketing communication tool for a city outside of its own country, it is possible to critically approach how 'distant' urban spaces are commodified through constructed images. The Korean drama Memories of the Alhambra offers a rich case where the narrative often taps into a 'foreign' city's cultural and symbolic values to create an "an aesthetic hallucination of reality" (Baudrillard 1983, p. 248). As the consumption patterns moved from goods to experiences (Featherstone, 2018), images became an important tool for entertainment and tourism industries to commodify

urban spaces (Harvey, 1990). Through this lens, the current study critically approaches image, reality and commodification as manifested in a K-drama TV series.

Key Words

Branded Entertainment, City Branding, Commodification, Product Placement, TV series.

"I hate 208w": An analysis of anti-celebrity discourse among the popular culture audiences in China

Authors

Ms. Xi Wang - School of Journalism and Communication, Renmin University of China

Abstract

"208w" is the abbreviation for 2.08 million yuan (about $300,000) in Chinese. "208w" is widely used on Chinese social media to refer to high-earning popular celebrities since Chinese actress Zheng Shuang, who allegedly evaded taxes, was exposed that she was paid approximately 2.08 million yuan per day during filming. Unlike anti-fans who target specific celebrities or media productions, some social media users use "208w" to generally express their hate speech or critique of popular celebrities.

Combining discourse analysis and in-depth interviews, this study tries to answer the following questions: What specifically are social media users expressing when they engage in anti-celebrity discursive resistance? Is there a conflict between anti-celebrity discursive resistance behavior and their identity and consumption behavior as popular culture audiences? This study crawled over 30,000 Weibo posts with "208w" as the keyword and analyzed the texts through LDA model and sentiment analysis. To deepen understanding of the relationship between anti-celebrity discourse and popular culture consumption, this study also conducted one-on-one interviews with 8 Weibo users who used "208w" to refer to popular celebrities and post hate speech or critique.

The paper summarized Weibo users' anti-celebrity discourse into five topic categories: jealousy and hatred of celebrities' high income, critiquing and resistance of celebrities' illegal and inappropriate behaviors, critiquing and mockery of privileges enjoyed by celebrities, body shaming and appearance judgment of celebrities, and mockery and resistance of celebrity fans. Most Weibo users who engage in anti-celebrity discursive resistance are popular culture audiences, including many who were once ardent fans of certain popular celebrities. While engaging in celebrity critiquing, they negotiate their identity as popular culture consumers by watching pirated videos and refusing to buy merchandise endorsed by specific celebrities. The anti-celebrity discourse on social media sometimes also conspires with Chinese official media to cause substantial negative effects on specific celebrities.

The paper argues that the anti-celebrity discursive resistance of popular culture audiences is a microcosm of the discursive resistance to privilege and elites in Chinese cyber-populism. The paper also discussed Chinese consumers' collective imagination toward popular celebrities.

Key Words

anti-celebrity, popular culture audience, discursive analysis, social media, cyber-populism

Who Decides the Taste? The Group Distinction and Reorganisation of Group Norms of Chinese Musical Theatre Fans

Authors

Ms. Xinran Ke - Sun Yat-sen University

Prof. Yijin Zhou - Sun Yat-sen University

Abstract

Theatre fans form vital audience communities that sustain the vitality of theatrical events. The Internet has altered how theatre is created, produced, marketed and consumed, bringing more and more people with different economic and cultural backgrounds into the theatre field and making them theatre fans. Economic capital is found in fan studies as a quick way to acquire social status among subcultural groups. However, when highbrow culture represented by the theatre is also impacted by fan group norms, it does not comply with this rule, leading to a situation where cultural norms and economic norms confront each other. This situation is particularly noticeable in China, where theatre exists as an imported product and the musical theatre industry is still in its infancy.

This study intends to explore how musical theatre fans group, which is doubly attacked by the economic norms of fandom and the cultural norms of art, form the group distinction and reorganise group norms.

Based on Bourdieu's theoretical perspective of 'taste and distinction', this study conducted six-month field research of Chinese musical theatre fan groups, observing their practices both in virtual communities and reality and conducting in-depth interviews with the individuals concerned.

The study found that: （1）Contrary to the cultural univore theory of Bourdieu, there are different statuses in the current cultural consumption of musicals. (2) The way musical theatre fans consume musicals as a cultural form varies based on different combinations of their cultural and economic capital: fans who hold both high cultural and high economic capital are traditional musical theatre audiences and attach importance to the content of plays and theatre experience; Fans with high cultural capital and low economic capital are more rational in their consumption decisions, weighing ticket prices against the theatre experience; fans with high economic capital and low cultural capital tend to consume impulsively, and their core demand is to meet their favorite actors; while fans with both low cultural capital and low economic capital usually follow others behaviours. They are vulnerable to the opinions of fan communities. (3) Fans of different statuses compete for cultural dominance around the standard of taste in musicals: fans with higher cultural capital regard the appreciation of culturally rich plays as high taste, while fans with more economic capital regard the amount of consumption as a standard of taste. They attack and taunt one another in virtual communities, and some fans even get into physical confrontations in front of the theatre. (4) In the competition between economic and cultural norms, economic norms have a

certain impact on cultural norms, but cultural norms still play a greater role: fans with higher economic capital and lower cultural capital have gained a certain voice within the group through high consumption, but at the same time they also have an identity crisis. They are reluctant to acknowledge their identity as fans of actors, but rather they present themselves as 'audiences', which shows their obedience to cultural norms.

This study explores the distinction of Chinese musical theatre fans and the reorganisation of group norms under the impact of the economic norms of the fandom. It gives a Chinese context for understanding 'taste and distinction' in the twenty-first century and also provides a Chinese perspective for theatre fan studies.

Key Words
musical theatre fans; taste and distinction; cultural capital; economic capital

At the Intersection of Illusory Relationship, Digital Labor, and Shadows of Misogyny: a Study of Chinese Female Audience of English-speaking VTubers

Authors

Ms. Wanqing Liu - School of International Journalism and Communication, Beijing Foreign Studies University

Ms. Lin MA - School of International Journalism and Communication, Beijing Foreign Studies University

Abstract

With the advancement of technology, virtual YouTubers (VTubers) have become increasingly popular on online video-sharing platforms such as YouTube, Twitch, and Bilibili. Controlled or performed by humans using their actual voice, their images are, unlike regular YouTubers, presented in 2D or 3D avatars utilizing motion-capturing devices. Along with live streaming software, other AR/VR-related technologies, etc., they make profits by live streaming for commercial ends.

So far, there are very few studies on the VTuber industry in academia, most of which adopt qualitative approaches, i.e., interviews and digital ethnography. Nevertheless, with Japanese ACG culture widely recognized as the cradle of this industry, a vast majority of VTubers are female while the audience is male, resulting in the persistent existence of the male gaze, gender inequality, and patriarchal hierarchy in this industry. Yet, the expansion of feminism in recent years encourages females to enter and engage as an active audience and consumer in the VTuber industry, indicating a lack of female perspective in previous studies.

Therefore, this paper, adopting digital ethnography and in-depth interview, select English VTubers under NIJISANJI EN, a well-known Japanese VTuber company, and their Chinese female audience as the research subject. Digital ethnography would be utilized, aiming at exploring not only the interaction within the virtual community but also between the audience and VTubers, while in-depth interviews are used for better comprehension of the female audience's perception of VTubers and its contributing factors.

More specifically, drawing on the concept of participatory culture, this paper endeavors to examine the Chinese female audience of VTubers, particularly the dynamic within the para-social relationship between English-speaking VTubers and Chinese female audience by responding to the following questions: What are the characteristics of the Chinese female audience of VTubers of NIJISANJI EN? How do they understand the relationship between them and these VTubers? How do they interact with these VTubers, and what does the digital and emotional labor that they devote to this para-social connection reflect upon?

This study is expected to enrich current research in the following aspects. Firstly, the research result reveals the vitality of unofficial subtitling organizations developed by Chinese female audiences on Bilibili, who, as intermediaries, are deeply involved in the construction and dissemination of the images of English VTubers in Chinese social media. It should be noted that their digital labor is robust enough to establish their own distinct discourse, which frequently competes with and even take over the original image of VTubers in the Chinese context.

Furthermore, in the study of Chinese female audiences' emotional labor, the intersectionality of their sexual and cultural identity is addressed, which not only implies the power relation of native and non-native English speakers but also suggests female audiences' awareness of the male gaze and gender inequality in VTuber industry as feminism increasingly integrates with participatory culture. Nevertheless, this perception fails to confirm whether the Chinese female audience has escaped from patriarchal ideologies embedded in the VTuber culture and whether they have successfully transformed from the subject to the object in this industry.

Key Words
VTuber, participatory culture, emotional labor, digital labor, intersectionality

"Nomadic" Expressers: Network Migration and Identity Construction of Chinese Fandoms

Authors

Ms. Ruyue MA - Communication University of China

Ms. Wenjing YANG - Communication University of China

Abstract

In *Textual Poachers*, Henry Jenkins regarded fans as poachers and nomads and focused on the empowerment of poachers. Through poaching materials from the mass media and transforming them into the fans' interpretation, the "poachers" believed that they have the power dominate the text, but it turns out that this power is far less than the producers of the text. At the same time, "nomads" are not mentioned as a key point in the book, which refers to the flow and migration process of fans. Existing research generally divides this migration into two categories: the migration from one text to another and the migration from one platform to another platform. This paper will focus on the second kind of migration.

In China, affected by factors such as the pressure of personal servers and auditing mechanism of platforms, the nomadic characteristics of fandom communities are much more obvious. In the 1990s, the fans began to use the Internet as the medium to create fan fiction, and the forums operated by individuals were used as the main media for production and communication. Then the emergence of social media made Tieba and Weibo bigger fan clubs. In 2011, Netease created the social platform LOFTER, which is positioned similarly to Tumblr and became the most important media for fan fiction in 2010s. However, after the "227" incident in 2019, the fan community has shown a large and rapid "reverse migration" process, and a series of individual forums such as wland and platforms like Weibo received the attention of fans again.

This study attempts to explore how such a migration process occurs and how it transforms. According to this, this paper will take Harry Potter fans in China as an example, which have existed for a long time, experienced more cyber migration, and are more active overall. This paper adopts online participant observation and interviews as the mainly methods. The creation and consumption of fan fiction are the core links of participating in fan culture, and the communication of fan communities is an important process to maintain it. The two authors of this paper are fan writer and fan administer, who can observe the details in the process of community interaction. Combined with the interviews with 5 fan writers and 15 fan readers, this study initially found that the fans showed the group subjectivity in the technical negotiation process and formed their territorial consciousness; while the cyber migration strengthened its identity and subjectivity in the process of breaking the territorial consciousness; territorial consciousness eventually grew into an identification with the fandom community as a whole, with the "fandom" as one family.

"Everything for Someone": Sundance Now and the Tenuous Evolution of Cinema-Specific Streaming Services

Authors

Dr. Anne Major - Texas Christian University

Abstract

Major subscription video on demand (SVOD) services (e.g., Netflix, HBO Max, Hulu, Disney Plus, and Amazon) have adopted a "something for everyone" strategy—offering an array of films, TV series, original programs, and other digital content for mass audiences. Over the past decade, these mass-market services have garnered substantial journalistic and scholarly attention for their impacts on traditional TV and film business models, production and distribution strategies, and consumption practices (Lotz, 2014; Lobato, 2018). Less attention has been paid to niche-oriented SVODs (e.g., Sundance Now, Shudder, Criterion Channel, Mubi, CrunchyRoll), which offer specialized content and target particular audience groups, fan communities, and taste cultures. This paper rectifies this literature gap by examining AMC Networks-owned streaming service, Sundance Now, and tracing its evolving content acquisition practices, curation strategies, and promotional tactics from 2015 to 2022.

Drawing on literature addressing mass-market SVOD business models and practices (Curtin et. al., 2014; Gilbert, 2019) and burgeoning scholarship on niche streaming services (Major, 2021; Wayne & Sienkiewicz, 2022; Balanzategui & Lynch, 2022), this study approaches Sundance Now's shifting maneuvers as tenuous efforts to reframe specialty cinema—and its associated cineaste taste culture—for the digital realm. In 2015, AMC Networks launched Sundance Now as a cinema-specific SVOD with a library of independent, international, documentary and art films that aligned with the Sundance film festival brand. Whereas Sundance Now originally targeted discerning film fans, it currently promotes itself as a purveyor of "intelligent" and "prestigious" storytelling and offers a selection of original drama series alongside niche film titles. Sundance Now (and its parent company, AMC Networks) has adjusted its acquisition and marketing practices in response to restrictive market conditions. Contextualized against the backdrop of increasing industry consolidation and growing competition in the streaming landscape, Sundance Now's evolving practices reflect its fraught efforts to speak to film-specific taste cultures while remaining economically sustainable.

This paper draws on primary interviews conducted with Sundance Now and AMC Networks content acquisition professionals in 2017 and follow-up interviews with individuals working in the specialty streaming space taking place in February 2023. These forthcoming interviews in concert with previous conversations will provide insights regarding AMC Networks' changing institutional agendas and business strategies. Moreover, analyzing Sundance Now's promotional strategies, curatorial services, and other distinctive features will illustrate how the SVOD has reframed film-oriented taste cultures for the streaming format. Ultimately, this study approaches Sundance

Now's trajectory strategies as reflecting specialty cinema's uncertain cultural status and the niche streaming model's perilous position in the contemporary industrial landscape.

Key Words

Streaming, platforms, cinema, distribution, media industries, video-on-demand, Sundance Now, AMC

The portrayal of diasporic Muslim women in European teen series

Authors

Mrs. Salma Mediavilla Aboulaoula - Ghent University

Abstract

The presence of visibly Muslim women in the public sphere has been the cause of multiple polarized debates in several European countries over the last decade. One of those countries is Belgium, a secular and ethnically diverse country that is increasingly characterized by the rise of far-right extremism (OCAD, 2020) and heightened gendered Islamophobia (CIIB, 2021). In Belgium, in the context of ensuring state neutrality, recurring topics of debate concern the admissibility of headscarves in the areas of education, work, and leisure. Although diasporic Muslim women have claimed their voices in these discussions, it's undeniable that their identities, at the intersection of race, gender and religion, are increasingly used in political debates about them, without them. More importantly, within this context of secular countries trying to define and negotiate religion's place in public life, mediated representations of (visibly) diasporic Muslim women have become crucial symbolical, political battlefields.

The growing importance and politicization of Muslim women's mediated representations are apparent in both fictional and non-fictional media content, with several studies speaking of a "post-9/11-coverage" trend (Hirji, 2011). They conclude that since 9/11, media coverage of Muslims has not only increased but that consequently, the modes of representation have become rather negative and stereotypical. For diasporic Muslim women this media attention has seemingly resulted in hyper-surveillance and fixation on their bodies. In fact, a majority of studies conclude that they are mainly represented in terms of oppression, victimization, exoticism, and terrorism, alluding to the idea that an Orientalist (Saïd, 1978) perspective is still dominating the discourses on and portrayals of diasporic Muslim women. Current research on representational practices surrounding Islam and Muslims is mainly conducted on traditional news media (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017). Additionally, studies on fictional representations mostly analyze American series that pertain to the terrorist/crime series genre, e.g. *24* (Asultany, 2012).

With this case study I want to gain more knowledge on the portrayals of diasporic Muslim women employed in teenage coming-of-age series that take place in European countries. Relying on an interdisciplinary theoretical framework consisting of postcolonial feminist studies and critical media studies, this paper aims to obtain an answer to the following research question: How are the diasporic Muslima characters in the popular series *SKAM* (Norway) and its Belgian adaptation *wtFOCK* portrayed? I will conduct an open and in-depth qualitative textual analysis of all the seasons of *SKAM* (4) and *wtFOCK* (5), with a specific focus on the season surrounding the Muslim characters, Sana and Yasmina. The goal of this research is to analyze the narratives and modes of representation employed to portray the intersectional identities of diasporic Muslim women living in secular European countries. In addition, the findings of both series will be compared and situated within their respective national contexts, i.e. the national regulations regarding freedom

of religion and how they are translated into the storylines. This paper is part of a broader study consisting of textual analyses of five series from five European countries, combined with a qualitative audience study with diasporic Maghrebi Muslim women in Belgium.

Key Words

Recalling a Female Ghost: Gender and Romance in the Chinese Horror Games

Authors

Dr. Shuyan Zhou - Soochow University in China

Abstract

Horror has been a sensitive genre to the censorship of the popular culture products such as novels, films and TV dramas in China. While recently with a rapid development of game media, a kind of Chinese horror games has been attracted by a great number of young players. These games bring players into a mysterious and adventure world based on the traditional Chinese religious and folk culture. Ghosts, supernatural monsters, religious rituals, and even folk superstitions which have been rarely represented in the mainstream media, are reconstructed in the horror games as a way of fantasizing and entertainmentization of Chinese tradition.

The paper focuses on a popular mobile game series called *Paper Bride*, made by Heartbeat. From Jan 2021 to Aug 2022, there have been four games released online, each of them is for free, and appears in trending puzzle games to all players. It is worth noting that each *Paper Bride* tells a ghost and love story, which arouse the memories of Chinese traditional romances. The player usually take the point of view of the hero, who gets involved into a mysterious village, to rescue and prevent his girlfriend from being the "paper bride", by means of solving different puzzles in game. On the one hand, the narration of *Paper Bride* provides a critique approach toward the woman sacrifice in folk superstition ritual in the premodern China. The hero's adventure can be taken as a way of getting rid of the superstition and the backward sexism. While on the other hand, as a horror game, it connects the female ghost fantasy not only with a traditional Chinese romanticism, but also with a feminine and abject power, which makes the complexity of meanings of the gender images.

The paper is in attempt to examine the gender and romances in horror games, taking *Paper Bride* series as an example. How is the game reconstruct the Chinese traditional rituals and ghost fantasies into a popular romance? How do we understand the gender roles in the romance especially the female images with Chinese horror?

Key Words

Gender, Romance, Chinese Folklores, Horror Game, *Paper Bride*

A digital ideoculture? Whatsapp groups, homosociality and masculinity.

Authors

Dr. Marco Scarcelli - University of Padova

Abstract

This paper rearticulates the definition of the manosphere by considering everyday male digital media practices as part of a series of peripheral manospheres, connected, often without a clear reference, with the more articulated galaxy that makes up what we now call the manosphere (Ging 2019).

The work focuses on homosocial practices between adolescents (Flood 2008) and how they perform and create masculinity (Mac an Ghaill 1994; Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman 2002) inside private WhatsApp groups composed of (heterosexual) guys.

The article is based on the analysis of 36 in-depth interviews with young people aged 15 to 19 who live in different Italian regions. Through the analysis of boys' narratives, it is possible to explore spaces that are usually difficult to observe—private WhatsApp groups—to bring out the practices of masculinity that intertwine male homosocial relationships with the characteristics and affordances of digital media (Renold et al. 2017; Ringrose & Harvey 2015).

The analysis reveals how the definitions and maintenance of the group, the use of humour, and (what we define) the digital girl-watching maintain and reproduce specific forms of masculinity creating an idioculture (Fine 1987) that we can define digital idioculture, a space that boys retain safe and useful to perform what they consider a pure masculinity, showing (heterosexual) desire (Adler & Adler 1998; Pascoe 2007; Skelton 2001) and considering women merely as desire object.

Despite frequently in the literature scholars speak about hybrid (Bridges & Pascoe 2014; Demetriou 2001) or inclusive (Anderson 2009) masculinities, in the groups that we studied we can easily find a hegemonic and toxic idea of masculinity (Gought, Milnes & Turner-Moore 2019; Tuker & Govender, 2017) that deal, frequently unconsciously, with the manosphere sharing with that the same matrix of hate and violence but with different frames that makes more difficult for young men to recognize the toxicity of specific discourses.

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Key Words
Young people; digital media; peripherical manosphere; homosociality; boyhood.

Investigating Ideology: Portrayals of Technology in TV Detective Series

Authors

Mr. Benjamin Cunningham - University of Barcelona

Abstract

Popular culture both influences and reflects technology's narrative role in daily life. Fictional content, which depends on an audience's ability to make basic assumptions about the fictional world, offers some unique analytical possibilities. Meanwhile, the combination of structured plots, stock characters and realist ethos make detective fiction especially suitable for study. Two archetypal television shows from that genre, "Columbo" and "CSI", offer some additional advantages.

Technology plays a prominent role in the narratives of both shows. As influential cultural artifacts, variation in the narrative role played by technology in Columbo and CSI offers insight into how attitudes and social mores have evolved over the past 50 years. This study pays particular interest to technologies engaged in telecommunications, broadcasting, surveillance, wireless communication and information processing. As the primary fields of the so-called "knowledge economy" that emerged in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, they are most representative of the ways technology has acutely transformed daily life.

I use Greimasian actantial modeling to gauge how frequently technology plays an integral part in the plot of "Columbo" and "CSI" — and to isolate that narrative role. The simple narratives in these two detective series make them especially receptive to actantial modeling — a method for unpacking the narrative dimension of discourse. Measured in bulk, across many episodes, these narratives, and the role played by technology in them, are quantifiable.

This first phase of analysis helps identify specific episodes that were best suited for more detailed qualitative discussion. I then use deep reading to look further into individual episodes — both typical and aberrant plots — for details on the role technology plays in the narrative of particular episodes. I compare results from these first two phases to find trends for how technology's narrative role has changed over time. Finally, I posit a theory of technology's role in contemporary daily life.

Based on these analysis of these television shows, I contend that, over time, they increasingly portray technology as neutral, politically agnostic tools. In many early episodes of Columbo, technological devices are utilized by criminals to distort the truth. In latter-day episodes of CSI technology is portrayed as having almost magical properties that serve a cosmic sense justice. Put another way, over time these television shows are more likely to portray technological artifacts as "things" (in the Heideggerian sense that they disclose the world) as opposed to devices (which serve to obscure the world).

Even as these portrayals appear increasingly unrealistic, I argue that they portend the significant ideological shift that has occurred over the past half century.

AI ENABLED APPLICATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF PARASOCIAL INTERACTION: THE EXAMPLE OF CHATGPT

Authors

Dr. Ozge Ozok Sisman - Dr at Istanbul Kultur University

Dr. Ceren Bilgici - Asst. Professor

Abstract

As a result of the rapid development of information and communication technologies, human intelligence has begun to be imitated, and new ways and methods have begun to be sought to facilitate the life practices of individuals in social and professional life. Artificial intelligence, which is rapidly advancing within the framework of technological developments and adopted by different disciplines today, means that intelligent machines can perform the behaviors belonging to individuals (Whitson & Whittaker, 2012, pp. 29-32) Artificial intelligence technology, which can also be defined as machines taking on human-related tasks with different algorithms previously described, consists of systems such as machine learning, deep learning, voice recognition, planning, defined neural networks, and virtual assistants (Nilsson, 2010, pp. 45).Chatgpt was designed as a language model by the artificial intelligence research company OpenAI. Based on the GPT-3.5 language model, which is still in the testing phase, the chatbot is a free artificial intelligence software that can generate human-like texts through deep learning, answer questions, and interpret resources through algorithms (Marganian et al. 2009). It is in question that the Chatgpt application establishes parasocial relations through the credibility of the source, which is perceived as an actual individual in its communication with the users. Parasocial interaction means that the person perceives the person or software in front of her as a person in a one-way way and sees her as a friend (Pavlik, 2023). Today, the extent to which artificial intelligence technology, which has become a part of popular culture, has human characteristics and how sufficient it is to perform human behaviors are among the topics that are frequently discussed. In this context, this research, the rapidly popular artificial intelligence-based Chatgpt application, is evaluated in the context of parasocial interaction.

This research, carried out with the in-depth interview method, one of the qualitative research methods, aims to determine the participants' feelings and thoughts about the Chatgpt application. Artificial intelligence-based Chatgpt application within the scope of parasocial interaction was examined within the framework of the views of individuals belonging to the Z generation, which is the generation that uses technology the most, according to The Deloitte Global 2022 Gen Z and Millennial Survey conducted by Deloitte (2022). According to the research findings, it was concluded that the participants were parasocial strong in terms of the ability of Chatgpt technology to communicate with the user and to interpret the questions. The participants, who define Chatgpt technology as the future of the internet, predict that artificial intelligence-based applications can be integrated into sectors such as education, culture, and trade. In addition, it has

been determined that it will reach an important position in social and professional life through the dimension of parasocial communication. However, today, with the rapid development of artificial intelligence technology, further development of the human response system is necessary in order that Chatgpt technology does not lose its popularity in a short time.

Key Words

Chatgpt, Artificial Intelligence, Parasocial Interaction, Openai, New Media.

Digital activism as a means to strengthen marginalised communities and contribute to democracy: an example from the cultural sector

Authors

Dr. Olga Kolokytha - University for Continuing Education Krems

Dr. Lida Tsene - Open University of Cyprus

Dr. Matina Magkou - Université Nice Cote d'Azur

Abstract

Crises are not only conditions of hardship, but can also act as agents for change. The social, financial, and also in some cases institutional uncertainty that prevails during a period of crises, highlights deficiencies and brings on the surface underlying problems. This, in turn, presents a unique opportunity to address issues that may otherwise have been left unattended.

The COVID-19 crisis has hit the cultural sector in Greece quite severely, also because of its timing-taking place shortly after the sector has been slowly recovering from the aftermath of a decade-lasting financial crisis. The measures adopted by the State addressing the cultural sector did not seem to fully address the problems caused by the cancellation of performances and the subsequent unemployment of artists and creative professionals. One of the most important effects of this lack of adequate support was the rise of the #SupportArtWorkers movement (SAW), a self-organisation of artists and culture professionals in the form of digital activism aiming to advocate for long-term optimal support.

This proposal discusses the #SupportArtWorkers movement as a mechanism to mobilise a marginalised community, one which works under precarious conditions and is under-represented in the policy discussion, but also as a means to include this community in a democratic political process such as the cultural policy discussion and decision-making. Methodology comprises policy analysis and empirical research mainly in the form of analysis of online posts, but also of a small number of complementary qualitative interviews. More specifically, we applied a mix of quantitative and qualitative content analysis of online textual and visual narratives on the facebook and instagram official accounts of #SAW between May and December 2020.

Our proposal first highlights the conditions that led to the emergence of the SAW movement and then discusses its development, impact and aftermath. The self-organisation of artists and creative professionals into an advocacy-type network has made them stronger actors in cultural policy-making processes.

We discuss digital activism as an instrument which can provide opportunities for intervention into the public sphere and promote democratic processes and representation, but also highlight how digital technologies can facilitate engagement for change.

Articulating Ecological Imaginaries: The Mediation of Greta Thunberg

Authors

Dr. Leslie M Meier - University of Leeds

Dr. Nancy Thumim - University of Leeds

Abstract

How does the mediation of Greta Thunberg inform ecological imaginaries? As Nancy Fraser (2021) observes, ecopolitics has become mainstream insofar as it now encompasses the participation of activists, politicians, and communities representing a diverse range of political and social perspectives. As a result, growing awareness of environmental problems is countered by disagreement on causes and, hence, viable responses: 'On the one hand, growing numbers of people now view global warming as a threat to life as we know it on Planet Earth. On the other hand, they do not share a common view of the societal forces that drive that process—nor of the societal changes required to stop it' (Fraser 2021: 95). Indeed, everyday media audiences with varying interest in and commitment to environmental issues encounter starkly contrasting views on the climate crisis. Lilie Chouliaraki and Myria Georgiou's (2022) work on the 'crisis imaginary' demonstrates how imaginaries *regulate* what is perceived as relevant and, importantly, what is obscured and ignored—with subsequent lived consequences. Focusing on ecological crises, this paper attends to how popular culture shapes and is shaped by ecological imaginaries and, hence, what people are or are not able to imagine, care about, and act upon.

Informed by a circuit of culture approach (du Gay et al. 1997), we will examine the case of Thunberg—a figure who has spurred discussion and debate about climate action and various social justice issues among media audiences. Drawing on perspectives from critical political economy, textual analysis, and audience studies, we will examine Thunberg's circulation and reception in news media, social media, and popular media more broadly. Our analysis will attend to: the platforms and media companies involved in the production and circulation of stories about Thunberg; the representations of Thunberg across a range of media sites; and online audience discourses prompted by these mediations.

An Online Fan-base of One's Own: how Women Writers from Brazil Relate to their Fans in the Digital Age

Authors

Ms. Flavia Pessoa Serafim - University of Leeds

Abstract

The use of social media has placed increasing demands on creative writers' time in recent years. One of those new demands consists in intensely interacting with the public. Recent studies have shown that the internet has brought a new paradigm in the relationship between authors and their public, according to which writers need to form a community with their readers and be active in communicating with their fans. However, despite this new interaction model and its implications for authorial identity and practice, little research has been done to explore authors' experiences with their public. This need for studies is more significant when we discuss women writers from the Global South. In an attempt to fill these gaps, this study explores how women writers from Brazil live this new form of interaction with the public. Reflecting on 27 semi-structured interviews with women authors, this research tries to understand how these women comprehend and navigate these digitally mediated relationships. The data generated by the abovementioned interviews were studied through a thematic analysis, which yielded four main themes: the authors' understanding of what is public and how this relationship impacts their career; the authors' experience of online abuse; the networks of support that this contact with fans ended up generating; and the sense of responsibility that some of the writers feel towards their fans. By examining those themes, I discovered that some of the writers interviewed do not see their fans as public, whereas others see their public as crucial to their career, even though they feel the pressure to be constantly connected as taxing. It was also possible to see that most authors have not experienced online abuse; the few that did seem to have a higher online following and exposition. Regarding the third theme, some authors have recruited readers to help in their writing process, asking them to work as beta readers or listening to their requests and advice when writing new material. Finally, some writers express the idea that they have a social and moral obligation to their fans. That happens mostly with writers from a marginalised background whose production is heavily related to social activism or social issues. I studied these findings under the light of theories of para-social relationships, online-meditated socialisation, fans studies and digital literary sphere. The analysis of the data and the mentioned theory suggests that the para-social relationship between the authors and their readers has transformed and acquired new contours of proximity, thanks to the affordances of new technologies. It also suggests that these relationships are influenced by gender, as online abuse, for instance, mostly happens in relation to gendered issues. Another example of the influence of gender pertains to the support networks formed with fans, which were also mainly gendered.

Key Words

'Can we not laugh with anything anymore?' – A multi-method analysis on how humour controversies are reported on in Flemish print media from 2005 to 2021

Authors

Ms. Anke Lion - Ghent University

Abstract

The ethics of humour have become heavily disputed in recent years, both in the academic and public sphere (Davies and Ilott 2018). In Flanders specifically, numerous humorous texts have sparked controversy for their offensive representation of minoritized groups, including the anti-Semitic caricatures of 'Aalst Carnaval', which ultimately cost the festival its UNESCO cultural heritage title (Boffey 2020). A similar trend can be observed with other national and international 'humour controversies': public rows about transgressive humour aimed at minoritized groups which play out "social divides through a dramatization of moral and political rifts" (Kuipers 2011: 64). Media coverage on these controversies often evokes a kind of moral panic: a fear that humour is increasingly being limited by a hypersensitive 'politically correct' and/or 'woke' culture (Krefting 2016). News articles titled "Can we not laugh with anything anymore?"(Maes and Beckers 2020) and "Comedians are becoming the canaries in the coalmines." (Goethals 2019) seem to suggest that these are uniquely precarious times for free humorous expression. However, despite the increased frequency and newsworthiness of such 'humour controversies', the way they are reported on by news media remains largely overlooked by critical scholarship (Koivukoski 2022).

Such a study becomes increasingly urgent given the fact that news coverage on humour controversies may perform a boundary-heightening function by highlighting existing power relations between social groups. For instance, when researching the aftermath of the 2005 Danish Muhammed cartoon controversy, Smith (2009) and Kuipers (2011) noticed how the offendability of 'Muslims' as a group was used by several news reports to draw a symbolic line between the "liberal, secular West and the rest who are humourless" (Das and Graefer 2017: 54). By using an 'Us' vs 'Them'-narrative, media homogenized Muslim opinions as humourless and offended (Fearon 2015). As such, media hold the symbolic power to blame failed humour on either the comic text or the audience's alleged lack of humour (Ahmed 2010). Additionally, media discourses are considered a key indicator of dominant frames in public opinion (Lindekilde, Mouritsen and Zapata-Barrero 2009). News reports on humour controversies thus form a relevant site to map the cultural sensibilities of any given society at a precise moment in history (Kuipers 2008: 11; Ödmark 2021).

This paper hopes to remedy the lack of studies on mediated humour controversies by constructing a rich database of print articles on humour controversies from four Flemish newspapers from 2005 to 2021. We specifically chose 2005 as our starting point, since it marks the start of the Danish cartoon crisis, conceptualized by Giselinde Kuipers as "the first transnational humour scandal"

(Kuipers 2011: 77). The goal of this database is to gain a systematic, longitudinal and holistic understanding of how humor controversies are discussed in the public domain. The results of the database were subjected to a multi-method analysis, combining a quantitative study that provides a mapping of humour controversies in Flemish print media (how many articles, which voices are covered, which topics lead to (newsworthy) incidents, do we see an increase/decrease over time/newspaper) with a qualitative thematic analysis into which discourses about humour, identity and free speech/censorship ('cancel culture') are prominently present in the Flemish print media.

Key Words

Humour controversies

Print media

Offensive humour

Woke culture

Moral panic

Black Women to the Rescue

Authors

Ms. Ashley Smalls - The Pennsylvania State University

Abstract

Mass media influences the public perception of Black women and the perception Black women may have of themselves. It also has the potential to reinforce stereotypes. With media consumed heavily across American culture, it would be ideal if all people could tune in and find empowering images of themselves. Unfortunately, underrepresentation and misrepresentation in the media are still constant issues for Black women.

Considering how historically racist the portrayal of Black women has been, it is vital to learn more about how Black women are portrayed today since past racist depictions have contributed to their oppression. One way we can do that is to take a look at the global media phenomenon known as the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

The Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) is a collection of superhero films and TV shows owned by Disney that exists in a shared universe. The cohesive series of content includes Iron Man, Captain America, Thor, Guardians of the Galaxy, and four Avengers films, with more on the way. While a leader in film and pop culture, the Marvel Cinematic Universe has not been at the forefront of diversity in casting, particularly female characters of color. In fact, up until 2018, the women of color who do exist in these films have traditionally played aliens, such as Zoe Saldana's Gamora and Pom Klementieff's Mantis.

Black Panther and Captain Marvel are the 18th and 19th installments in the MCU. They have become two of the most economically and culturally significant films for the shared universe, grossing over $1 billion worldwide. Black Panther is the first Black-led superhero film and features a predominantly Black cast with various representations of Black women in supporting roles. Captain Marvel, the first female-led superhero film of the MCU, has a White woman in the lead with a Black woman in a supporting role.

For the first time, with the existence of Black Panther and Captain Marvel, Black women have an opportunity to support a film in the MCU with a Black lead and a female lead, with Black women playing a more crucial role in the movie than in past MCU films before.

Even before receiving the titular role in the sequel, the Black women of Black Panther challenged the history of stereotypes depicted in popular culture. Both films received heavy praise for their diverse representation, particularly their representation of women.

Using intersectionality as a theoretical basis, I have conducted a qualitative content analysis of MCU content in which Black women have lead or supporting roles, such as Black Panther, Captain Marvel, WandaVision, and Wakanda Forever. This content analysis will clarify how or if the MCU,

arguably one of the biggest names in pop culture, has changed how Black women are depicted in media and what could be done to better represent such a marginalized group.

Key Words
Intersectionality, Pop Culture, Marvel, Gender studies, Representation, Mass media

Drag Story Hour: The Ascent and Decline of (Young) Western Civilization

Authors

Dr. Niall Brennan - Fairfield University

Abstract

Drag cultures and performances have been catapulted into popular imagination since the airing of *RuPaul's Drag Race* in 2009 (Brennan & Gudelunas, 2017). Despite the present-day visibility and popularity of drag, vis-à-vis *Drag Race*, drag cultures and their performative articulations rest within political moments, from the gay liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Feldman & Hakim, 2020), to contemporary legislation, such as the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy and the Freedom to Marry Act, in the United States (Gudelunas, 2017). We can premise drag on the ways in which performativity underpins constructs of gender. Gender, rather than an inherent feature of our beings, is a self-conception that we develop and re-create through acts and performances that work as a "hallucinatory effect of naturalized gestures" (Butler 1990: xv–xvi). Moreover, drag complicates performing gender, as drag brings into play biological sex, gender identities and gender-performed identities enacted in the performance. Drag simulates and intensifies constructs of gender by parodying displaced meanings ascribed to "original" notions of gender, thereby imitating myths of gender itself (Butler 1990: 188). Drag is a deliberate, conscious performance of gender, predicated on the ways in which we perform gender unconsciously, every day. Newton (1972: 108) relates Greta Garbo playing women to gay men "passing" as straight men. Both are in drag, and from which drag assumes broader signification to encompass expressions of not only performing gender, but also of parodying the performativity of gender to underscore gender-performativity itself as taken for granted. In the US, Drag Story Hour is a community-engaged tradition that drag artist Michelle Tea started in 2015 (Rodriguez & Swenson, 2022). Drag Story Hour involves drag queens narrating and performing selected literature for children and their parents, and in public spaces, such as municipal libraries. Recently, in the US, Drag Story Hour has become a controversial, if not a polarizing, event. Advocates of Drag Story Hour see it as pedagogical moments that can provide performative approaches to understanding LGBTQ+ lives, and to understanding how to live and to be different in life (Keenan & Lil Miss Hot Mess, 2020). Detractors see Drag Story Hour as opportunities for pedophiles to groom children into pornography and sex-trafficking; moments in which "drag queen story hour plays right into … fears that … children are going to be led astray by evil or satanic or alien ideas" (Balmer, quoted in Rodriguez & Swenson, 2022). This study dissects the polarization and controversy surrounding Drag Story Hour by interviewing drag queens as facilitators, librarians as hosts, and parents as advocates and/or detractors of Drag Story Hour to argue that much less than the physical and public events themselves, it is discourse within the fora of social media that drives support, controversy and dissent towards attempting to grasp the ascent and/or the decline of young American minds.

Key Words

Controversy, children, drag story hour, library, politics, social media

'A treasured possession that has seen better days': Work and memory at The Repair Shop

Authors

Dr. Deborah Philips - University of Brighton

Abstract

The Repair Shop is distinctive in the landscape of contemporary reality lifestyle television in that there is no element of competition. The programme features a team of skilled craftspeople who use their expertise to restore an object that has no (or very little) monetary value, but which carries emotional weight for the members of the public who bring these items for repair. There is a collegiate atmosphere in the repair shop set, in which members of the team ask others for help and each contributes their particular skill set to the job at hand. The emphasis is on collaboration rather than individual achievement.

The set for *The Repair Shop* evokes the description of the traditional craftsman, as discussed by Richard Sennett, who has argued that: 'The craftsman often faces conflict in objective standards of excellence; the desire to do something well for its own sake can be impaired by competitive pressure, by frustration, or by obsession' (Sennett, 2008, p. 9). That competitive pressure, and the 'obsession' and 'passion' that are such features of programmes such as *The Apprentice* or *MasterChef*, are absent in *The Repair Shop.* There is no evidence of monetary reward in the programme, and no competitive pressure. Each member's contribution to the work at hand is admired and recognised by the others. *The Repair Shop* may well be a nostalgic fantasy for a preindustrial era, but it does offer an indication of how television might work to promote forms of work which are mutually supportive rather than aggressively competitive.

Key Words

Craftsperson, competition, nostalgia, support, reality television