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From Tastemaker to Transnational Cultural Production -- Chinese Documentaries at International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam

Authors

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Abstract

This paper sets out to study how International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) as a major industrial event exerts influence over global media production, distribution and exhibition by drawing on Documentary Studies, Film Festival Studies, World Cinema Studies and Media Industry Studies. IDFA is chosen as case study, because it is the most influential annual gathering event in the field of documentary. I will address the festival's production market (Docs for Sale) as well as its programming with a special focus on the performance and visibility of Chinese documentaries. My main research question is: How do Chinese documentaries and filmmakers benefit from participation in IDFA's programme and production market? By analyzing the interrelated structure setting transfigures symbolic cultural production through the value-addition process. To elaborate the difference between IDFA and other documentary film festivals, sub-questions will also be argued in the analysis of IDFA's interrelated structure setting: In what way does IDFA transfigure symbolic cultural production into "critical capital" and affect the documentary current mechanism in production, funding, exhibition and the professional career pathway?

To answer this question, I firstly use a Critical Media Industry perspective (Havens and Lotz, 2014) to position IDFA as organization in its industry context. I will consider its mandate, history, funding and supportive policy. In addition, I follow a Film Festival Studies approach to include attention for the industry and programming practices. My methods include qualitative interviews, participant observation, analysis of festival publications and online archival research. Four semi-structured interviews have been carried with two IDFA programmers, one selection viewer and an industry professional who frequently visits IDFA. The online IDFA archives provide valuable data on inclusion of Chinese documentaries and documentary projects from the 1980s onwards.

Based on the detailed study of the data collected, I content that IDFA has crafted a unique identity as the top tier festival in the international documentary realm, through the process of selection, programme and market, documentaries are culturally legitimized and incorporated with artistic value bestowed by the festival's prestige. Institute development in multi-dimensions highly benefits from the IDFA awards, which, in return has enhanced the impact of IDFA's critical capital not only on the authority of awards but also over

documentary productions, sales and career building. On the one hand, IDFA has to keep broadening the scope to search for creative visual language and different storytelling in aims to maintain its principles of evaluation model. On the other hand, it gradually has become the alternative exhibition and marketing place for young or underrepresented filmmakers, especially those from Non-Western countries. So international recognition can be gained when filmmakers are aware of norms of festivals and a certain tradition of contemporary cinema, which inevitably affects those documentary productions that target international audience for exhibition and distribution.

As obligatory points of passage, film festivals are “events-actors-that have become so important to the production, distribution, and consumption of many films that, without them, an entire network of practices, places, people, etc. would fall apart”(de Valck, 2007). Documentary festivals are in absence of stars and media coverage compared with festivals more centered on fiction films. IDFA affects the field of global documentary by its inter-linked departments -- IDFA selection, Forum, Doc for Sale, Bertha Fund and Academy. According to IDFA’s policy plan (2021), there are more than 3,500 documentaries for annual submission, only around 300 productions are selected. Besides the competition, sales agents, buyers, distributors, festival programmers and sellers also join the Forum and Doc for Sale sections, the number of attendees remains constant at 600 before the Corona pandemic. Moreover, the IDFA Bertha Fund will back about 30 productions from applications every year. Filmmakers of supported projects are invited to participate in the industry activities to enlarge their international visibility and network, “eventually finding a place for them at some section of the festival program”(Vallejo, 2020). Renowned Chinese documentaries like *Last Train Home*, *China’s Van Gogh*, *Plastic China* etc. are all granted by IDFA Bertha Fund and premiered at theater during the festival.

This research will give an overview of IDFA’s main sections and their function along with data from annual reports first. Then I look how the interrelated structure setting transfigures symbolic cultural production through the value-addition process in company with interview content. Thirdly, Chinese documentaries selected, funded by IDFA based on the record in archive will be analyzed and discussed to illustrate the feature and trace of Chinese story’s global travel in the documentary gaze.

Keywords: International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, Documentary, Culture Capital, Chinese Documentary, Transcultural Presence

Submission ID

273

How does ‘journalistic professionalism’ exist? -- changes and continuation of traditional news production from the perspective of ANT

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Abstract

The participation of multiple subjects including journalists, intelligent technologies, and the public in news production in the digital era breaks old professional barriers and changes the traditional news-production mode of newspaper era. However, changes and continuity coexist in automated journalism of all-media process. Traditional modes such as ‘different reporters covering different sections of the news’ and ‘editors typesetting newspaper at midnight’, still playing an important role in large numbers of media. Its existence has certain inevitability. In order to explore how traditional processes have changed in digital era and what kind of traditional patterns are still going on, this study interviewed 14 news practitioners from traditional media, new media and news aggregation platforms through semi-structured in-depth interviews adopting the cultural research method of Grounded Theory. Based on ANT framework, this study incorporates news practitioners, technologies, platforms and even ideologies that unite journalism professional communities into the collaborative network. According to the frame of traditional news production: collection, editing, censorship and distribution, this study shows the role of various subjects in the change and continuity of news production more clearly.

It is found that, in the process of news collection and editing, automated journalism technology adopted by some media leads to several changes: First, technology has constructed a field in which multiple subjects can provide content directly. Some news products no longer need information collection or editing. Second, when news leaves newsroom, its circulation has just begun. News production on aggregation platforms extends the boundary of news circulation. However, due to the different characteristics of media organizations, the homogenization of automated journalism content, the inability of technologies to deal with diversified news facts, etc., it’s difficult to popularize automated journalism in news collection and editing. In news censorship, the technological subject replaces the human subject significantly, reducing the tedious manual labor. However, technology can’t reach the ‘absolutely safe’ standard of news value requirements. Manual censorship is always a vital prerequisite for distribution during which the technological subject’s level of involvement is highly related to the type of news presentation and platform. In addition, this

study also focuses on the hidden human labor behind news circulation, namely 'ghost work', thus expanding the boundaries of ANT in news production.

In general, ANT abandons the anthropocentric bias and introduces non-human actors such as technology according to the symmetry principle. All actors in news production play indispensable roles as a network. However, ANT's limitations also emerge in the exploration of the changes and continuities of news production: non-human actors, such as technology, rely on human actors to exert their subjectivity, and most parts of news production still maintain the form of collection, editing, censorship and distribution. News ideology exists as 'agent' inside and outside newsroom, connecting all nodes of news production and maintaining the status of newsroom and the professional division of journalist. Based on the symmetry principle of relativism, ANT has become a logical deduction, which often has a certain distance from the news production practice.

Submission ID

339

Data journalism and data curation: on the relevance of the curation lifecycle model for data journalism practices

Authors

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Abstract

Curation is not a new term. Traditionally, curators mean people who select, manage and preserve the artistic productions or cultural heritage assemblage, and give them a new and unified meaning for presentation to audiences (Kaplan, 2013& Dempsey, 2000& Walters and Skinner, 2011). They play a role as "an artist's clerk or servant" (Obrist and Bovier, 2011. p127) to build a bridge between artist and public. On the one hand, they give artists ideas on how to present their work. On the other hand, they help plebeians to better understanding art exhibitions.

We often hear that the digital content curation supports activities throughout its lifecycle undertaken by data archivists such as librarians or data managers. However, we do not often make connections between curators and data journalists. In fact, fewer scholars study data journalism curation. Recently, data journalists are more and more interested in

curation because of the impact it is having on their curation lifecycle model, how it is challenging the authority of traditional news organizations and why it is becoming the contemporary journalism skills. In another word, curation has always been a part of journalism, though sometimes people just do not name it call.

To clarify the curation of data journalism, this paper will study on the relevance of data journalism and data curation and argue that both curation and journalism have the similar process of data selection, content added-value, data collection, data management and preservation. Meanwhile, there are something different as some of the data journalism workflows lack the preservation section, which results in the disappearing of digital contents. Therefore, having our own curation plan for long-term preservation strategies by mapping each activity in the curation model might be a good way. However, what key elements should be included in the journalism curation lifecycle model? When, where and for whom the curation lifecycle model is useful in relation to data journalism? In order to answer these questions, this paper firstly will do the systematic review of the existing research on the workflow of curation in data journalism, digital curation lifecycle model in databases and online blogs. Second, this essay will refer to the basic lifecycle model from The Digital Curation Center (DCC) and the Digital Curation Unit (DCU), and combine the features that data journalism has in order to propose a new data journalism curation model that includes: *have an idea (5W1H), have your dataset (collect or create, clean and select, ingest and select), design and write, preservation plan, community watch, curate and publish, user experience, social impact, store/immigrate/create/dispose, reappraise/reselect*. Furthermore, this essay applies this model in a winner data project <where do migration flows to and from> in 2018 Data journalism awards from Caixin. By examining these three points, we can fully discuss the advantages and disadvantages learned from the case study and data journalism model. By using this model, we can have a clear understanding of how the data journalism process should work where we should strengthen.

Submission ID

370

Knowledge Production on Short-video Sharing Community: a case study of Chinese Bilibili from the Perspective of Participatory Culture

Authors

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Abstract

The origin, diffusion and impact of knowledge have been important issues since the beginning of human history. Since the beginning of Plato, human beings have been constantly asking what is knowledge? Where does knowledge come from? What does knowledge mean to us? From papyrus to the Internet, the medium that carries knowledge is constantly changing. In the past ten years, with the rise of online platforms, knowledge is interpreted and reshaped by media: Wikipedia, Q&A community, audio platform, short video, etc.

The rise of short knowledge videos has gone further than traditional knowledge communities, creating a more complex picture of media knowledge production. Short videos have the characteristics as instant shooting, timely sharing, short length, free splicing with simplified technology and diverse forms. As of December 2020, the number of short video users was 888 million with an increase of 14.4 million from December 2020, accounting for 87.8% of the total netizens. Bilibili, the Chinese cultural community and video platform with a high concentration of young generations, was founded in 2009. Through the hosting and sharing of videos, the Bilibili platform has shaped the distinctive features of the participatory community under the Web 2.0 model. Van Dijck (2013) believes that the characteristics of participatory media and the participatory cultural atmosphere it creates can effectively promote users' participation in the production of such media content, including explicit and implicit participation. From the perspective of platform design, Bilibili provides all users with equal opportunities to participate in registration, uploading and commenting, and has the cultural attribute of explicit participation. In June 2020, Bilibili launched the knowledge division and incubated a group of knowledge producers: for example the legal knowledge producer Luo Xiang has over 10 million fans, financial knowledge producers Half Buddha, Little Danny", Dong Jianing, IC Lab are also top producers whose fans are over millions.

The theory of Participatory culture provides an excellent analytical theoretical framework for exploring public participation in knowledge production and dissemination in a digital media environment. On top of the platform, the practice of public participation in knowledge production has been developed and amplified in the digital media environment, providing the public with new ways of communicating, collaborating, and disseminating ideas. To what extent the participatory production of knowledge is driven by the platform economy, and also, what role does the platform play in the cycle of economic value requires further empirical research and investigation. To explore this issue, two research questions are proposed:

RQ1: What are the key components of knowledge in the form of a short video?

RQ2: What is the production logic of knowledge in the short-video sharing community?

This research will start from the consumer end and the production end of the short video community and will answer two research questions through quantitative and qualitative empirical research methods. The first part of this study plans to conduct a content analysis of popular short videos and reviews in the Bilibili Knowledge Zone based on the framework. According to the submission rules of the Bilibili Short Video Knowledge Community, knowledge short videos are divided into 8 themed areas. This research uses short videos as the unit, selects the short videos of the knowledge area published between October 1, 2020, and December 31, 2021, for 15 months, selecting 8 topic areas according to the "number of comments". The 10 videos with the highest monthly comments are encoded with a total of 1200 samples with the theme, information sources, argument mode, sense value, public frame, emotions, interactivity, cyber symbols, and cultural symbols which are 21 categories. After coding, we will use the regression model to analyze the effect of short video's meaning expression and content generation on knowledge expression and obtain the content elements of the knowledge form of the short video community platform.

The second part of the research focuses on the mechanism of knowledge content production and operation, shifting the perspective to the production side to examine the practical process of knowledge-based short video production and the theoretical logic and laws hidden behind the practice. This research will adopt a snowball approach and select representative knowledge content producers as interview objects based on three factors: (1) Knowledge content production time. (2) Frequency of production of knowledge content. (3) User recognition. The interviewees will be 20 or more. And we will analyze the content by NVivo to explain the mechanism of knowledge content production in short-video sharing community.

Submission ID

629

Prácticas de producción de webseries: Colombia como estudio de caso

Authors

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Abstract

Las webseries son un producto alternativo audiovisual cuyo origen va en línea con la evolución de la web, el medio que las soporta. Como formato apto para contar historias, las series web conservan las características principales de las narrativas serializadas propia de medios predecesores como la literatura, la radio, el cine y la televisión. Sin embargo, a diferencia de estos medios, las webseries tienen la particularidad de que su producción requiere de condiciones distintas a las tradicionales de la industria audiovisual, lo que ha permitido la participación de nuevos actores en sus procesos de creación.

A partir de una investigación de carácter exploratorio y descriptivo que toma como caso de estudio la producción de webseries de Colombia, este trabajo revisa en profundidad los procesos de realización de 30 de webseries de ficción de la última década. Desde una perspectiva sociológica, con acento en los aspectos propios de las profesiones de la comunicación, el entretenimiento, la producción cultural (Morin, 1966) y las prácticas televisivas (Levine, 2001), el estudio identifica las formas de producción, las rutinas laborales y demás aspectos del proceso de creación de series web y hace un análisis comparativo entre profesionales y *amateurs*.

Los resultados principales dan cuenta de un formato alternativo que copia las etapas tradicionales de la producción audiovisual, pero que, dependiendo el tipo de realizadores asume distintas formas de ser ejecutadas. Asimismo, el formato webserial posibilita la experimentación y con ello permite en los realizadores mayor libertad para explorar relatos y técnicas poco convencionales en formatos tradicionales como la televisión. Por otro lado, en los procesos de escritura, debido a la tendencia a las cortas duraciones de los capítulos, los guionistas exploran técnicas de escritura diferentes: mientras el cine implica estrategias de concreción y la televisión de dilación, las webseries implican la condensación.

Estos y otros resultados contribuyen al estudio de la producción audiovisual de los nuevos medios y las teorías sociológicas de las profesiones, al igual que ofrecen datos útiles para los nuevos creadores de contenidos para la red y sus representaciones, lo que interesa tanto a la academia como a las industrias de producción vinculadas a la realización audiovisual.

Submission ID

809

Beyond Sadness : A Study on the Short Videos Production of Chinese Families of the Trafficked and the Construction of Their Images

Authors

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Ms. Xinping Luan - Communication University of China

Abstract

[Abstract] Sun Haiyang, whose 14-year search for his trafficked son inspired the influential movie *Dearest*, was finally reunited with his son Sun Zhuo on December 12, 2021. This emotional reunion, which was made possible by the close cooperation between the media, charitable organizations, and the police, has since garnered tremendous public attention. Child trafficking is a common concern for many Asian countries (ILO 2002). In China, a large number of infants are trafficked to be sold for adoption. Since most people do not have direct experience with this crime (Logan, 2007), public media has become the primary channel for individuals to raise awareness on human trafficking. With the growing popularity of platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou, many families decide to rely on the platforms of short videos to find their children when they are missing.

Focused on the phenomenon of human trafficking, this study observes a group of families who are seeking their children from the perspective of public-image construction. The study conducted extensive video text analysis based on the short videos available online with such themes; we also completed nine in-depth interviews with the short-video creators who were actively seeking their children online. In particular, the results are discussed under a uniquely Chinese cultural context.

This research demonstrates the following: Firstly, the theme of missing children frequently reoccurs, which does not terminate after the missing child is found. Secondly, the videos have a tendency to create an emotional connection between the creators and the viewers, which tend to guide the public discourse and improve the effectiveness of communication. Thirdly, the visuals and audios used by the videos are relatively simple but marked with a sense of tragedy. It might be the case that people seeking for help deliberately show themselves in a vulnerable position, which garner more attention and assistance in a limited period of time. Based on these descriptions, the public-image of this group and its path gradually become clear. The self-display of these families in the short video has become a passive demand in the process of searching for their children, with many creators realizing the advance empowered by the technologies. Similar circumstances and individual experiences create collective belongings in cyberspace and become the main source of comfort

for the group. Consequently, the attention itself tends to be the social capital craved by families of child trafficking victims.

This study provides an insight into the short-video measure of the families who are seeking help from society to locate their missing children, aiming to shed light on the families' dilemmas, and evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of the short-video approach. At the same time, how the action of seeking children can be transformed from an individual experience to an emotional community with the help of short video technology, thus helping to solve social problems, should be an issue requires more analysis and global concerns.

[Key words] child trafficking, short videos, public image

Submission ID

1843

Change and unchange: The impact of audience feedback on news production in Chinese journalistic field

Authors

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Abstract

Audience feedback, no matter audience metrics or user comments, has been increasingly attached importance of institutional media in recent years. Actually, it is a worldwide phenomenon that gatekeeping and media orientation was influenced by the audience preference (Tandoc, 2014; Hanusch & Tandoc, 2019), which also happens in China but without enough academic attention.

Guided by field theory, this paper focused on the attitude of journalists and editors towards audience feedback, and the habitus in making news influenced by audience feedback in Chinese newsrooms based on in-depth interviews of 19 journalists and editors from different media in China.

The study found that media platforms, social media, internal and external media partners such as Internet engineers from media institutions and technology companies, and reader letters were the main channels to access and observe audience feedback for journalists and editors.

Journalists' and editors' attitudes toward audience feedback were contradictory. They welcomed but also hated the influence of the audience in making news. On the one hand, journalists and editors thought audience metrics, especially the click rates, could enhance the professional identity of journalists and sometimes bring more income to them. User comments were useful for news clues and correcting their mistakes. On the other hand, traffic and click-through data became a key performance indicator, which increased the newswriters' working pressure, causing their dislike of audience metrics. Their attitudes to user comments were also negative because of the homogeneous and rude content.

The habitus in making news changed as well as unchanged due to audience feedback. From the perspective of change, audience feedback had a significant impact on the writing/editing and distribution processes, especially in the aspects of news titles, news presentation, time and platform for news distribution. From the perspective of unchanged, traditional news rules still played a dominant role, and the criteria of news judgment and news selection were not overturned by audience feedback.

Chinese journalistic field was special due to the existence of political capital, resulting in the above phenomena. It could be understood that the political capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital in the journalistic field hedged the impact of economic capital brought by audience feedback. The reasons were as follows: firstly, the involvement of political capital in news selection and distribution weakened the impact of audience feedback. Secondly, from the perspective of economic capital, the mainstream media lack a strong demand for traffic monetizing. Business media's strategy was to make appropriate adjustments on the premise of adhering to cultural capital. They did not completely link the traffic with the income of journalists. For journalists, the economic capital brought by audience feedback was highly uncertain. So, few journalists abandoned the original standards. Thirdly, from the perspective of cultural capital, media adhered to the traditional standards of judging news values and the cognization of good news and good journalists. Fourthly, from the perspective of symbolic capital, audience feedback could not fully reflect the authority and credibility of media. The role of writing history and promoting social development, pursued by journalists, could not be endowed by audience feedback.

This further indicated that under the influence of audience feedback, media organizations and journalists still had agency. They took the initiative to adjust the degree of audience feedback embedded in the news production so as to use the audience feedback as a tool. They focused their agency on the news selection and tried their best to weaken the influence of audience feedback while referring to it in news selection although they gave up some agency in the specific news production process

The journalistic field was merging with other fields especially political and technological ones. The boundary of the future journalistic field will be constantly blurred.

Submission ID

1906

On-site and On-line: Doing Production Ethnography at the Bophana Center in Cambodia

Authors

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Abstract

In this paper, I argue that ethnographic research on media production sites should treat the onsite and online field as a continuum because it provides the holistic view of a marginalized community's identity negotiations within global context, using the Bophana Center as a case study. Due to the Khmer Rouge's brutal reign in Cambodia, the Bophana Center aims to restore heritage to: 1) understand the past, 2) build up the present, and 3) invent the future through mainly three different initiatives: media production education, media content production, and establishing archives.

Locating media production at the heart of restoring Cambodian heritage, the Center attempts to communicate its stories far beyond the Cambodian community. The Bophana Center creates works emphasizing indigenous identities and experiences of Cambodians. The indigeneness lies in its relationship with the global, which implies that the Center's work can be viewed as identity negotiations of Cambodia within a global context. Such attempts can be highlighted through the use of languages. The Center uses at least two languages—Khmer and English—in sharing their production, and a tri-lingual database—Khmer, French, and English—for their archives. Such initiatives are shared through online field with the audience. In other words, the online field provides a marginalized media production community a means to reach a global audience.

The political implications of media contents produced by marginalized communities have been explored in previous research on media production ethnographies, mainly on the empowerment of owning one's voice in relation to the development of Internet and technological accessibilities of media production. However, I intend to examine ethnographic research as related to globalization and its impact on the self-representation of a marginalized community.

Because the online field is crucial in consideration of globalization, I build on the definitions of field that has been challenged with Internet studies. Ardévol and Gómez-Cruz (2014) largely categorize “fields” in internet studies as virtual, connective, and Internet in everyday life. Building on the authors’ second category, I argue that the onsite and online field should be explored as a continuum as it provides the overview of both causes and impacts of the marginalized community’s media production. While production processes at the onsite field provide decision-making processes of the producers, which ultimately constructs “images” of themselves, the online site works as a transnational vehicle for and destination of the community’s attempts. In exploring the images portrayed in the Center’s media contents, viewing media contents as means to communicate their stories with global audiences, I argue that ethnographic research on media production requires holistic study that involves not only the production but also the consideration of its audiences.

Submission ID

2165

The Reluctant Change: How User Comments Influence News Production in Chinese Journalistic Field

Authors

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Abstract

With both more and more news organizations making news and more and more audiences consuming news in social media, user comments, a kind of feedback, play a role in influencing news production. Guided by field theory, this paper aims to explore the social media editors' and journalists' perception and utilization of user comments in news production in Chinese new newsrooms by in-depth interviews (N=14).

Even though influenced by user comments, embodied cultural capital of the Chinese journalistic field was still dominant in news production. Professional norms and habitus were maintained to a large extent. On the one hand, journalists and editors reflected and evaluated their professions, the objectivity of the news, the way of news narration, the writing structure of news story respectively, based on user comments. The aim was to protect and optimize the norms but not change them. On the other hand, user comments played a role as news clues sometimes. However, journalists continued searching news in traditional ways because they were disappointed at user comments as clues due to too much

emotional content and few useful ones. It indicates that embodied cultural capital was the covert way to convey norms effectively.

Influenced by user comments, objectified cultural capital was weakened to an acceptable extent. News reports, as a kind of objectified cultural capital, were evaluated by the audience in the form of comments. From the perspective of news organizations, the number of user comments became a standard to evaluate news work. From the perspective of individuals, user comments were a way for journalists and editors to evaluate themselves. Positive comments contribute to their career identity. In conclusion, user comments acted as criteria of news reports in two non-institutionalized ways-quantity and content text. Accordingly, some adjustments of habitus were made. On the one hand, editors volunteered to do some additional work such as selecting user comments, which proved to increase the number of comments. On the other hand, they know audiences' attitudes on certain news topics and news reports, they would change their work according to some rational suggestions so that they can satisfy more audiences.

Findings shed light on exploration and description of journalist-audience relationships in social media and the features of the Chinese journalistic field. First, the utilization in news production can be regarded as strategies to serve journalists themselves. In terms of discourse strategy, they emphasized the importance of news users and user comments in public so that they could gain recognition and popularity among audiences. In terms of practice strategy, they partially accepted user comments and changed habitus in news production so that they could protect their professions and norms. Second, because of the control of cultural capital, the main habitus of news production, news selection, and news judgment in detail, was maintained, which could be illustrated by the field hysteresis, an obvious phenomenon in Chinese journalistic field. It also means that the journalistic field cannot be driven by news users in China.

Submission ID

2261

An exploration of the ‘reorientation’ of South African Female Soap Opera Characters: Changes and Continuities in *Uzalo* and *Scandal!* through glocalisation and indigenisation.

Authors

Mrs. Janet Onuh - University of KwaZulu Natal

Abstract

This paper will explore the reorientation of the South African soap opera industry with a move away from broader themes of multiculturalism to localised specificities. “Insofar as global media giants gained a foothold in national media cultures, they often did so through *glocalization*, or revising their global branding and content strategies to better align with national cultures and expectations (Robertson and White, 2007), rather than imposing a singular Western template onto diverse regions and cultures” (Flew, 2020:24).

Gender inequality is a global problem as much as it is a South African problem. Despite international conventions to support gender equality and growing commitments to gender parity, gender disparities still prevail. Currently, South Africa has declared Gender-based violence (GBV) as a second pandemic struggle in the country as femicide remains on the increase. The media is known to commonly represent the male gender as strong, powerful, and aggressive; while female characters are represented as submissive, sensitive, and as the domesticated nurturer or tempting jezebel. Recently still, studies conducted around issues relating to gender roles and stereotypes among soap opera audiences in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa indicate that women in soap operas are misrepresented and undermined.

The doctoral study from which this paper emanates explores the representation and readings of female characters with an emphasis on gender roles in contemporary South African indigenised soap operas, through the case studies of *Uzalo* and *Scandal!* The aim is to provide broader commentary on how discourses on South African female identity may or may not have changed, in the process of glocalisation, as well as how they are read by the audiences.

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, interviewing the *Uzalo* and *Scandal!* production teams to explore the intention behind the gender roles assigned to female characters and their influential discourses. Focus group discussions will be held with participants with the groups set up as: 2 groups of females, 2 groups of males and the last 2 groups will be mixed. The aim is to understand how the audience views these operas in relation to what they viewed in the past and in light of contemporary society.

The study is guided by the active audience and feminist media theories. The inclusion of the active audience theory will assist in understanding the readings associated with the representation of female characters in *Uzalo* and *Scandal!*, Feminist media theory, particularly the intersectional approach, will assist in conceptualising the relation between systems of oppression which construct multiple identities and social locations in hierarchies of power and privilege often between race and gender. The study's findings are yet to be concluded but this paper will be based on preliminary data and a critical examination of literature that includes shifting gender media representations, African language media and traditional South Africa gender roles.

Keywords: Soap opera, gender roles, stereotypes, female characters, representation/constructions

Submission ID

2397

Film production practices in South Africa in the age of Netflix

Authors

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Abstract

This article examines the extent to which Netflix has and continues to transform the way films are produced in South Africa. As a subscription video on demand platform, Netflix changed the television industry, and the way films are distributed. This has attracted a lot of scholarly attention. While studies on changing production practices have been carried out, these tend to focus more on Hollywood studios. Acknowledging that Hollywood studios operate in a context different from many other jurisdictions, this study interrogates how the practice of filmmaking is changing in South Africa due to the Netflix influence. While small compared to Hollywood, the South African film industry is one of the most vibrant on the African continent. Before Netflix, the South African film industry had been boosted by deliberate efforts by the satellite broadcasting platform DSTV to promote local film production. However, Netflix brought a global platform and audience that was different from DSTV, a more African focused platform. The study takes a critical media industries approach to examine how South African based filmmakers are responding to the emergence of this global focused platform. It interrogates how industry routines and economics

are changing in response to the affordances provided by Netflix. These routines include scriptwriting, casting, budgets, choice of production personnel, and marketing. Interviews are held with officials from selected production houses to understand the change, or not, that Netflix has brought to their approach to filmmaking. It finds that South African production houses regard Netflix as a platform for global visibility and as such tend to make production decisions in a way that satisfies Netflix requirements.

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‘Dependent’ Body Parts and Outsiders vs ‘Independent’ Entrepreneurs and Insiders: (Self-)Ascribed Cultural and Professional Identities in the Global News Production Process

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Abstract

This literature-based research-in-progress paper intends to delineate issues around the cultural and professional identities of both foreign correspondents and local-based media employees (‘fixers’) while trying to shed light on the question of why the identities of those ‘crucial players in the pursuit of international news gathering’ (Murrell, 2019: 1680) are important.

Today’s global news production process as a ‘site of cultural contestation’ (Palmer, 2019: 10) is characterised by an ‘inside/outside cultural dichotomy’ (Bunce, 2010: 527). Foreign correspondents carry their cultural baggage with them: ‘Patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting that were learned throughout their lifetime’ (Hofstede, 2005: 2-3) and constantly keeping connected to their audiences at home (Bunce, 2011: 12) can lead foreign correspondents to remain ‘outsiders’ to the place they are reporting from. Here, local-based media employees come in: Due to their insider ‘ability to navigate the cultural terrain’, they serve as an ‘interface between the correspondent, the source, and the site’ (Palmer, 2018: 321). Contrariwise, locals may deem the local-based media employees, their fellow countrymen, as ‘traitors’ and ‘outsiders’ as they work for foreign organisations (Brooten and Verbruggen, 2017: 445). In their work, local-based media employees could ‘see things as outsiders to their own culture, with foreign eyes’ (Brooten and Verbruggen,

2017: 445) while constructing their habitus drawing on local and international perspectives (Moon, 2019: 1714).

Whereas the foreign correspondents' professional identity seems to be widely agreed upon as 'key players in today's globalisation of consciousness' (Hannerz, 2002: 65), the professional role of local-based media employees seems to be ambiguous: On the one hand, there has been the tendency of foreign correspondents describing them and their competences and knowledge as body parts, like 'local hands' (Bishara, 2006: 19) or 'our ears and our eyes' (Palmer and Fontan, 2007: 5), which Ashraf and Phelan (2022: 4) understood as an 'unthinking (even dehumanising) identification of real people with anatomical metaphors.' On the other hand, their professional role might be in transition due to their transformation into self-governing media entrepreneurs who turn the role of the 'fixer' into a 'trading profession' (Murrell, 2019: 1679), leading to more professional autonomy and agency in which power becomes 'more carefully and transparently negotiated' (Murrell, 2019: 1693). In the same vein, Plaut and Klein (2019: 1709) observed that when 'fixers' become more influential in the news production process, foreign correspondents feel their professional identity could become compromised.

So why do the cultural and professional identities of both foreign correspondents and local-based media employees matter? Both inhabit essential roles in the process of 'mediated image-building of foreign countries and translating foreign cultures' (Beliveau et al., 2011: 130) in which an individual's sense of identity and the identity ascribed by others need to be negotiated (Baker, 2010: 204). Identity perceptions can powerfully affect behaviours, as journalists' understanding of their 'place in society' impacts 'the way they interact with news sources and make decisions about news selection and presentation' (Donsbach, 2012: 1).

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