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## Public Information Literacy in Online News Media Comments: Qualitative Research on the Role and Influence of Buzzers on Narratives and Information

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### Abstract

This study examines the role of buzzers in comments on online news media and their impact on the narratives and information conveyed to the public. Using a qualitative approach, the research employs content analysis and interviews to explore the interaction dynamics between buzzers and other users in the comment sections. The findings indicate that buzzers often dominate the comment space, creating an illusion of public support for specific issues and influencing public perception. Additionally, this study identifies the strategies buzzers employ to promote specific agendas and the responses of news media in managing these comments. These findings highlight the importance of understanding the presence of buzzers in online news, particularly in maintaining the quality of information and public discourse. With the increasing use of digital platforms, the public is expected to become more critical in filtering the information they receive. This research contributes to the literature on communication and media, offering recommendations for news media to take greater responsibility in moderating comments. Ultimately, the results aim to raise public awareness regarding the influence of buzzers and the importance of media literacy in the digital age.

**Keywords:** information literacy, public information literacy, online news media, buzzer.

### 1. Introduction

Online news media has become one of the main sources of information in today's digital era (Sultan, Amir, 2023). These platforms are increasingly popular due to their ease of access and speed of information dissemination (Wang, 2024). However, behind this progress, there are major challenges related to public information literacy, which is the ability of individuals to search, understand, evaluate and use information critically (Rusdiyanti et al., 2023). One aspect that has become a major concern in the context of public information literacy is how people interact with news, especially in online media comment spaces (Gjerazi, 2024; Tayie, 2022).

Comments that appear in online news columns often reflect diverse views (Ivanova, 2023; Kolhatkar et al., 2020). However, it is not uncommon for these comments to be dominated by buzzers with a particular agenda (Fitria, 2023; Sholihah, 2023). The use of buzzers in online news commentary raises questions about the authenticity and objectivity of the information (Budiana, 2024). Buzzers, who often favour certain opinions, can influence the way information is communicated and received by the Public (Rahim et al., 2024).

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Buzzers often work in an organised way to promote a particular agenda, be it political, social or economic (Budiana, 2024). They can quickly create public opinion in favour of or against a particular issue. In the context of online news, the presence of buzzers can change the way information is presented, creating a narrative that may not be objective. This has the potential to undermine the integrity of the information presented to the public. (Dewantara et al., 2022; Fitria, 2023; Rahim et al., 2024; Sholihah, 2023).

In addition, buzzers can also create the illusion of public support for an issue. With a large number of comments that look positive, the public can be influenced to follow the flow (Dewantara et al., 2022; Widyatama, Mahbob, 2024). This phenomenon raises questions about the ethics of using buzzers. Is this considered opinion manipulation or simply a marketing strategy?

Kohnen McGrew (McGrew, Kohnen, 2024) in recent decades have strengthened online information literacy so that people are more critical in consuming news and more resistant to information manipulation. Kanozia et al (Kanozia et al., 2022) offer a solution that the government needs to make regulations to limit the spread of fake news. The first country that was aware of limiting the spread of fake news that disturbed public peace was France, which in 1881 issued the Freedom of Press Law. The German government was more assertive by issuing the Network Enforcement Act which fines all media sites up to 50 million for those who refuse to remove fake and illegal content.

Public information literacy is increasingly recognized as critical to fostering informed citizenship and democratic governance, especially in the digital age. It encompasses the skills necessary for individuals to access, evaluate and utilise information effectively, thereby enhancing their ability to engage with public services and counter misinformation. Based on this, the role of media and information literacy is crucial to combat disinformation and increase public trust in institutions. It empowers citizens to critically assess media content, encouraging a more informed public capable of engaging in the democratic process (Jaakkola et al., 2023). In addition, empowering the public in young people in particular can use appropriate communication strategies to improve digital literacy. Young people can identify valid information and counteract misleading hoaxes and negative content (Rullah et al., 2025).

In this context, information literacy is not only related to an individual's ability to understand news content, but also includes critical skills in recognising propaganda, bias, hoaxes and communication strategies used by buzzers (Adhikari, Joshi, 2024; Rusdiyanti et al., 2023). Lack of information literacy can cause people to be easily influenced by engineered narratives, resulting in social polarisation, increased misinformation, and reduced quality of public discussion in digital spaces (Kurniasih et al., 2024).

Overall, this research is expected to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how buzzers influence public opinion in online news media and information literacy can be an important tool to protect the public from information manipulation. This research aims to explore the comments that appear on online news media, particularly those influenced by buzzers, shaping the narratives and information received by the public. In addition, the results of this study can provide insights for policy makers, academics, and media practitioners in designing strategies to improve public information literacy in order to create a healthier and higher quality digital ecosystem.

## 2. Materials and methods

The research method used is using qualitative methods. Qualitative research is a subjective method that reveals rich data and reality in a naturalistic context. It is reflexive, communicative, and rigorous, focusing on various realities to improve quality in social and educational research, especially in teaching and learning (Pandey, 2024). Qualitative research involves various designs such as case study, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and narrative enquiry. It focuses on understanding complex human and social phenomena through subjective interpretation, utilising diverse sampling methods and data collection tools (Regmi, 2024).

The research stage carried out in this research is using a case study. The method used is by using several stages including: (a) content analysis of buzzer comments, (b) in-depth interviews, (c) analysing key themes using data visualisation tools and triangulating data. Detailed informant information is shown in the Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** The Source of the Research

No	Initial Name	The Position
1	NB	<i>Kapanlagi Youniverse</i> Journalist
2	DZM	<i>Kapanlagi Youniverse</i> Journalist
3	OS	Content creator
4	EM	<i>Fimela.com</i> Journalist
5	AAK	Head of <i>Beautynesia.id</i>
6	EM	<i>Kapanlagi.com</i> Journalist
7	DW	Buzzer

### 3. Discussion

The existence of buzzers in the digital ecosystem not only acts as a disseminator of information, but also as an effective narrative change agent. This is in accordance with the opinion of Budiana (Budiana, 2024) which states that buzzers actively shape narratives, influence perceptions and have the potential to change outcomes. Through qualitative analysis of the various comments they produce, it can be seen that buzzers have a systematic communication strategy in shaping public opinion. They do not simply convey information, but also utilise various persuasion techniques to direct perceptions, create polarisation and distort information circulating in the digital space (Ivanova, 2023; Kolhatkar et al., 2020).

In the context of digital information literacy, the buzzer phenomenon is a serious challenge for the community in sorting and understanding information critically (Gjerazi, 2024). Digital information literacy includes the ability to access, evaluate and use information ethically and responsibly (Kurniasih et al., 2024). However, with the presence of buzzers who often reframe issues in a biased manner, the public is faced with a situation where the information circulating does not always reflect the truth, but has been packaged with a specific purpose (Facciani et al., 2024; Kurniasih et al., 2024).

In practice, buzzers use various techniques to influence readers' perceptions. One of them is astroturfing (Arce-García et al., 2022; Badade, Dhanaraj, 2024; Weber, Neumann, 2021), which is the creation of the impression of organic support for an idea or character, when in fact it has been controlled in an organized manner. Astroturfing involves creating fake online personas and accounts to simulate grassroots support for a particular agenda. This organised strategy manipulates public opinion by giving the false impression of widespread and genuine enthusiasm for a cause, product or individual.

In addition, buzzers also often utilize echo chamber techniques, where they reproduce and repeat certain narratives to make them sound more credible and accepted by a wide audience. Yin (Yin, 2023) suggests that influential users, or hardliners, play an important role in reinforcing certain narratives. Echo chambers are formed through selective exposure and interaction with like-minded individuals (Nguyen, 2020; Williams, 2023) and contribute to the polarisation of opinions, the spread of misinformation and the erosion of trust in institutions (Müller et al., 2022).

Another challenge is the ability of buzzers to widely spread disinformation and misinformation. Disinformation refers to information that is deliberately manipulated to mislead, while misinformation is the unintentional spread of incorrect information (Krotoszynski, 2024). In many cases, buzzers employ both strategies to shape public opinion in favor of certain parties or to weaken others. This further blurs the line between facts and opinions, making it difficult for the public to distinguish valid information from manipulated content. The impact of buzzer activities is not limited to shaping public opinion but also contributes to social polarization. By reinforcing a particular viewpoint and suppressing opposing perspectives, buzzers create divisions within society (Widyatama, Mahbob, 2024). Furthermore, they have the potential to distort circulating information by subtly mixing facts with opinions, making it challenging for the general audience to differentiate truth from manipulation (Dewantara et al., 2022).

The rise of the buzzer phenomenon and the spread of disinformation demand solutions beyond merely raising awareness. Digital information literacy, which includes critical thinking skills, source evaluation, and information verification, serves as a crucial foundation. Society needs to be trained to develop critical thinking skills, assess the credibility of sources, and verify information before sharing it. The ability to recognize buzzer strategies, understand information manipulation techniques, and utilize credible information sources are essential steps in

maintaining a healthy information ecosystem. Additionally, the involvement of educational institutions and libraries in providing digital literacy education is a key factor in building a more informed society that is not easily influenced by narratives controlled by buzzers. (Dewantara et al., 2022; Rahim et al., 2024; Widyatama, Mahbob, 2024)

With increasing awareness of the importance of digital information literacy, society is expected to become more discerning and critical consumers of information. This ability includes not only recognizing hoaxes and disinformation but also analyzing information sources, understanding potential biases, and evaluating content credibility. As a result, people will be less susceptible to propaganda, better able to filter relevant information, and capable of participating more wisely and responsibly in public discussions in digital spaces.

#### 4. Results

This research found that online news media has become one of the main sources of information for Indonesians in this digital era. The increasing use of digital platforms is a new challenge in public information literacy. The existence of buzzers not only serves as a disseminator of information, but also as a modifier of existing narratives. Through qualitative analysis of the comments generated, it is seen that buzzers often direct public opinion in a strategic way. They utilise certain techniques to influence readers' perceptions, create polarisation, and distort the information conveyed.

##### *Public information literacy*

NB, Journalist of *Kapanlagi Youniverse* explained that public information literacy in the context of online news and social media is the ability of public to use tools and or information sources in order to critically understand what they get from news sources and or social media that they use in their daily life: "*The public must know how to identify their needs related to information, then use various sources to find this information, to test the accuracy and relevance of information. If it is at the 'advanced' level, the public is able to use the information in the decision-making dimension of what information it gets.*"

DZM, a journalist from *Kapanlagi Youniverse*, stated that public information literacy is the foundation to build a critical society. Therefore, journalist has a duty not only to deliver news, but also to educate the public to be a smart information reader and responsible netizen: "*The rapidly growing social media, including the presence of many homeless media, is also a big challenge in the digital era, where the boundaries between facts and hoax news are increasingly blurred.*"

##### *Buzzer*

The role of buzzers according to OS, Content creator, criticises politics that buzzers are very influential and more predictable in the narratives they convey: "*Their presence is very clear and felt. The context itself varies. It can be for business purposes (enhancing the image/enlivening a brand's campaign), or political interests (raising issues, reducing issues, or attacking political opponents).*" OS has experience in dealing with online buzzers: "*Yes, often in the comments or DMs, comments that fall into the category of CIB (Coordinated Inauthentic Behaviour) according to META's definition. What is very clear is that it is coordinated, the key messages are similar, and at the same time*". All buzzer-influenced content is very often found in every post he posted, OS added that almost every mainstream news post is present, especially in certain topics (for example: Jokowi/Prabowo/Anies/IKN/Free Nutritious Meals). Both are broadcast on Youtube, Instagram, Tiktok, and X.

Furthermore, EM, a journalist at *Fimela.com*, stated that she often finds buzzer content, especially on content related to sensitive information: "*Often, especially on content related to sensitive information, for example related to politics, government, economy, social, even in the entertainment world (especially Korea and its fanatical fans) as well as football.*"

Buzzers influence the narratives that develop in online news/social media. OS responded that the buzzer process in influencing the narratives that develop on social media is in two ways, the first through active campaigning and the last through critical comments: "*In two ways: (1) active campaigns filling timelines and algorithms with certain content, thus making some of the public think it is the truth; or (2) through massively attacking critical comments and content, thus making people lazy to speak out and assume the truth is something wrong.*"

According to DZM, the way buzzers influence the narratives that develop in online news/social media is by creating opinions that have been planned with their service providers: "*Mobilising a very large number of buzzers, hoping that it will be considered a general opinion*

*that represents netizens. The narratives used tend to be provocative and play on the emotions of netizens even if they have to use false information or do not match the facts."*

#### *Narratives on online media*

EM added that the way buzzers influence the narrative that develops on social media is aimed at people who lack literacy, especially in digital information literacy: *"For Indonesian internet users, buzzers are still very capable of influencing opinions, especially for those who lack digital literacy (usually boomers/X generation). But for millennials, Z and alpha generations, they are already much more sceptical and intelligent in consuming information, and can even quickly tell which are buzzers and which are organic users."*

In contrast to the view of AAK, head of *Beautynesia.id* that in trusted online news media, buzzers are not influenced because there are other more valid sources: *"In credible news media, it is not because there will usually be other valid sources to balance the news."*

The language style used by these buzzers tends to be provocative, as stated by EM: *"The style of language tends to be provocative, opinionated, justifying certain parties, blaming other parties, not having a strong basis/evidence, daring to argue with the opposing party and even being long and offensive. Often the language or sentences used are uniform/ almost similar to other buzzers."*

DZM added that *"doing massive posts targeting certain keywords so that the desired topic can become a trending topic, including by utilizing bots. The language style is usually adjusted to the target audience you want to influence. But the pattern is the same, for manipulative language styles, provoking emotions, provocative, sarcasm, or using contexts that cause polarisation in netizens. For content, they usually use clickbait themes or titles. This is done to increase the engagement of the content they post. In addition, the content will also have a uniform narrative with a slight difference in the cover to be reposted by other buzzers."*

ME, a journalist at *Kapanlagi.com*, adds that there are 5 important points in the language style used by buzzers: *"As far as I observed, the first one shares the news link that supports their opinion. The news could have been prepared to build an argument. The second debates the opinions of opposing netizens. The third uses quotes from famous figures. Next, using a story that he has personal experience of the topic being discussed with his statement: 'According to my experience' and finally flooding the comment section."*

DW, a former buzzer, stated that the style of language used was very provocative and in close proximity: *"1000 contents with the same language arrangement in close proximity, they are buzzing something, right?"* She also added that the change in the way information is conveyed influenced by buzzers has had a bad influence on the public and for her as a former buzzer *"It makes you annoyed because the comments of people who are really interested are covered by silly template comments"*. DW continued that the main challenge in public information literacy today is that many people are increasingly triggered and believe in the narratives given. *"People are more easily triggered by bad comments and are happy to respond without thinking."*

NB added, *"Internet penetration and access to information with various platforms, especially the existence of VPNs. This condition allows the public to get a variety of information from various cyberspace channels. The level of public awareness of the various information around them is still not good. This means that it is a never-ending challenge for the public to increase their level of literacy. Social media platform channels that have freedom of access and expression. Lack of understanding about cyber ethics, despite the existence of the ITE Law and similar derivative regulations. The spread of misinformation, dis-information and mal-information. Unfortunately, the public does not all know and have the capability to use tools to avoid being ensnared by the three types of hoaxes, which are usually perpetrated by the buzzers."*

DZM did not disagree: *"The main challenges in public information literacy today are the flood of information, misinformation or hoaxes, and the lack of digital literacy skills. The government should be able to provide regulations related to the media, by regulating unlicensed media homelessness. In addition, online media itself must remain committed to presenting quality, accurate and balanced information. Social media platforms should also be responsible for moderating hoax content and prioritising verified information."*

EM added that: *"User background (related to education level/access to digital information, especially for the older generation and people in remote areas who cannot access digital information all the time to develop themselves related to literacy. There is no support from the government to educate the nation, even certain parties/government personnel use buzzers to*

*control public opinion. Digital literacy is not the main focus of the state/society, because it is still a luxury/secondary/tertiary item) in everyday life (under developing country problem)."*

#### *The Role of Education in Improving Public Information Literacy*

The role of education in improving public information literacy in online news media is very little, especially in developing information literacy. EM stated that education still uses conventional methods: "*There is not much effect because digital literacy is not the main focus of educational institutions. The government and many educational institutions are still very conventional/old-fashioned and even tend to limit the curriculum to focus on the 'essentials' which unfortunately is very outdated. Younger generations (Z and Alpha) get knowledge about digital literacy from their parents who are millennials and privileged enough to understand the importance of this, not from schools that still consider it unimportant. The provision of information related to digital literacy from millennial parents/home environment is limited to those who are in urban areas and have good knowledge capital. The rest, for those who do not have this privilege, have no opportunity at all to develop their literacy.*"

DZM added that education should play a more dominant role in improving public information literacy: "*Education plays an important role in improving public information literacy related to online news. Digital literacy and ethics in digital interaction should be included in the school curriculum. This can make people have verification skills, critical thinking, and good information sharing ethics during the information flood in the current digital era.*"

NB adds: "*that when it comes to the broad term education, of course it is very important. The spectrum of education that can reach all levels of society, from age to public education, is crucial. In this segment, education can provide very high nutrition on how the public behaves towards all the information that enters around them. The ideal goal, of course, is to create a tradition of critiquing what information comes in from various platforms, so that the negative elements of information will not occur. If we look at the role of education narrowly, especially in specialised zones such as schools or campuses, it is also very important. Socialization or lessons on information literacy in formal zones can be a strong fortress for students, from elementary, junior high, high school to university level. The benefit of this zone is that those who have received information literacy knowledge, students, will apply it in their social life, including the closest one, namely the family.*"

The hope for the future of public information literacy in the context of news media and online social media is to improve the credibility of news and clear regulations. As stated by OS that "*it is hoped that there will be clearer regulations and ease of reporting buzzers.*" In addition, comprehensive improvements are expected as stated by EM: "*Comprehensive and fundamental improvements starting from the Indonesian government to the lowest level and evenly distributed throughout Indonesia. This cannot be done by only a small number of people/groups because it will be useless when most of the other people, especially the government, do not care or even deliberately misuse or use the inability of people's literacy to benefit certain parties.*"

ME added that in order to prioritize ethics in journalism: "*Not only online media, but also social media creators, need to prioritize journalistic ethics in delivering news or content. Do not be tempted or blinded by the desire for profit (traffic).*" A similar hope was expressed by NB: "*The hope for public information literacy in the context of online news media is to increase the credibility of a media. Whatever information that uses online news channels, everything comes from elements that have credibility, so that it does not cause doubts, doubts and confusion in the community/public. In addition, stakeholders must constantly give attention to increasing the level of information literacy, so that the public will be more critical and able to fortify themselves against information from online news. In addition, there must be interaction or dialogue between the public and the source of online news, so that intensive discussions will create constructive conditions.*"

## **5. Conclusion**

This study found that public information literacy plays a crucial role in navigating the dynamics of online news comments, particularly in identifying the influence of buzzers on opinion and narrative formation. The findings indicate that buzzers employ various manipulative strategies, such as information framing, disinformation dissemination, and attacks on individuals with differing views, often leading to polarization in online discussions. However, various levels of public information literacy result in some individuals being easily influenced by controlled narratives, while others can identify and counter disinformation with fact-based arguments and

credible sources. The lack of awareness regarding these information manipulation techniques highlights the need to strengthen digital education so that society can be more critical in processing information in online spaces.

The implications of this study affirm that improving public information literacy must be a priority for various stakeholders, including the media, academics, and the government, to create a healthier digital environment free from manipulative influences. More systematic digital education is needed to raise public awareness in recognizing propaganda and bias in information, while policies for managing online media platforms can help mitigate the negative impact of buzzers. This study also opens opportunities for further research to explore in greater depth how buzzer interaction patterns influence public trust in the media and their impact on social and political stability in the digital era.

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## Media Education Model for Studying Images of Family and Family Education in Russian Feature Films (1920–2020)

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### Abstract

The article presents the structural components and the content of the media education model for studying the images of family and family education in Russian feature films (1920–2020). The author analyzes the main theoretical approaches, methodological and practical aspects of reflecting the images of family and family education in Russian cinematography in media education of university students. The construction of a media education model is based on the synthesis of methodological approaches to media education, including cultural, semiotic, ethical approaches, and the theory of critical thinking. Reliance on these theories is predetermined by the main tasks of media education for the younger generation, consisting in expanding the socio-cultural framework of media education and enhancing the ability to independently search, select, analyze, interpret and create audiovisual media texts, use media resources for personal self-development and professional self-improvement. One of the key factors determining the relevance of this model is the psychological and pedagogical possibilities of using feature films in youth education. The educational function of Russian feature films is of great significance in the professional training of future teachers, psychologists, and organizers of work with youth. The inclusion of media education is aimed at teaching university students understanding and assessing what is seen on the screen and creative perception of media reality. This process plays a special role in analysing films on family issues, since it preserves and strengthens the family institution, family traditions of upbringing, and family values. In this regard, the study and analysis of feature films about family and family upbringing, which are imbued with the best ideas and ideals, can become an important tool for introducing the younger generation to a value-based attitude towards creating and strengthening family relationships, increasing the level of parental responsibility for the younger generation.

**Keywords:** media, media education, Soviet and post-Soviet feature films, family, family education, media education model.

### 1. Introduction

The theme of analysing feature films in education has become increasingly relevant in recent years. Discussion and analysis of films for different age categories is an important means of ethical and moral, patriotic, aesthetic education, and is a key factor in studying media in education and the development of media competence of the individual.

In our opinion, the use of Soviet and Russian feature films in studying family and family education is vital. In different years, the screen presented models of families with different values, but the main family values such as trust, loyalty, understanding, and care for children, always

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constituted the key idea of family, which origin is laid in the folk traditions and mentality of the Russian people.

The study of images of family and family education in feature films actualizes the issues of understanding a cinematic text. The concept of the cinematic text has been examined for many decades from different points of view. In the context of our study, we will turn to the cultural approaches of O. Aronson, who repeatedly notes that "a cinematic text is always a text in which two planes coexist: the plane of the depicted reality and the plane of mistrust of the image. There is always some sense of technology, even if we seem to be completely emotionally involved in the film. This moment of technology included in the image is extremely important both for us to be able to deal with the cinematic text and – I am not afraid of this word – for us to believe the image" (Aronson, 2012: 23).

In the study by N.V. Lavrentieva, a cinematic text is understood "as a set of references to cinema and the elements that make up its space: actors, the roles they played, films, special terms. The use of such "quotes" allows you to expand the space of the work, add new shades, and force the reader to "join the game" (Lavrentieva, 2022: 9).

Speaking about feature films, let us turn to the definition of the film text given by G. Slyshkin and M. Efremova, who present the structure of the latter as follows: "the film text consists of images, moving and static, speech, oral and written, noises and music, specially organized and in an inseparable unity. In the film text there are two semiotic systems – linguistic and non-linguistic – operating with signs of various kinds" (Slyshkin, Efremova, 2004: 21-22).

Cinematographic texts include various artistic signs, images, symbols, which make up the multi-layered nature of films in the context of time and space. According to the definition by Yu. Usov, sound-visual images of the audiovisual media text are considered as a dynamic system of "plastic forms that exist in screen conditions, spatial-temporal dimensions, and audiovisual means conveys the sequence of development of the artist's thoughts about the world and about himself (Usov, 1980: 17).

T. Mozhaeva states that "the cinematographic nature of a fictional text is based on the ability of words to indirectly convey specific and unambiguous audiovisual images, the montage and dynamic nature of objectified narration, the author's free handling of the fictional time and space of the text, and the special role of the historical present in creating the "illusion of immediacy" in a fictional work" (Mozhaeva, 2006: 10). Also, as A. Chizhik and A. Sadokhin note, "the most important factor governing the perception of a film text is the degree of significance of the work for the perceiver, which is expressed in the corresponding discursive practice. The perception of a film text is filtered through a system of attitudes and the significance of the content, the information contained in it. Under the influence of these factors, the work is refracted through the prism of culture, transformed on the basis of individual perceptions of a person. At the same time, the work is perceived not spontaneously, but through an established system of views, beliefs, cultural traditions, moral values, prejudices and stereotypes" (Chizhik, Sadokhin, 2020: 11).

## **2. Materials and methods**

The material underlying this research is contemporary Russian and foreign scientific publications on images of family and family education in Russian feature films of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods in the context of identifying the main prospects for media education. Research methods are analysis and synthesis of scientific publications on the research problem, generalization and classification, content analysis, abstraction, and modelling.

## **3. Discussion**

In our study, we analysed both Russian (Aronson, 2007; Chelysheva, Sapozhnikova, 2024; Chizhik, Sadokhin, 2020; Fedorov, 2016; Khilko, 2011; Lavrentieva, 2022; Mikhaleva, Lozovitskaya, 2024; Mozhaeva, 2006; Salny, Katrich, 2023; Slyshkin, Efremova, 2004; Usov, 1980) and foreign scientific findings (Bazalgette, 2009; Bitney, 2022; Bruzzi, 2005; Callister et al., 2007; Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013; Levy, 1991; Lloyd, 2014; Potter, 2022; Silverblatt, 2001; Silverblatt, 2016; Tanner et al., 2003; Zurcher et al., 2018) devoted to the analysis of family and family education in feature films.

As evidenced by the analysis of scientific literature on the topic of the study, the reflection of family and family education in Russian feature films of various genres has an interdisciplinary

nature and is reflected in a number of philosophical, pedagogical, psychological, sociological, political science, and historical studies.

Our analysis of publications written during the Soviet period on media education (Baranov, 2002; Usov 1980) has shown that the main emphasis in them was on the theoretical justification of an aesthetically oriented concept of media education associated with the ideological tasks of forming a comprehensive development of the individual; the foundations of cinematography analysis were laid, which were reflected in later Russian models of film and media education.

In the post-Soviet period, the range of issues related to the study of the family and mass media has expanded; interdisciplinary studies of the theory and history of media education, including the analysis of family models have appeared. For example, a philosophical analysis of anthropological and socio-cultural approaches to the study of cinema and media culture is considered in Russian dissertations (Chernyshova, 2001; Lubashova, 2009; Postnikova, 2007). Among pedagogical studies A. Fedorov was one of the first to consider the possibilities of a comprehensive study of screen arts in the training of future teachers (Fedorov, 1993). A. Goncharuk studied the attitude of the younger generation to performing arts from a pedagogical standpoint (Goncharuk, 2000).

Sociological issues of cinema are presented in the dissertation written by K. Tarasov, who examined the influence of on-screen violence on young people (Tarasov, 2000). A sociological analysis of Russian films was carried out by K. Vorobyova (Vorobyova, 2011). T. Leontyeva presented a characteristic of the visual image of the family in animation (Leontyeva, 2022).

Recent art history and cultural studies dissertations also partially touched upon the topic of the reflection of family models in films. The works closest to our topic are those of K. Ognev, who presented the main models of cinematographic art in a historical and artistic retrospective (Ognev, 2003); Yu. Tyurin, who examined cinematographic creativity through the prism of historical and ethical traditions (Tyurin, 2006) and G. Abikeeva, who studied the art history aspect of family images in forming identity based on the cinema of Central Asia (Abikeeva, 2010).

#### 4. Results

Based on the comprehensive analysis of theoretical and methodological approaches to the problem under study (Chelysheva, 2024a; Chelysheva, Sapozhnikova, 2024; Kurtov, 2011; Lozovitskaya, 2024), we have attempted to build a model for studying the images of family and family education in Russian feature films (1920-2020) in the context of media education.

In our research, we understand a model as “an auxiliary object, selected or transformed for cognitive purposes, providing new information about the main object” (Novikov, 2007: 107).

For our study, we stick to the definition proposed by T. Danelyan, who defines the modelling process as “the study of objects of knowledge on their models; the construction and study of models of real-life objects, processes or phenomena in order to obtain explanations of these phenomena, as well as to predict phenomena of interest to the researcher” (Danelyan, 2014: 167).

In this study, our attention is drawn to the educational model, which is understood as “a really established practice that, at its inception, did not proceed from any particular theory, but gradually acquired a clearly expressed qualitative originality. This method of activity, now considered theoretically, is a model in the sense that it represents a special example of setting up the educational matter” (Gusinsky, Turchaninova, 2000: 25). Accordingly, for our study, it is important to rely on the features of pedagogical models identified in the findings of V. Pisarenko: “focus on research, availability of information, connection with reality, objective or procedural essence, reproducibility in new conditions. The main meaning of developing models is the possibility and necessity of disseminating pedagogical experience, its development and improvement” (Pisarenko, 2024: 60).

As the analysis shows, at the present stage there are a number of media education models that are differentiated by goals, objectives, media sources, age categories of the target audience, etc. As a rule, the content and structural components of the models represent a synthesis of several foundations, among which the most important for constructing a model for studying the images of family and family education in Russian cinema (1920–2020) in media education are: education and information models, including the study of the theory and history of media; educational and ethical models that consider moral, philosophical problems; models of developmental learning, implying the development of creativity, imagination, independent thinking, etc.

The foundation for designing a model for studying the images of family and family education in Russian feature films (1920–2020) in the context of media education were the media education models of a number of Russian and foreign researchers (Baranov, 2002; Bazalgette, 2009; Bazhenova, 2012; Chelysheva, 2015; Eco, 2005; Fateeva, 2007; Fedorov, 1993; Khilko, 2011; Muryukina, 2019; Potter, 2022; Sharikov, Cherkashin, 1991; Silverblatt, 2001, 2016; Usov, 1980).

Thus, the fundamental approaches used in this study are based on the socio-cultural concept of media education, including cultural, semiotic, critical, ethical approaches to media education:

- 1) Cultural approaches (Baranov, 2002; Bazalgette, 2009; Fedorov et al., 2018; Khilko, 2011; Sharikov, Cherkashin, 1991; Usov, 1980);
- 2) Ethical approaches (Baranov, 2002; Bazhenova, 2012);
- 3) Developing critical thinking (Bazalgette, 2009; Chelysheva, 2015; Chelysheva, 2024b; Fateeva, 2007; Fedorov et al., 2018; Gálik et al., 2024; Gáliková Tolnaiová, Gálik, 2020; Muryukina, 2019);
- 4) Semiotic approaches (Eco, 2005; Silverblatt, 2016; Usov, 1980).

The model for studying the images of family and family education in Russian cinematography (1920-2020) in the context of media education includes a number of interconnected components, among which the following stand out: "target, content, procedural, control and evaluation" (Kotlyarova, 2019: 15). At the same time, the methodological approaches to constructing the model are ensured by the unity of theoretical and practical approaches to studying the family theme in feature films; a comprehensive, systemic study of audiovisual media texts through the hermeneutic analysis of Russian feature films on the issues under study; a study of transformational changes in the images of family and family education in historical retrospect using feature films from different periods within the chronological framework of this study.

In defining the target component of the media education model, it seems possible for us to formulate its target guidelines, which include teaching value attitudes about traditional family values to the younger generation. The main material for study in media education is Russian feature films.

Among the main objectives of the presented model, we can highlight:

- 1) Educating the younger generation in respect for family, family traditions, family education as key guidelines for the well-being of modern society through Russian feature films on family issues of different time periods;
- 2) Developing media competencies related to the ability to select, analyse, interpret and evaluate audiovisual media texts on the topic of family and family education;
- 3) Expanding the university students' knowledge about the possibilities of using media education methods and technologies in teaching school students using feature films about family and family education.

The content component of the model is determined by the goals and objectives associated with the university students' ideas and target attitudes about traditional family values during media education.

When studying the theme of family and family education reflected in feature films, several content blocks of media education can be identified:

- 1) Study and characterization of the main concepts related to the family theme in audiovisual media texts in feature films of different time periods (family, models of family education, the image of the family on the screen, constructive and destructive models of behaviour in the family, parental responsibilities, responsibility for raising children in the family, family values, family traditions, etc.);
- 2) Analysis of scientific research related to family issues in audiovisual media culture (including pedagogical, psychological, cultural and other approaches to the problem); a comparative analysis of media critical reviews based on materials from films about the family of different years;
- 3) Study of audiovisual media texts of Russian media culture on the theme of family in historical retrospect in order to determine the main key trends in the reflection of family images in feature films at different stages of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

The content of media studies includes a set of lectures and practical classes, creative assignments (projects, essays, oral and written work on course topics, etc.), discussions, round tables, strategic sessions, etc. based on feature films about family and family upbringing, independent assignments on given topics, studying and analysing literature on the course topic, etc.

Traditionally, verbal, problematic, heuristic and other methods of analysing audiovisual media texts are actively used in media education practice. The choice of specific methods depends on the purpose and objectives of a certain lesson, the degree of their complexity is based on the degree of readiness of the audience for media education.

Depending on the objectives and lesson topic, various methods, forms, technologies and approaches to media education activities can be used in studying feature films. Creative forms and techniques for working with feature films on family issues can include games, simulation, training exercises, solving situational tasks and problem-solving activities, preparing scripts, studying professional analytical media criticism, writing compositions, essays, stories on behalf of the main or secondary characters of a particular film, preparing posters, comics and collages on a given topic, organizing discussions based on the watched film, a brainstorming session, group media projects, etc.

The means and main material for broadening the younger generation's notions and target settings about traditional family values via media education is the use of audiovisual media texts on family issues. The study of feature films is carried out with the help of the hermeneutic analysis of Soviet and post-Soviet feature films about family and family education, based on key concepts of media education: media agencies, media categories, media technologies, media languages, media audiences, and media representations.

The procedural component of the presented media education model involves preparing university students for future professional media education activities in schools, leisure centres, children's health camps, institutions of additional education, etc. This component helps to identify the possibilities of media education and their use in the future professional activities of university students, as well as their learning about the methodological and practical aspects of media education from the point of view of using its educational, upbringing and developmental potential. Moreover, the procedural component includes preparing the university student audience for media studies based on Russian feature films on family issues, involving film discussions, completing creative tasks on audiovisual media texts, as well as integrating elements of media education into school subjects (literature, history, etc.).

In addition, this component includes university students' preparation for working with the parent community in order to promote media education in the family, discussing family education with parents in order to improve their level of pedagogical culture, forming ideas about responsible parenting, etc.

The control and assessment component of the media education model involves carrying out activities aimed at assessing the university students' competencies in accordance with the set goals and objectives. This component includes monitoring university students' knowledge of the studied topics, the completion level of tasks for independent study, etc.

The application of the model for studying images of family and family education in Russian cinema (1920–2020) in media education is higher education, including the training courses "Pedagogical education", "Psychological and pedagogical education", "Organization of work with youth", etc.

## **5. Conclusion**

As a result of the analysis of scientific research in pedagogy, psychology, cultural studies, and sociology of the last years of the twentieth century on the topic under study, we identified and analysed the main conceptual foundations, methods, forms, technologies, and approaches to media education that study audiovisual Russian media texts of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods about family and family education.

In this study an attempt to construct a media education model for studying images of family and family education in Russian feature films (1920–2020) was made.

Methodological approaches to designing the media education model are provided by the unity of theoretical and practical approaches to the study of family issues in feature films; a comprehensive, systematic study of audiovisual media texts based on the hermeneutic analysis of Russian feature films on the topic under study; a research of transformational changes in the images of family and family education in historical retrospect in feature films from different periods within the chronological framework of this study.

The target guidelines of the presented media education model include teaching attitudes about traditional family values to the younger generation. The main material for study in media education is Russian feature films.

This goal involves solving the following interrelated tasks:

- 1) Fostering students' respect for family, family traditions, family education as key guidelines for the well-being of modern society through Russian feature films on family issues created in different years;
- 2) Developing students' media competencies related to the ability to select, analyse, interpret and evaluate audiovisual media texts about family and family education;
- 3) Expanding the students' knowledge of the media education possibilities based on analysing feature films about family and family education.

The content blocks of the media education model include the study of basic concepts related to the topic of family and family education, feature films, etc.; university students' analysing scientific research on these issues; analysis of audiovisual media texts on the topic of family and family education.

The procedural component of the media education model is important in the professional sense, as it allows to prepare university students for future media education activities with the school audience by organizing and conducting media studies in educational organizations of various types, as well as to use the acquired knowledge in integrating elements of media studies into general education. In addition, the possibilities of future professionals' collaboration with the parent community, aimed at using media education in family upbringing and raising the level of pedagogical culture are considered.

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## Zbyněk Bryných: Zigzags of Film Directing

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### Abstract

This article analyzes the creative path of one of the most famous Czechoslovak directors – Zbyněk Bryných (1927 – 1995): from his first experiments with newsreels to the “thaw” period; from his masterpieces of the 1960s to his emigration to the FRG, where (in the late 1960s and early 1970s) he directed several largely experimental films; from the period of his return to Czechoslovakia, where he became actively involved in the subject of “normalization”, to the final period, when he spent the last years of his life making detective series on television in the FRG.

Thus, from one of the leaders of the Czechoslovak New Wave of 1960s (*Transport from Paradise, ... and the fifth horseman is Fear, I, Justice*), Zbyněk Bryných in the 1970s – 1980s turned into a rather ordinary director of ordinary films (*What Color Is Love?, The Night of Orange Lights, Romance for a Crown, Anger, Accused and Suspect, Who Comes at Midnight, The Halftime of Happiness*).

The author concludes that the example of Zbyněk Bryných’s winding creative path shows that the adaptation of an artist to the rules and opportunities of different periods of societies and countries can lead both to outstanding results and to the fading of the author’s potential and desire to experiment.

**Keywords:** Zbyněk Bryných, film studies, Czechoslovakia, cinema, film, movie, cinematography.

### 1. Introduction

The creative path of the famous Czechoslovak director Zbyněk Bryných (1927–1995) was difficult and winding. He was self-taught, without any special cinematographic education. In the 1950s, he worked for a long time as an assistant director and made documentaries, some of which were more reminiscent of some *Daily News* or educational instructions.

He made his first full-length film in 1958, when the “thaw” period had already begun in Czechoslovakia.

### 2. Materials and methods

*Object of study.* The social and cinematographic situation in Czechoslovakia in the period from 1958 to 1985 was chosen as the object of our research.

*Subject of study:* evolution of cinematographic work of the famous Czechoslovak director Zbyněk Bryných (1927–1995).

*Research methods:* comparative analysis, generalization and classification, induction and deduction.

### 3. Discussion and results

*Zizkov Romance/Zizkovská romance.* Czechoslovakia, 1958. Director: Zbyněk Bryných.

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*Zizkov Romance* is a melodrama about the love of the plasterer Mirek and the driver Helena. It was very similar in its lyrical intonation to the Soviet "thaw-lyrical" films.

*Five out of a Million/Pet z milionu*. Czechoslovakia, 1959. Directed by Zbyněk Bryných.

The melodrama *Five out of a Million* was staged in a similar vein, consisting of several short stories: black-and-white lyricism with likeable characters and simple love stories...

However, in his next film, *Skid*, Zbyněk Bryných drastically changed both the genre and style.

*Skid/Smyk*. Czechoslovakia, 1960. Director: Zbyněk Bryných. Distribution in Czechoslovakia: 1.7 million viewers.

*Skid* is a spy noir in which the protagonist, an emigrant, with his face altered by a car accident, returns to socialist Czechoslovakia at the turn of the 1960s. He pretends to be a clown, but his real goal is not circus acts, but connections with a spy nest...

*Skid* begins with a long drive through the night streets of the FRG: flickering neon signs, jazz music. Then a nightclub with striptease (of course, within the limits permitted by the Czechoslovak caesura of those years). A bar counter. Whiskey and soda. A play with shadows and reflections, provocative glances of spectacular women... Something similar was often encountered in the 1960s in films exposing the bourgeois way of life, shot in the GDR, but Zbyněk Bryných found his own intonation, in which one could sense hidden irony: about the genre, about stereotypical characters.

Film critic Alexey Gusev wrote that from the point of view of the genre (or, at least, what is convenient to call a genre), *Skid* is both a spy film and a circus movie. Two genres that can never meet under any circumstances... The world on the brink of the Cold War, permeated with spy networks, turns into a world revue with a big fake gun within the framework of one short plot (Gusev, 2018).

Here, however, there seems to be some exaggeration, since several years earlier in the Soviet film *The Mystery of Two Oceans* the spy and circus theme was presented in one of the most key episodes, when a cunning circus spy killed his twin brother in order to take his place on a secret submarine.

But it is entirely possible to agree that *Skid* embodies the very carnivalesqueness on which the Czech new wave will be built... *Skid* is a film at a crossroads; a film that emerged at a turning point, a crisis point, a narrowly passed point in the history of national cinema. ... Its entire structure is wide open, like in old engravings – with the skeleton out. All the joints are visible (Gusev, 2018).

On the one hand, *Skid* is a very instructive, very one-dimensional, very orthodox film about an emigrant, abandoned in his former homeland on a spy mission and suffering a moral crisis, and in the finale there are the expected triumphal fanfares about the fact that the enemy turned out to be wrong, while socialist construction in Czechoslovakia is in full swing... all this has very little to do with the film as such. Because it is only half. And on the other half it is *Here Comes the Cat*. It is this shading of a simple, oaky, linear plot with the luxury of the script development and the richness of the direction, which cancel the possibility of any verdict in anyone's favor, that makes this film both so outstanding and so unprecedented (Gusev, 2018).

After the highly successful release of *Skid* (in Czechoslovakia it was seen by 1.7 million viewers) Zbyněk Bryných decided to step away from detective and spy themes for a while and made a black comedy, *Every Crown is Good*.

*Every Crown Is Good/Kazdá koruna dobrá*. Czechoslovakia, 1961. Director: Zbyněk Bryných.

The main character of this comedy inherits a large house. But when he arrives there, he discovers that the house is full of strange people...

Zbyněk Bryných made this film deliberately theatrical and filled with elements of absurdist humor.

But in his next film, *Don't Hide from the Rain*, he returned to the "thaw" lyricism in the spirit of Soviet cinema of the early 1960s...

*Don't Hide from the Rain/Neschovávejte se, když prší*. Czechoslovakia, 1962. Directed by Zbyněk Bryných.

In this film, a young teacher tries to "sow the reasonable, the kind, the eternal" in a small village where people adhere to their traditions. There is a love story here, and some irony...

The film *Don't Hide from the Rain* did not arouse much interest – neither from the press nor from the audience, but the next work of Zbyněk Bryných – *Transport from Paradise* – became one of the main ones in his work.

*Transport from Paradise/Transport z raje*. Czechoslovakia, 1962. Director: Zbyněk Bryných. Distribution in the USSR – from October 21, 1963: 5.4 million viewers in the first year of showing.

This black-and-white documentary drama won the main prize at the Locarno Film Festival. It told the true story of the Jewish ghetto in the Czechoslovak town of Terezín, which the Nazis wanted to present to a delegation of the International Red Cross as a "paradise for Jews".... The Terezín ghetto resembled an ocean liner, designed for three thousand people, but sent out to sea with ten times that number of travelers. It was a death waiting room. Almost three hundred people died daily from hunger and disease alone, and a total of one hundred and forty thousand people passed through this city ([Fiala, 1963: 140-141](#)).

Maintaining a "documentary" look (this is where his background as a newsreel director came in handy), Zbyněk Bryných showed how the Nazis were making a propaganda film about how the Führer "gave" the Jews a paradise city, where shops and even a bank were open, where polite SS officers offered their hand to arriving Jewish ladies to help them get off the train...

This is, indeed, a special film. There are many shots in it when it seems that nothing is happening; when a car with two SS men circles through the deserted streets of the ghetto, whose inhabitants are condemned; when the camera stops on houses, streets, people – people whose life here is so ghostly and unreal, people whom the Nazis turn into numbers. But people do not cease to be people even in this "gift city", which lived a double life: as a demonstration camp for the International Commission of the Red Cross and as an extermination point, a point that was a step before an even more massive extermination of people ([Fiala, 1963: 140-141](#)).

Thus, the horror of Nazism does not come from the brutal scenes of torture, which the filmmakers tactfully avoid, but from the reduction of man to a number, from the bureaucratic consistency with which people are counted and weighed in order to be sent to their deaths. Despite its documentary sobriety, focus on concrete actions and realism, *Transport from Paradise*, like Jan Němec's later *Diamonds of the Night* (1964), is an existential parable about a man caught in a deadly situation. Can we maintain dignity and moral principles even when our lives are at stake? Can we maintain faith in humanity and love in the shadow of death? ([Šrajter, 2023](#)).

Overall, *Transport from Paradise* is, in my opinion, one of the most powerful films about the Holocaust. The film is mercilessly strict, devoid of any pathos, sentimentality, straightforward plot and visual moves. And it probably could also be called *Ordinary Fascism*...

This film rightfully earned high marks from the Czechoslovak press ([Kopaněvová, 1965: 136-139](#); [Pitterman 1963: 11](#); [Struskova, 2009](#); [Tunys, 1962: 22-23](#); [Zalman, 2008](#)).

*Place in the Crowd/Místo v houfу*. Czechoslovakia, 1964. Directors: Zbyněk Bryných, Václav Gajer, Václav Krška.

In the film *Place in the Crowd* Zbyněk Bryných once again returned to the "thaw" motifs of a contemporary theme, although with elements of satire, when a 16-year-old boy is assigned to agitate in favor of shock agricultural work...

The film *Place in the Crowd* caused rather disappointment among the public, who highly rated *Transport from Paradise*, since much more was expected from the director...

*Constellation of the Virgo/Souhvězdi panny*. Czechoslovakia, 1965. Director: Zbyněk Bryných. Distribution in Czechoslovakia: 0.8 million viewers.

This army comedy tells the story of a soldier waiting for a love date with his girlfriend... This film would probably have been quite ordinary compared to other Czechoslovak films of the mid-1960s, but Zbyněk Bryných dared to include two very bold erotic scenes for those times (built mainly on close-ups of the heroine's face) with the participation of Jaroslava Obermaierová. But here it is necessary, however, to clarify that the Czechoslovak censorship of the mid-1960s already differed quite significantly from the strict rules of the 1950s – early 1960s, and Zbyněk Bryných did not fail to take advantage of this... And, most likely, this was the main reason that the film was seen in Czechoslovakia by 0.8 million viewers, which for a film without a sharp adventure intrigue is a very good attendance rate.

*... and the fifth horseman is Fear/... a paty jezdec je Strach*. Czechoslovakia, 1965. Director Zbyněk Bryných.

...1941. Prague. The main character is a Jew, a doctor by profession, who during the occupation is forced to work in a warehouse where the Nazis transport confiscated Jewish property. He is forbidden to practice medicine, but he decides to help a wounded underground fighter, realizing that he is exposing himself to mortal danger...

Many film scholars call the parable ... *and the fifth horseman is Fear* (the title itself contains a reference to the four horsemen of the Apocalypse) the pinnacle of Zbyněk Bryných's work.

This is probably his most perfect and tragic work. The Master's work, imbued with Kafkaesque motifs, where the nightlife of a doomed ghetto, a house with a spiral staircase and colorful residents appears...

Unlike Echelon from Paradise, with its collective hero and multiple narrative lines that create a mosaic picture of the ghetto, ... *and the fifth horseman is Fear* is a portrait of the inner ghetto, paralyzing and dehumanizing man... Contrasting lighting, camera angles, unnaturally amplified sounds and noises, or choppy editing create a claustrophobic, paranoid atmosphere of a city where no one trusts anyone, and the only thing that unites people is fear (Šrajer, 2025).

Like *Transport from Paradise*, ... *and the Fifth Horseman is Fear* was highly praised by the film press (Brdečka, 1965: 68-69; Pittermann, 1965: 7; Přádná, 1998: 72-73; Žalman, 2008: 222 and others) and received a number of prizes at international film festivals (in Italy, Argentina and elsewhere).

In this film, Zbyněk Bryných, after a rather long break, once again turns to the sophisticated black-and-white visuals that were characteristic of *Skid*. Unusual angles, panoramas, graphically verified close-ups, metaphorical expressionist images, quotes from Dante's *Inferno*...

*Transit Carlsbad*. Czechoslovakia, 1966. Director: Zbyněk Bryných. Film distribution in Czechoslovakia: 0.4 million viewers.

After a masterpiece that required full creative dedication ... *and the fifth horseman is Fear* Zbyněk Bryných decided to take a breather at the Karlovy Vary resort (by the way, he was born there in 1927), where he filmed the spy movie *Transit Karlsbad*, which allowed him, as in *Skid*, to play with the form and appearance of the characters, this time on the big screen.

Almost the entire film was shot in the most luxurious hotel in Karlovy Vary, the Grand Hotel Pupp (although in the 1950s – 1980s it was called the Grand Hotel Moscow).

According to the plot, agents of several Western intelligence agencies are hunting for a famous scientist living in a luxury room of this hotel...

In fact, the plot itself did not bother Zbyněk Bryných much in this film. Together with the cameraman of his previous film ...*and the fifth horseman is Fear* Jan Kališ, the director embroidered intricate visual patterns on the background of the palace interiors, sometimes getting carried away by the panorama of the central street of Karlovy Vary, filmed with a hidden camera... A special feature of the film *Transit Karlsbad* was that there was almost no Czech speech, since the characters spoke mainly in French, English and German... This was presented with irony and a touch of parody (with a clear hint of "Bondiana"), which, however, the mass audience might not have felt...

*Time of First Love/Tempo první lásky*. Czechoslovakia, 1966. Director: Zbyněk Bryných.

For their own amusement, while working on the film *Transit Karlsbad*, Zbyněk Bryných and his cameraman Jan Kališ also shot a short melodrama *Time of First Love* in the same luxury hotel.

It was the story of a one-night stand between a young elevator operator and a millionaire's daughter...

Once again, there was a game with black and white visuals, close-ups of characters and ironic hints. But this time, with a sad intonation of primo amore illusions scattered throughout the plot...

*Dialogue 20-40-60/Dialogue*. Czechoslovakia, 1968. Directors and screenwriters: Jerzy Skolimowski, Peter Solan, Zbyněk Bryných.

At the height of Czechoslovakian "socialism with a human face" and the "Prague Spring", Zbyněk Bryných directed one of the short stories of *Dialogue 20-40-60*, filmed by three directors in the distinctly black-and-white style of the "new wave".

In this experimental dramatic comedy, the plots and actors were different, but the dialogues were the same. It was a kind of look at the relationships between women and men of different generations.

The best of these short stories – the third one – belonged to Zbyněk Bryných: he got the older age of the characters, who acquired the necessary psychological depth on the screen, which was not at all hindered by a certain theatricality...

In the same year 1968, Zbyněk Bryných carried out another of his own projects, related to the theme of the Second World War – *I, Justice*. This time, based on the material of "alternative history".

*I, Justice/Já, spravedlnost*. Czechoslovakia, 1968. Directed by Zbyněk Bryných. This film received a special jury prize at the Trieste Fantasy Film Festival.

In the course of the plot of this science fiction film, representatives of a mysterious Organization kidnap a certain doctor in 1946 and bring him to a patient who turns out to be... Adolf Hitler... But it soon becomes clear that the doctor is not needed to cure the Fuhrer, but, on the contrary, to prolong his suffering...

The role of Hitler in this film was very convincingly played by the German actor Fritz Diez (1901-1979), well known to Soviet viewers for his role as the Fuhrer in the films *Liberation*, *17 Moments of Spring*, *Selection of Target*, and *Soldiers of Freedom*.

This time, Zbyněk Bryných staged a fantastic, sometimes grotesque drama about resistance to power, about the creeping indoctrination of ideologies and about the limits beyond which the desire for justice turns into personal revenge ([Křipač, 2016](#)).

The main character, a doctor, becomes a kind of alternative to his colleague from Zbyněk Bryných's film ... *and the fifth horseman is Fear*. Only he, overcoming himself, dared to help the underground fighter, and this one, on the contrary, despite the pressure of the Organization, sends Hitler to the other world so that he can avoid endless psychological and physical torture...

Brynykh's films *Transport from Paradise*, ... *and the fifth horseman is Fear* and *I, Justice* were shot by different cameramen: Jan Čuržík, Jan Kališ and Josef Vanis, however, their black-and-white visuals have something in common: asymmetrical compositions, close-up portraits conveying the smallest details of facial expressions of faces without make-up. All this helps to create an expressionistic atmosphere of cruelty, devastation and the need to make a choice...

Film scholar Jan Žalman (1911-1990) wrote about it this way: We can accept or not accept this style, the defining value of which is the expressive tension of the image, and in which the atmospheric element plays a dominant role, but this in no way cancels out its objective aesthetic quality, not to mention its emotionality. In any case, it is a style adequate to the inner state of the soul and creative nature of Bryných, with the help of which he expressed what no one had expressed before him, and which not only led him personally to the most remarkable results in his directorial career, but also significantly enriched his stylistic palette ([Žalman, 1968: 368](#)).

*America or the Missing Man/Amerika oder der Verschollene*. FRG, 1969. Director Zbyněk Bryných. TV.

In a black-and-white drama (based on the unfinished novel by Franz Kafka) with elements of satire, a young man named Karl emigrates to the United States, where he meets a wealthy "sponsor"...

This was the first film by Zbyněk Bryných, made after he, like some other famous Czechoslovak filmmakers, emigrated to the West in protest against the suppression of the Prague Spring in August 1968. Zbyněk Bryných went to the FRG, but as it turned out, for a short time...

With the film *America or the Missing Man* Zbyněk Bryných established himself as a professional director, capable of working in Germany in the short timeframes of television production, and he was allowed to debut in the "big cinema" of the FRG with the film *O Happy Day*.

*O Happy Day / She's 17 and Anxious*. FRG, 1970. Directed by Zbynek Brynykh.

So, at the beginning of 1970, Zbyněk Bryných shot another author's project: the surrealist film *O Happy Day*, consisting largely of self-quotes: a long drive through a night city with neon advertisements, an abundance of dark night shots, a play with color, angles and optics...

The film takes its name from the pop/gospel song *Oh Happy Day* by the *Edwin Hawkins Singers*, which is heard throughout the film.

According to the plot of this film, the 17-year-old heroine, vegetating in some Catholic boarding school with strict nuns, wants to escape from the guardianship of the boarding school and her parents in order to "learn about life." And she learns about it: night clubs, "weed", fashionable music and eroticism, photo collages reminiscent of Warhol's works...

Despite all the "psychedelia" and the riot of color changes (this was Brynykh's first color film, where he boldly experimented with the color scheme), this picture reflected a very serious generational conflict and teenage rebellion, which, of course, was helped by the bright music of Peter Thomas...

Despite the participation of West German star Nadja Tiller, *O Happy Day* was relatively low-budget, which helped him recoup the producers' costs, and they financed his next film project, "Angels with Scorched Wings."

*Angels with Burnt Wings/Engel, die ihre Flügel verbrennen/Angels Who Burn Their Wings*. FRG, 1970. Director Zbyněk Bryných.

...Munich, 1970. A 16-year-old teenager kills his mother's lover (played colorfully by Nadja Tiller), considering her promiscuity as a betrayal. His peer – she was only witness to this murder –

invites the boy to her apartment. Her mother (in rhyme with the heroine of Nadja Tiller) changes lovers like gloves, and the girl (actress Susanne Uhlen in this role looks like Mia Farrow's heroine from *Rosemary's Baby*) eventually also kills her mother's next lover... Holding hands, the teenagers try to escape from the angry crowd pursuing them... In this way, Brynykh turned *Agels...* into a kind of Romeo and Juliet story of the criminal world in a cruel society...

*Angels with Burnt Wings* is the second color film by Zbyněk Bryných, in which he apparently wanted to once again show off all facets of his formal mastery. Original editing, modernist visuals using the then fashionable zoom lens, sophisticated play with color, distortion of the characters' faces in mirrors... The cinematographer of his four previous films, Josef Vanis (1927–2009), constructed bizarre frame compositions and created an unsettling thriller atmosphere...

If you do not take into account the rather boldly filmed (for 1970, of course) erotic scenes, it may well seem that *Angels with Burnt Wings* is a production of the GDR, exposing the vices of the bourgeois way of life. However, this is only a superficial comparison, since Zbyněk Bryných's film was very different from the political detectives of the GDR, directed against the machinations of ideological opponents from the FRG and the Western world as a whole: not only in its expressive visual and musical series, but also in the director's detached and ironic approach to the Freudian plot of this film. Just one telephone conversation is worth it, in which one of the characters checks the list of invitees to some event and asks for the surname of one of them in syllables: "Bry-nych" – with two "Y"s...

At the very end of 1970, Zbyněk Bryných released an even more ambitious project: a co-production of three countries (Germany, Italy and France) called *The Females*.

*The Females/Die Weibchen/Femmire carnivore*. Germany–Italy–France, 1970. Director: Zbyněk Bryných.

The plot of this film is clearly reminiscent of *Alice in Wonderland*, only for an adult audience: a young woman ends up in a special women's sanatorium located somewhere in a German resort, where mysterious and at first completely inexplicable events occur...

In terms of genre, this is a cool mix of thriller, black comedy, surrealism, psychedelia, satire on feminist ideas and a horror film about cannibal women, immersed in an atmosphere of challenging public morality, a riot of colors, absurdism, parody (and even the Lumière brothers' *The Watered Waterer* is parodied there, not to mention the film stories about Frankenstein).

Once again, original editing, non-standard work with sound, use of a wide-angle lens, playing with a zoom lens, distorted faces in mirror reflections, eroticism and provocation.

As a result, this sophisticated film, which can be interpreted as a parable about addiction against which there is no point in rebelling, with an international cast, turned out to be too complex for the mass German and European audience and failed at the box office...

Since all three of Zbyněk Bryných's largely experimental and outrageous films were unsuccessful at the box office and were rather sourly received by the German press, he had to suppress his rebellious impulses as a man who suddenly got hold of previously forbidden "toys" and try to return to television to make a more realistic film. This film was an adaptation of Erich Maria Remarque's novel *The Night in Lisbon*.

*The Night in Lisbon / Die Nacht von Lissabon*. Germany, 1971. Director: Zbyněk Bryných. TV.

In this very traditional drama, the protagonist takes his sick wife out of Nazi Germany...

The film premiered on April 9, 1971. Zbyněk Bryných was not offered a new job in "big cinema", and he decided... to return to Czechoslovakia.

This return took place because in the FRG Brynykh did not film anything that "defamed socialism," Czechoslovakia, or the USSR, and therefore the new Czechoslovak authorities were able to turn a blind eye to his relatively short German emigration and gave him the opportunity to work in the cinema of the "normalization" period.

Moreover, Zbyněk Bryných managed to reach an agreement with the Czechoslovakian authorities that he would have the opportunity to return to Germany from time to time to join the detective series that were being produced there on a conveyor belt.

So, the first Czechoslovak film shot by Zbyněk Bryných after the "German tour" was the war drama *Oasis*.

*Oasis/Oáza*. Czechoslovakia, 1972. Director Zbyněk Bryných.

...1943. In North Africa, the Allies are fighting the Nazis. A truck with a Czech crew – a lieutenant and six soldiers – escapes from the Foreign Legion fortress. They want to join the Allied army...

This was the first color film shot by Zbyněk Bryných in Czechoslovakia. Together with the cameraman Josef Vanis, who had returned with him from West Germany, he tried to create a special atmosphere of a scorched desert landscape and a bright, scorching sun in changing focuses of a wide-angle lens, accompanied by jazz music.

The film did not have much success with audiences in Czechoslovakia, but Zbyněk Bryných managed to prove that he knew how to play by the rules of the "era of normalization" and from now on would not pretend to stage philosophical parables and experimental art house.

*What Color Is Love?/Jakou barvu má laska.* Czechoslovakia, 1973. Director: Zbyněk Bryných.

The next Czechoslovak film by Zbyněk Bryných, *What Colour is Love*, was already completely socialist realist and was a run-of-the-mill love story of not very expressive characters...

*The Night of Orange Lights/Noc oranžových ohnu.* Czechoslovakia, 1974. Director: Zbyněk Bryných.

The protagonist of another socialist realist drama by Zbyněk Bryných, *The Night of Orange Lights*, celebrates his 45th birthday and drinks heavily. And then, to his own detriment, he gets behind the wheel, hits a passerby and ends up in prison.

The former experimenter and philosopher Zbyněk Bryných is simply unrecognizable here – everything is done in a straightforward and flat manner.

This drama was not a success with audiences, just like the didactic film *Teachers Out of School*, which was filmed a little later.

*Teachers outside of school/Profesori za skolou.* Czechoslovakia, 1975. Directors: Zbyněk Bryných, Vladimír Blážek, Malian Mucha.

Then Zbyněk Bryných decided to show that he could (if he wanted to) make a box office Czechoslovak film. And he did it with the help of far from any sociality and politics, the musical trifle *Romance for a Crown*, which, in fact, was a success in the cinemas of Czechoslovakia and even made it to the screens of the USSR.

*Romance for a Crown/Romance za korunu.* Czechoslovakia, 1975. Director and screenwriter Zbyněk Bryných. Distribution in the USSR – from December 26, 1977: 9.2 million viewers in the first year of showing. Distribution in Czechoslovakia: 1 million viewers.

A teenager invites a girl his age on a date... But this is only the beginning of a musical story... But there won't be any real intelligible story after that, and the film will smoothly transition to a concert of the stars of the Czechoslovakian pop scene of that time.

Film critic N. Tselikovskaya wrote in the year of the release of *Romance for a Crown* in Soviet cinemas that everyone, of course, knows that the value of art is in no way connected with the price expressed in monetary units. ... In the film by Czechoslovak filmmakers, just one miserable crown works real miracles: not one song or one romance, but an entire vocal program, sung by popular stars of the Czechoslovak stage, sounds from the screen, turning the film into a kind of musical revue. And all this, mind you, for just one crown, which the film's hero, Fil, received as a lucky gift. ... Karel Gott himself sings the famous hit *Maestro Paganini* at Fil's personal request, and how he sings! His lesser-known colleagues sing no worse than Karel Gott, who is popular in the Soviet Union... ([Tselikovskaya, 1977](#)).

The final Czechoslovak period of Zbyněk Bryných's work gives the impression that he simply served "normalization" in order to be able to occasionally film ordinary detective stories for German television, which brought him good money in hard currency.

It seems that when he made his Czechoslovak films of the late 1970s and mid-1980s, he not only cast aside all his former ambitions as an auteur, but also had no desire to create a more or less box-office spectacle. Very boring socialist realist dramas and slightly less boring detective stories – that's what the Master put on the conveyor belt, alas, having decided to become an ordinary craftsman...

*Anger/Hněv.* Czechoslovakia, 1977. Directed by Zbyněk Bryných.

Industrial drama *Anger* is a dull tale of conflict in a mine... This is perhaps Zbyněk Bryných's weakest film. Everything is bad in it: the socialist realist plot with banally written characters, the acting, and the lackluster visual design.

*Accused and Suspect/Stíhán a podezřelý.* Czechoslovakia, 1978. Director Zbyněk Bryných.

Apparently tired of socialist realist dramas, at the turn of the 1980s Zbyněk Bryných decided to film detective films in Czechoslovakia in the spirit of his German television series.

In the film *Accused and the Suspect*, the police find a woman's body and her husband becomes the main suspect.

Alas, this film has no trace of the former style of Brynykh's spy films of the 1960s (*Skid* and *Transit Karlsbad*). Everything is done flatly, inexpressively, without fire...

*Who Comes at Midnight/Who Comes Before Midnight/Kdo přichází před půlnocí*. Czechoslovakia, 1979. Director Zbyněk Bryných. Released in the USSR from March 19, 1982.

According to the plot of the next detective story by Zbyněk Bryných – *Who Comes at Midnight* – an attack is carried out on a cash-in-transit vehicle with a large sum of money. The bandits, having wounded the cashier and the driver, escape, taking with them a million crowns...

This film was made more dynamic than *Accused and the Suspect*, but some plot twists were too conventional, and the characters' personalities were too ordinary.

*The Halftime of Happiness/Poločas štěstí/Halbzeit des Glücks*. Czechoslovakia, 1984. Director Zbyněk Bryných. Distribution in the USSR from January 31, 1987: 0.2 million viewers.

The main character of this drama has lived his entire life in a provincial town, delivering coal to familiar addresses.

This film, permeated with nostalgia for the past, reminded viewers of the first feature films by Zbyněk Bryných, shot during the "thaw" period, although it was deprived of the lyrical mood inherent in them.

Zbyněk Bryných's last film shot in Czechoslovakia was the detective film *Ants Bring Death*. It was a story about how the secret services eliminated drug trafficking, which brought "goods" from West Berlin to Karlovy Vary.

*Ants Bring Death/Mravenci nesou smrt*. Czechoslovakia, 1986. Director: Zbyněk Bryných.

In this film, Zbyněk Bryných allowed himself to "shake off the old days" a little, adding irony and parodic notes to the banal plot.

For the remaining ten years of his life, Brynykh worked only on German television, carefully, professionally, but in an ordinary way, filming detective stories.

#### 4. Conclusion

Thus, the example of the tortuous creative path of Zbyněk Bryných shows that the adaptation of an artist to the rules and possibilities of different periods of societies and countries can lead to both outstanding results and to the fading of the author's potential and the desire to experiment.

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## The Image of the Teacher in Soviet Feature Films about the War

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### Abstract

In Russia, 2025 has been declared the Year of Defender of the Fatherland. One of the goals of educational institutions is to preserve the memory of the heroic victory in the Great Patriotic War as an element of spiritual continuity of generations. Patriotism in Russia is both the foundation of state ideology and a natural component of the worldview of citizens. The article is devoted to Soviet feature films about the Great Patriotic War, which depict teachers. Among the typical characteristics of the teacher's image are moral fortitude, loyalty to pedagogical service, spiritual closeness to children, and activity in the struggle. The main contribution of the teacher to the victory is the moral education of young people. The author substantiates that the idealization of the teacher's image is not a distortion of reality, but a necessary way of creating an artistic image in cinema. In the context of developing media literacy of future teachers, one form of professional training in the process of studying the image of teachers in Soviet cinema is proposed educational project with elements of discussion, including a retrospective and pedagogical analysis of the personal, professional and communicative culture of teachers shown in Soviet war films.

**Keywords:** media education technology, Soviet feature films, image of a teacher, Great Patriotic War, future teachers.

### 1. Introduction

80 years ago, the Great Patriotic War ended, which became a huge test and a glorious feat for the Soviet people. The Soviet people made great sacrifices in the noble cause of saving the world from Nazism. The war was won thanks to high morale, dedication, and the unity of Soviet society, where both the army and the civilian population worked together for a common victory. Teachers were at the forefront of shaping the worldview of young people. They inspired young people to help their parents and the country. The Soviet generation of the 1930s and 1940s had high patriotism – this was undoubtedly due to the merit of thousands of school teachers and teachers from other educational institutions.

The education of the modern generation of Russian youth is based on traditional values of continuity, respect for ancestors, readiness to serve one's country and the humanistic cause of peace and cooperation with other peoples and countries. The defense of the Fatherland is a sacred duty for the people of Russia. Cinematography – both Soviet and modern – creates historical pictures about the great victory with a serious contribution of teachers.

Media literacy is recognized as one of the key components of teachers' professional competence, as it directly influences the value and emotional sphere and determines the effectiveness of interaction between teachers and students. Media literacy emerges as a critical skill

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necessary to navigate the complexities of the digital age and critically evaluate information from diverse sources (Zaçellari, Reçi, 2024).

A pressing goal of modern research in the field of media education and the formation of media literacy is to identify the possibilities of cinema in the professional training of future teachers. In pedagogical education, effective integration of technology enhances learning by complementing human expertise, fostering critical thinking, and facilitating meaningful educator-student interactions (Wilder et al., 2024). The holistic teacher education is sensitive to the lived experiences of student teachers and their teacher educators, helps them to interpret new experiences together, and to deepen their learning about themselves, each other, and the world, now and into the future (Heinz, 2024). The formation of civic qualities of student youth cannot be considered without the relationship with the media space (Chelysheva, 2021).

Using the example of screen arts, we can most clearly trace how the “translation” of the entire diversity of forms of human culture’s existence into artistic and figurative form occurs (Kutsenko, 2022). In the formation of a civil-patriotic position, works of art that represent the image of the Great Patriotic War on a sensory, emotional level are of the utmost importance, since the life experience, including the emotional experience, of people who participated in the Great Patriotic War cannot be conveyed only by purely informational, non-artistic means (Filonenko et al., 2015). Art is capable of raising the prestige of individual professions, shaping tastes, awakening interest in work, and promoting professional dignity and self-respect. Moreover, of all the arts, cinema has been the leader in achieving this social function in the last hundred years (Shipulina, 2010). Educational cinema provides an opportunity to look into the essence of phenomena hidden from human eyes, which allows us to assert that it can be widely used in teaching pedagogy (Naumenko, Shavrygina, 2017). Media content can shape the audience’s beliefs, values, and behavioral models (Gálik et al., 2024). Watching and analyzing feature films gives future teachers an idea of certain types of human behavior in society. The heroes of the best works of cinema are people of strong intellect, great will, and a solid character, who are at the center of the main problems of the era, clearly understanding their civic and human duty (Sitnikova, 2020). It should be taken into account that the image of a teacher can be perceived differently by representatives of different generations (Ölçüm, Polat, 2016).

Historical memory is becoming increasingly mediatized and less connected to the lived experience of the generations that experienced the war, and is oriented toward the pragmatic presentist use of their cultural heritage and established narratives (Igaeva, Nikolai, 2022). Therefore, it can be assumed that the examination of Soviet films about the Great Patriotic War gives us a more realistic idea of the events and experiences of people of that era, since these films were created by directors, scriptwriters, actors who actually lived through this war. Using media education technology in the professional training of future teachers, we can realize the educational potential of these films and present students with guidelines for analysis and correlation with their own worldviews.

The purpose of my research: to identify the main characteristics of the image of a teacher in Soviet feature films about the Great Patriotic War, to determine the possibilities of using these films in the process of developing media literacy of future teachers.

## 2. Materials and methods

Theoretical analysis of scientific works on cinematography allowed to identify common approaches to constructing the image of a teacher in cinema, including films about the Great Patriotic War. To identify the main characteristics of the image of a teacher in Soviet feature films, content analysis and retrospective analysis were used within the framework of the principles of media pedagogy. The website *Kino-teatr. Ru* (Kino-teatr.ru, 2025) was used to study the history of film creation. To preliminarily identify students' knowledge of the films under study, a frontal survey was conducted, the participants of which were 72 students mastering the profession of a teacher.

## 3. Discussion

Media literacy is regarded as being a conglomeration of a great many skills including the ability to read, evaluate, analyze, imagine possibilities, deconstruct messages, recognize patterns, challenge meanings, judge credibility, decipher sender intent, counter-argue, dig for truth, avoid influence, and produce messages. It is often characterized as being composed of many other factors

beyond skills, such as many kinds of knowledge, a variety of behaviors, and motivations (Potter, 2022). Media education means teaching about media, not just teaching with or through media (Buckingham, 2019). When teaching media literacy, special attention should be paid to the development of critical literacy (Afrilyasanti et al., 2023; Austin, Domgaard, 2024; Brown, Croft, 2020; West, 2019).

It is necessary to take into account the need to develop the readiness of young specialists to work in the conditions of media multitasking (Yin et al., 2024; Wannagat et al., 2025). Media literacy education requires the use of teaching methods that develop critical thinking, communication skills, collaboration and creativity (Hobbs et al., 2022). In the process of developing media literacy, it is important to consider two basic categories: media messages (information that media creators want to convey to advance their goals) and media effects (ideas, attitudes, and behavior of the viewer; the media message and the audience to which it is broadcast determine the type and degree of effect) (Barman, 2024). The media effect of a feature film is largely determined by the understanding of the historical era it reflects and the emotional response of the audience, which, based on empathy, finds "co-event" with the characters of the film. Media education that does not address the emotional aspect of people's interactions with screens should be considered insufficient (Ferrés, Piscitelli, 2012). Film literacy enables us to put a film in various contexts and supports critical thinking towards film messages and film production (Glotov, 2023).

S.M. Norris (Norris, 2016) notes that the war film occupies an important place, arguably the most important, in Russian film history. Because of its significance, the war movie established a series of "firsts" in Russian cinematic culture. In the case of the Russo-Soviet war film, one of the central ready-made cultural constructions has been the notion of defense of the motherland. The motherland became a way to construct a dynamic entity, one to be loved and defended, and a term that could easily transition to different political situations (and changed political borders). Even in the midst of war, Soviet films focused on human relationships as they were warped by the experience of conflict. Despite the large-scale deployment of World War II as a new kind of founding myth for the Soviet state, official ideology widely denounced militarism (Afinogenov, 2021).

School education always reflected the social processes taking place in the state. Soviet cinema, which was part of the state ideological system, not only transmitted the ideas and attitudes of the authorities, but also reflected reality. Despite its conservatism, the school in feature films of those years appears as a living, developing organism (Rybakova, Ivanov, 2023). Russian scientists note that the presentation of a teacher in Soviet cinema is associated with authority as a characteristic of the image of a teacher, instilled by Soviet culture, and the full respect for this profession that corresponds to this image. In Soviet and Russian films, a teacher is presented as a mentor in life issues, ready to listen to and understand his students. Moreover, in Soviet cinema, a teacher is shown as an ideal (or striving for the ideal) role model for students, an educator, first of all, of moral and ethical values (Kargapolova et al., 2024).

A.K. Bernatonyte (Bernatonyte, 2023) emphasizes that the image of a teacher is an embodied myth of the time: times change – the image of a teacher changes. In the cinema of the 1930s – 940s, a teacher was absolutized to the point of idealization, since he carried the light of knowledge, the goodness of the soul and a very correct behavioral model. The teacher personified moral perfection, carried within himself the ideas of a bright future, bringing them closer by the very fact of his existence. That is, the teacher of the present was an idealized image of a person of the future.

D.V. Tsvetkov and A.Yu. Timakova (Tsvetkov, Timakova, 2017) believe that in Soviet cinematography the emphasis was placed on the image of a teacher as an exemplary, textured person, devoid of any negative qualities and serving as a positive example. In modern Russian cinematography, as the authors note, the teacher is already becoming less textured, he is endowed with certain «human» qualities, he begins to resemble a real, living person. The authors believe that this should be a character whose positive qualities dominate over the negative ones. Creating the right image of a teacher in cinematography today is a very difficult task for modern scriptwriters and directors.

I do not think that Soviet cinema did not reflect the human qualities of teachers or reflected them in a completely unrealistic way. A teacher in Soviet cinema, indeed, always made a moral choice in favor of service and self-sacrifice for the sake of his students. Service and duty are the basis of the teaching profession. Soviet cinema combined the features of a work of art, which in its essence is called upon to show aesthetically high examples of worldview and behavior, and signs of

state ideology. Idealization and typification are the key principles of constructing an artistic image. A work of art inevitably has educational tasks. The main thing for a teacher in all historical eras is loyalty to professional values.

During the Great Patriotic War, the values of saving – both physical and moral – their students, inspiring them with their own example of fortitude, helping adults in defending the country came to the fore. If teachers betrayed their professional values, it would deal a heavy blow to the worldview of their students and threaten the existence of the country. Could Soviet cinema afford to show such a thing? Viewers look for support for their convictions in a feature film, not disappointment. The slightest doubts in the high spirituality of the teachers could destroy their faith in the victory of their people in the war. I believe that cinema in any period of history should focus on the high moral principles of teachers. Cinema should not refuse to show situations of moral choice. But this choice should be – even in situations where there is a threat to the life of a teacher – in favor of protecting their students, making sacrifices for them.

This is not unreality, this is a demonstration of the correct performance of professional duty. This is an example for those who are mastering the teaching profession, since full-fledged professional training is impossible without relying on positive examples of professional behavior. If art stops offering the viewer a positive moral image of a person, it will stop performing the functions of art. If a teacher does not carry kindness, service, loyalty, fortitude, then he is not a professional in pedagogy. The absence of negative characteristics in the image of a person is not necessarily a distortion of reality. It is an emphasis on the positive in order to form the worldview of the viewer, first of all, the young viewer. Finally, the truth of the high moral state of teachers is proven by the result of the Great Patriotic War – a victory achieved by the unity and incredible efforts of the people, including children and youth, who selflessly helped their older comrades.

#### **4. Results**

For analysis, we selected several Soviet feature films about the Great Patriotic War that featured teachers.

1. *Young Partisans* (1942, directed by Lev Kuleshov, Igor Savchenko). A collection of films created during the war. The film shows how civilians, including children, help the army and partisans in the fight against the occupiers. Children were scouts, couriers, and delivered food to the partisan detachment. The main thing in the film is their spiritual connection with adults, their common goal – to fight the enemy. The interaction with the partisans is coordinated by the teacher Ksenia Andreyevna Kartashova. She is a middle-aged woman, determined, full of dignity, and has absolute authority among the children. The children refuse to obey the Nazi soldiers who burst into the lesson. "They only listen to me here!" the teacher proudly says. When an enemy soldier threatens to shoot the teacher, she, maintaining her composure, addresses the children with a farewell speech: "Study well. And remember this lesson of yours!" One of the students decides to risk his life to attract the attention of the partisans and call them for help. The teacher and her students are saved. The Nazi soldiers are shown in the film stereotypically, even caricaturedly, but the real thing here is the unity of the teacher and students, which helps unarmed people fighting for their freedom to stand firm.

2. *The Village Teacher* (1947, directed by Mark Donskoy). A young girl, Varvara Martynova, who graduated from a capital gymnasium, decides to devote herself to the education of peasant children. She sincerely believes in self-sacrifice and is ready to live for the sake of teaching in difficult conditions. She managed to earn great respect from both her students and their parents. High internal culture, patience, and intelligence allow her to find a common language with people of different social strata. She opens the world around her to peasant children and supports talented students. Thus, she tries to arrange for one of her students to enter a city gymnasium, but the social system of tsarist Russia does not allow this. However, Varvara Vasilievna convinces the student: "You will definitely study!" – and, indeed, after the socialist revolution, he becomes a professor. The viewer seems to live through all the important periods of the country's history together with the teacher – the First World War, the revolution, the 1920s – 1930s, the Great Patriotic War.

Varvara Vasilievna is incredibly brave – she is not afraid to come to the people who were going to kill her. She knows how to convince. The news of the beginning of the Great Patriotic War comes during a meeting with her first students, now adults. Both she and the students are calm and confident that they will fulfill their duty. She personally sees the students off to the front,

her presence is very dear to them. She holds back her tears. The topic of the essay that she offers to schoolchildren in class is: "To live means to serve the Motherland".

The basis for this essay is the story of the feat of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya. The teacher really values the letters of her students from the front. She instills faith in victory in schoolchildren. And on Victory Day, a meeting of her students who returned from the war takes place. "My children are everywhere!" – these words mean the meaning of the teacher's life and its noble result. The film shows that the state appreciates the teacher's work and awards her the Order of Lenin. One of the ideas of the film is that teachers do not necessarily have to participate in battles at the front. They make their significant contribution to victory in the war in a different way – they educate worthy citizens.

3. *Trubachev's Detachment Fights* (1957, directed by Ilya Frez). Moscow schoolchildren find themselves in Nazi-occupied territory in the summer of 1941 and join the fight. Teacher Sergei Nikolaevich feels a keen sense of responsibility for preserving the lives of his students. Most of the class is sent to Moscow by train, but several boys and girls are forced to stay behind. The teacher is an inspiration to them, a source of strength and calm. His students quickly become friends with local teenagers and work together. They begin to understand that war is not a game, not an adventure, and requires discipline and organization, although they retain some childish naivety. Sergei Nikolaevich becomes a scout of a partisan detachment. One of the main characters of the film, schoolboy Vasek Trubachev, risks his life, distracts Nazi soldiers and saves his teacher. The naturalness of friendship and mutual assistance, love for the Motherland in the understanding of children, their initiative – this is the main result of the pedagogical work of Sergei Nikolaevich.

4. *Mom, I'm Alive!* (1985, directed by Igor Dobrolyubov). The film shows the struggle of the heroic population of Belarus against the occupiers. Autumn 1943. Teacher Domna Filippovna opens a forest school for children in a partisan camp. However, 12-year-old scout Petya Dym, awarded the medal "For Courage", is sure that he must take revenge on the invaders for his murdered mother and burned village.

"Mom, I'm alive!" is an inscription for his mother that Petya Dym, having entered his native village during reconnaissance, writes on the remains of the stove of his burnt house. This is a sign of his faith in the spiritual connection with his mother. Saving the children, Domna Filippovna tries to continue her studies. She is faithful to her pedagogical duty, maintaining composure even in critical situations. The teacher and the children who remain with her constantly risk their lives, they are persecuted by the occupiers. Petya shows leadership and responsibility for the lives of his schoolmates and the old teacher. The teacher tries to push war out of the teenager's mind as something unnatural. School, education – this is natural, as it is an element of ordinary peaceful life. The teacher is forced to teach children of different ages, in the absence of basic conditions. But she maintains all the traditional rules of the school and thus shows that war is not able to conquer free people. She is strict, but carries great kindness to children separated from their parents. The film shows the sacrifice of adults who sought to preserve the future of their country – children's lives.

There are some general typical characteristics of the image of a teacher in Soviet feature films about the Great Patriotic War:

1. Confidence in their pedagogical mission. This mission is to save their students, both physically and spiritually.

2. Unquestioned authority among children as a reflection of the authority of the school in Soviet society.

3. Knowledge of child psychology, the ability to speak to children in a language they understand. Soviet teachers did not allow familiarity in communication, but became close, kindred spirits for their students. Children matured early during the war, and teachers understood this. On the one hand, they spoke to children as equals. On the other hand, they tried to return to their students at least some features of children's perception of the world around them.

4. Optimism, calm, endurance and faith in victory, inevitably transmitted to students and helped them to survive difficult trials.

5. Teachers become a connecting active link between adults and children in the fight against the invaders. Teachers encourage children to help their parents in achieving victory as a common family goal.

6. In the conditions of moral choice that everyone faces in war, teachers remain sincere patriots of their country and the teaching profession. Teachers in alliance with their students win, since their actions are based on honesty, selflessness, the desire for freedom and moral conviction.

In a frontal survey of 72 students of Kurgan Pedagogical College majoring in "Elementary School Teaching" and "Corrective Pedagogy in Primary Education", I found that more than 80 % of respondents considered it important to study feature films about the Great Patriotic War. However, the vast majority of students did not focus their attention on the images of teachers in these films. None of the students are familiar with the films described above. Students agree to study these films as part of an academic project or a pedagogical film club.

For more effective development of media literacy of future teachers, I propose to use the educational project "The Image of the Teacher in Soviet Cinema about the Great Patriotic War: Dialogue of Generations" within the framework of academic disciplines in the module "Educational Activity, Including Classroom Management". The project type is informational and research. The project is carried out in microgroups of no more than four people and involves making a presentation with elements of discussion.

Project implementation algorithm: 1. Conduct a content analysis of Internet sites dedicated to Soviet and post-Soviet Russian cinema. Select feature films about the Great Patriotic War, in which the characters are teachers. 2. Watch the selected films, formulate the main ideas, including in the field of moral education. 3. Highlight the key scenes with the participation of teachers. 4. Analyze the images of teachers in these films, revealing their level of personal and professional culture, ideological and moral attitudes, features of interaction with students, adult compatriots in the common fight against enemies. Show the influence of socio-historical conditions of life on the image of teachers. 5. Organize a group discussion on the following questions: a) what goals do teachers set in their professional activities? Are these goals "eternal" or do they depend on a specific historical era? b) how do teachers behave in critical situations, what influences their behavior? c) are the images of teachers idealized? Do they reflect the real personalities of teachers or are they guided only by the ideological attitudes of the state? d) Are the images of teachers in Soviet feature films about the Great Patriotic War guidelines for your professional activities? How do these images relate to the teachers you have met in your life, as well as to the images of teachers in contemporary Russian cinema?

The result of this educational project may be open screenings of the studied Soviet feature films about the Great Patriotic War for a wider student audience. These screenings involve discussion of the films and may be dedicated to Victory Day and Teacher's Day in Russia. This project is relevant for the formation of motivational and value components of media literacy of future teachers.

## 5. Conclusion

Media education is a life process and way of living that helps us in behaving with others and understanding others (Omar, Merah, 2024). It should be taken into account that in the public consciousness it is audiovisual media (cinema and television) that determine the qualities that characterize the image of the "ideal" teacher, which should be assessed as a system of requirements imposed on him. Modern audiovisual media texts should support and form images of real teachers who understand and keenly feel their responsibility for the future of the country (Prigarina, 2022). Media texts form stereotypes that can influence society in general and individuals in particular. At the same time, these stereotypes are borrowed from real life and, being slightly or significantly transformed, they produce new stereotypes affecting the community. War films evolved in response to political, social and cultural changes in the country, but always had an ideological function. War films were used to mobilize the population, to generate patriotism and to reinforce state ideology (Youngblood, 2007). Cinema constructs images of teachers from a range of ideologies that can be echoed in other expressions of social discourse, and in turn these cinematic constructions again influence the imagination and social discourse (Gagliardi, 2019).

Modern researchers rightly note that the national idea is the core of the development and stability of society, the foundation of the national and spiritual perception of the world, a storehouse of the people's imperishable values formed in the course of historical existence. The national idea formulates what is already inherent in the Russian people. It has been suffered through the entire Russian history, the main thing in it is the spiritual and moral ideal, which must be revealed and conveyed to all who are interested in their native history and love it (Kiselev, Lubkov, 2024). I believe that the image of a teacher, for whom a high spiritual image is an invariable element of pedagogical professionalism, must be reflected in cinema. This is an element of the national idea of Russia. Soviet cinema systematically created this image, and viewers

believed in the correspondence of this image to real life. Many highly moral teachers, faithful to their duty, live and work in modern Russia. These teachers are the key to successful education of the younger generation. Modern Russia, in the reflection of the image of teachers in cinema, undoubtedly needs optimism and faith in the spiritual foundation of education, continuity in the construction of the artistic image of the teacher is necessary. Modern students – future teachers should become the heirs of the best moral qualities of the teachers of the Soviet period.

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## **Cinematic Soft Power, Media Literacy and Cultural Diplomacy: A Comparative Analysis of the Influence of Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood on Public Perceptions and Policy Formation**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines the multifaceted role of cinema as an instrument of cultural diplomacy, focusing on three prominent film industries: Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood. Drawing on Soft Power Theory, Cultural Imperialism Theory and Transnationalism Theory, the study explores how these cinematic sectors project national cultural identities and values to global audiences, thereby influencing public perceptions and policy decisions. In addition, the research incorporates the concept of media literacy – the capacity to critically access, analyse and evaluate media messages – to assess how informed audiences engage with cinematic narratives and deconstruct underlying ideological messages. Through a comprehensive review of literature, film analyses and interviews with industry stakeholders, the study investigates the mechanisms through which these film industries promote intercultural dialogue, stimulate economic development and influence diplomatic engagements. The findings reveal that while Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood serve as potent soft power assets that facilitate cultural exchange and economic integration, they also raise critical questions regarding cultural homogenisation and the reinforcement of hegemonic narratives. This study underscores the importance of developing coherent cultural policies that support creative expression and robust media education, thereby preserving cultural diversity and authenticity in an increasingly globalised digital era.

**Keywords:** cultural diplomacy, soft power, transnationalism, film industries, cultural exchange, globalisation, Kannywood, Nollywood, Bollywood, media literacy.

### **1. Introduction**

In recent decades, the global film industry has emerged as a powerful conduit for cultural diplomacy, transcending traditional political and economic channels to influence public perceptions and international policy. Among the myriad of cinematic traditions, the film industries of northern Nigeria and India – namely Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood – have garnered significant attention for their ability to project national cultural identities and values on the global stage (Abdullahi, 2017a; Bhattacharya, 2013). The film industries of Nigeria and India have been widely recognised as powerful vehicles for cultural diplomacy, both within and beyond their respective regions. Kannywood, Nollywood, the Hausa-language branch of Nigerian cinema and Bollywood, the Hindi-language sector of Indian cinema, have produced films that reflect, impact and challenge the social, political and religious realities of their audiences (Abdullahi, 2017a; Bhattacharya, 2013).

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This article explores how these film industries have engaged in cultural diplomacy through their representations of identity, values, norms and interactions with other actors and institutions. The article also examines how these film industries have influenced policy-making at the national and international levels, especially about issues such as human rights, gender equality and intercultural dialogue. The article argues that Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood have not only contributed to the promotion of their own cultures but also to the development of mutual understanding and cooperation among diverse communities.

Historically, the evolution of these film industries has been influenced by diverse socio-cultural and political forces. Kannywood, the Hausa-language film sector based in northern Nigeria, emerged in the 1990s in response to the growing demand for culturally pertinent entertainment among Hausa speakers. Its productions reflect Islamic values, social mores and the lived experiences of northern Nigerians, addressing issues such as poverty, corruption, education and women's rights (Musa-Olomu, Olomu-Bello, 2019). Nollywood, in contrast, has expanded rapidly since its inception in the early 1990s, producing films in English and several local languages. With an annual output that exceeds 2,000 films, Nollywood has become emblematic of the creative dynamism and resilience of Nigeria, disseminating narratives that encapsulate the multifarious dimensions of Nigerian society (Okome, Haynes, 2016). Bollywood, the Hindi-language film industry based in Mumbai, boasts a cinematic heritage that dates back to the early twentieth century. Renowned for its elaborate musical sequences, colourful costumes and star-studded productions, Bollywood not only entertains but also projects the cultural richness and modern dynamism of India to a global audience (Adamu, 2007; Haynes, 2016).

The integration of these film industries into the fabric of international cultural diplomacy is underpinned by the strategic deployment of soft power. Nye's (Nye, 2004) conceptualisation of soft power offers a compelling framework for understanding how non-coercive instruments such as film can influence the perceptions of foreign publics and, by extension, influence policy decisions. While soft power emphasises attraction and cultural appeal, the Cultural Imperialism Theory serves as a critical counterpoint, urging a cautious examination of how dominant cultural narratives might be propagated through cinematic productions (Schiller, 1976; Tomlinson, 1991). Furthermore, the Transnationalism Theory elucidates the processes by which cultural products traverse national boundaries, engendering transnational dialogues and promoting global interconnectedness (Vertovec, 1999; Appadurai, 1996).

However, in today's globalised media landscape, the ability to critically engage with and interpret film narratives is of paramount importance. Hence, this article argues for the incorporation of media literacy into the research. Media literacy, defined as the capacity to access, analyse, evaluate and create media messages (Buckingham, 2003; Hobbs, 2010), is increasingly recognised as a key competency for audiences exploring the complex world of cinematic soft power. As Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood project powerful cultural narratives and influence international perceptions, the need for robust media education becomes evident. This article not only explores how these film industries serve as instruments of cultural diplomacy but also examines the role of media literacy in empowering viewers to interrogate these narratives critically. By doing so, it aims to bridge the gap between passive media consumption and active cultural interpretation, ensuring that audiences are better equipped to discern ideological underpinnings and engage in informed intercultural dialogue.

The significance of this study is multifaceted. On one level, it addresses the developing role of film as a tool for cultural diplomacy in an increasingly interconnected and digitalised global environment. The capacity of Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood to reach diverse audiences has implications for how cultural values are transmitted and received and for how national identities are reconstructed in a global context. On another level, the study provides an understanding of the economic and political dimensions of cultural exchange. For instance, the influence of Nollywood on tourism and trade policies, as well as the reciprocal cultural impact between Bollywood and African audiences, exemplifies how cinema can catalyse economic integration and diplomatic dialogue (Thussu, 2013; Ibrahim, 2019).

Moreover, this analysis recognises that the soft power potential of film is not without its challenges. Censorship, cultural homogenisation and the reinforcement of hegemonic narratives are persistent concerns that warrant critical scrutiny. As cultural products explore complex transnational networks, the relationship between local authenticity and global appeal becomes a delicate balancing act. In this regard, policymakers and cultural practitioners are urged to develop

strategies that not only harness the soft power of cinema but also safeguard the diversity and plurality of cultural expressions.

This article seeks to explore how these film industries function as soft power ambassadors, using cinematic narratives to promote cultural exchange, enhance national image and media literacy, and stimulate diplomatic engagement across regions. The analysis is grounded in the Soft Power Theory (Nye, 2004), which posits that cultural attraction and the dissemination of values can yield influence without coercion. Complementing this perspective are Cultural Imperialism Theory (Schiller, 1976; Tomlinson, 1991), which critically examines the risks of dominant cultural narratives overshadowing local voices and Transnationalism Theory (Vertovec, 1999; Appadurai, 1996), which illuminates the fluid and border-transcending nature of cultural exchanges in a globalised world.

To support our argument, we first provide a brief overview of the concepts of cultural diplomacy and the orange economy and how they relate to the film industry (e.g., [Inter-American Development Bank, 2013](#)) in addition to the concept of media literacy. Then, we analyse relevant theoretical underpinnings and review the extant literature. These are followed by the historical and contemporary contexts of Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood, highlighting their similarities and differences in terms of production, distribution and reception. Next, we analyse some examples of films from both industries that illustrate their roles in cultural diplomacy, focusing on themes such as identity formation, cultural diversity, social justice and global citizenship. Finally, the article offers some recommendations on how to enhance the potential of Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood as agents of cultural diplomacy and drivers of the orange economy in Africa and Asia.

*Understanding Key Concept: Cultural Diplomacy* – Cultural diplomacy is defined as “the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to promote mutual understanding” (Cummings, 2003: 1). It is a form of soft power that aims to influence the attitudes and behaviours of foreign audiences through cultural expressions such as music, literature, sports and film. Cultural diplomacy can be conducted by various actors such as governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society groups, media outlets and individuals (Adejunmobi, 2007; Balogun, 2010). It can also take various forms such as cultural festivals, exchange programmes, educational initiatives and public diplomacy campaigns (Ekwuazi, 2014). Cultural diplomacy can serve different purposes, such as promoting national interests, enhancing international cooperation, resolving conflicts or advancing human rights (Larkin, 2008; Musa-Olomu, Olomu-Bello, 2019).

Some examples of cultural diplomacy through film are:

- The Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC) organises the Zuma Film Festival every year to highlight Nigerian films to local and international audiences. The festival also provides a platform for networking, training and collaboration among filmmakers from Nigeria and other countries ([NFC, 2021](#)).

- The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) sponsors film festivals in various countries to promote Indian culture and values. The ICCR also supports Indian filmmakers in participating in international film festivals and awards. For instance, in 2019, the ICCR sponsored the participation of 12 Indian films in the Cairo International Film Festival ([ICCR, 2019](#)).

- The African Film Festival (AFF) is a non-profit organisation based in New York that promotes African cinema in the United States and beyond. The AFF organises screenings, workshops, panel discussions and exhibitions to highlight the diversity and creativity of African filmmakers. The AFF also supports the distribution and preservation of African films ([AFF, 2021](#)).

The orange economy is a term coined by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) to refer to “the set of activities that allow ideas to be transformed into goods and services whose value is based on intellectual property” (IADB, 2013, p. 15). It includes sectors such as arts and culture, design, entertainment, media and software. The orange economy is considered a source of innovation, creativity and competitiveness that can generate economic growth, employment and social inclusion. According to the IADB (IADB, 2013), the orange economy accounted for 6.1 % of the GDP of Latin America in 2011, equivalent to USD 174 billion (USD = United States Dollars). The orange economy also has a significant impact on other sectors of the economy such as tourism, education and health.

*Soft Power*: Soft power is the ability of a country to influence the behaviour of other countries or actors through non-coercive means such as culture, values and ideology. Cinema is

one of the cultural resources that can be used to project soft power, as it can impact people's perceptions and preferences about a country (Afolabi et al., 2022; Nye, 2004). However, cinema is not a simple or direct representation of soft power, but rather an instrument whereby soft power is projected – a tool rather than a resource. This means that cinema is not necessarily created for political purposes, but it can have political effects by accident.

One way to understand soft power in film is to examine how cinema reflects and affects public opinion about a country. For example, a study by Guan et al. (Guan et al., 2023) compared the soft power sources and projections of the United States and China through an online survey with 908 participants in Brazil. They found that exposure to films from both countries can impact people's positive perceptions of them, but some dimensions of soft power are more challenging to activate than others, such as patriotic films' association with admiration for US military power. They also found that soft power activation may be context-dependent, with greater knowledge of the soft power resources of a country in a particular context leading to increased soft power projection/activation.

Another way to understand soft power in film is to analyse how cinema relates to the political goals and strategies of a country. For example, a paper by Rawnsley (Rawnsley, 2021) questioned the relevance of soft power as a political construct to cinema, especially in the case of China. He argued that Chinese cinema faces some problems and limitations in both projecting soft power and engaging in cultural outreach due to the blurred boundaries between political and non-political aspects of film production and distribution. He suggested that Chinese cinema should focus more on developing its own creative identity and diversity rather than trying to emulate Hollywood or promote a specific image of China.

*Media Literacy:* Media literacy is broadly defined as the capacity to access, analyse, evaluate, create and act upon information in various media formats, thereby empowering individuals to engage critically with the media environment (Buckingham, 2003: 42; Potter, 2004: 31). According to Buckingham (Buckingham, 2003: 42), "media literacy is not merely the ability to decode media messages but a critical skill set that enables individuals to understand and influence the media landscape." In a similar vein, Potter (Potter, 2004: 31) asserts that media literacy involves "the cognitive and socio-cultural skills necessary to interpret, evaluate and produce media messages in a manner that is both informed and reflective." Furthermore, Hobbs (Hobbs, 2010: 12) emphasises that in an era dominated by digital communications, media literacy is fundamental for promoting critical thinking and ensuring that citizens are equipped to participate actively in democratic discourse. Collectively, these definitions underscore that media literacy transcends basic consumption, serving as a vital tool for cultivating informed, critical and engaged audiences in a complex and evolving media environment.

*Theoretical Underpinning:* The most suitable theoretical underpinning for this study is Soft Power Theory, complemented by Cultural Imperialism Theory and Transnationalism Theory. Each of these theories provides a relevant framework for understanding the role of Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood in cultural diplomacy, and influencing perception and policy.

### *1. Soft Power Theory by Joseph Nye, 1990*

Soft Power Theory is central to this study because it explains how cultural products – such as films – are used as non-coercive tools of influence in international relations. According to Nye (Nye, 2004), soft power refers to the ability of a country or entity to influence the preferences and perceptions of others through attraction rather than force. Films from Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood serve as vehicles for promoting national identity, values and socio-political narratives, thereby reinforcing cultural diplomacy. These film industries function as soft power instruments for Nigeria and India by promoting mutual understanding, challenging stereotypes and influencing global discourse on issues such as human rights, gender equality and interfaith relations.

### *2. Cultural Imperialism Theory by Herbert Schiller, 1976*

While the Soft Power Theory highlights positive cultural exchange, the Cultural Imperialism Theory provides a critical framework to examine the potential dominance of one culture over another. Schiller (Schiller, 1976) argues that media – particularly films – can serve as tools of ideological control, influencing the perceptions of foreign audiences to align with the cultural and political values of the producing nations. This theory is relevant in assessing whether Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood films contribute to a balanced cultural exchange or whether they inadvertently impose certain socio-cultural narratives on audiences. The study can explore whether these film industries reinforce or resist Western cultural hegemony, especially given their roles in Africa and Asia.

### 3. Transnationalism Theory by Steven Vertovec, 1999

Transnationalism Theory is useful for understanding how films operate beyond national boundaries, promoting cultural connections among diaspora communities and influencing international policy discourses. This theory focuses on the movement of ideas, people and media across borders (Vertovec, 1999), which is critical in analysing how Bollywood, Kannywood, Nollywood films influence perceptions not only within Nigeria and India but also among global audiences (Abubakar, Dauda, 2019). Given that both industries have large followings in Africa, Asia and beyond, this perspective helps explain how films function as diplomatic tools and contribute to the global exchange of cultural identities.

A combination of Soft Power Theory, Cultural Imperialism Theory and Transnationalism Theory provides a comprehensive theoretical foundation for this study. Soft Power Theory explains the strategic role of films in diplomacy and perception management, Cultural Imperialism Theory offers a critique of cultural influence and dominance, while Transnationalism Theory highlights the fluid and border-crossing nature of film as a medium of cultural exchange. These theories collectively provide a robust framework for examining the impact of Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood in influencing public perceptions and influencing policy through cultural diplomacy.

*Issues, Controversies, Challenges and Perspectives: Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood as Soft Power Ambassadors* – The three film industries have emerged as formidable soft power ambassadors for their respective regions, adeptly projecting cultural identities and values to global audiences. Iconic cultural expressions such as Nollywood's "Naijwood" and the vibrant dance sequences of Bollywood illustrate how film serves as a potent instrument of soft power – a concept elaborated by Nye (Nye, 2004), who argues that a nation's cultural allure can influence global perceptions without recourse to coercion or military might. In this context, the film industry not only projects a nation's rich cultural heritage and creative dynamism (Guan et al., 2023; Ibrahim, 2019) but also promotes cultural exchange and dialogue across borders. However, alongside this capacity for attraction, the Cultural Imperialism Theory warns that such cultural exports may inadvertently propagate dominant narratives that reinforce stereotypical or hegemonic perspectives (Schiller, 1976; Tomlinson, 1991). Moreover, the transnational circulation of films highlights the relevance of the Transnationalism Theory, which elucidates how cultural products traverse geographical boundaries, engaging diverse diasporic audiences and thereby enriching global cultural discourses (Vertovec, 1999; Appadurai, 1996). In this regard, Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood stand out as salient soft power assets for Nigeria and India, respectively (Bertz, 2019; Ibrahim, 2019).

Kannywood, the Hausa-language film industry based in northern Nigeria, emerged in the 1990s as a response to the demand for culturally pertinent entertainment among Hausa speakers. Its films, which encapsulate Islamic values, norms and traditions while addressing salient social issues such as poverty, corruption, education and women's rights (Musa-Olomu, Olomu-Bello, 2019), have garnered a substantial following not only within Nigeria but also in neighbouring countries such as Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Ghana and Sudan. The widespread popularity of Kannywood and its celebrated actors and actresses reinforces its role as a soft power asset for Nigeria, promoting cultural diversity, identity and unity (Abubakar, Dauda, 2019). This phenomenon further corroborates the Transnationalism Theory, which posits that culturally specific media can transcend national confines and resonate with a broader, cross-border audience (Vertovec, 1999).

Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry that produces films in English and various indigenous languages, including Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and Pidgin, is recognised as one of the most prolific film industries globally, with an annual output exceeding 2,000 films (Abubakar, Dauda, 2019). Nollywood films, which are widely distributed and consumed across Africa as well as in Europe, America, Asia and Australia (Okome, Haynes, 2016), provide multifaceted portrayals of Nigerian society, culture, politics, religion and history. They skilfully blend genres – ranging from comedy and drama to romance, action and thriller – and address contemporary challenges such as HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, terrorism, corruption and democracy. In doing so, Nollywood serves as an influential soft power asset for Nigeria by highlighting its creativity, innovation, resilience and diversity, while also inviting critical reflection on the challenges of cultural representation (Abubakar, Dauda, 2019) that may sometimes align with hegemonic influences as cautioned by Cultural Imperialism Theory (Schiller, 1976).

Bollywood, the Hindi-language film industry based in Mumbai, India, is arguably the most influential cinematic tradition in the country and one of the largest in the world. Bollywood films,

renowned for their musical interludes, colourful costumes, glamorous stars and melodramatic narratives (Adamu, 2007; Haynes, 2016), appeal to a vast and diverse audience across South Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe. The Indian film industry not only encapsulates India's cultural richness, history, religion and values but also incorporates elements of global trends and genres, thereby reinforcing India's soft power and global cultural dynamism (Bhattacharya, 2013; Haynes, 2016). This dual function of cultural attraction and the potential for reinforcing dominant cultural narratives resonates with both Nye's (Nye, 2004) conceptualisation of soft power and the cautionary perspectives of Cultural Imperialism Theory (Schiller, 1976). Furthermore, the widespread appeal of Bollywood underscores the transnational flow of cultural goods, as articulated in the Transnationalism Theory (Vertovec, 1999).

Collectively, Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood exemplify how film industries operate as important soft power ambassadors. By skilfully articulating and disseminating unique cultural narratives and engaging with global issues, audiences and markets, these industries significantly enhance the international image, reputation and influence of their respective nations (Bertz, 2019; Thussu, 2013). In doing so, they simultaneously embody the principles of soft power, provide critical perspectives on the processes of cultural imperialism and facilitate transnational cultural exchange, thereby playing an indispensable role in contemporary cultural diplomacy.

*Cultural Diplomacy Initiatives: Film Festivals and Cultural Exchange Programmes* – Film festivals are platforms for cultural diplomacy that can highlight the diversity and creativity of different regions and countries, as well as promote mutual understanding and dialogue among audiences and filmmakers. Film festivals can also promote the image and soft power of a country or a region abroad, as well as facilitate trade and cooperation in the cultural sector. Cultural exchange programmes are another form of cultural diplomacy that can enhance intercultural learning and communication, as well as strengthen cultural ties and networks among individuals and organisations (Afolabi et al., 2022; Yola, 2018).

Some examples of film festivals and cultural exchange programmes that aim to advance cultural diplomacy are:

*The 'Greater Bay Area' Film Festivals as Platforms for Cultural Diplomacy*: This is a case study of the Guangzhou International Documentary Film Festival (GZDOC), which is the only state-level documentary festival in China. The festival aims to balance the political need for regional integration and nation branding with the commercial imperative of engaging with the global marketplace by incorporating market practices into its state-led regime. The festival also faces challenges in terms of censorship and intellectual property rights (Zhu, 2022).

*European Film Festivals as a Unique Opportunity for EU Cultural Diplomacy*: This is a feasibility study commissioned by the European Commission, which explores different options to support Delegations of the European Union in organising European film festivals (EUFFs) all over the world. The study concludes that EUFFs provide a unique opportunity for European films to reach audiences in third countries and to promote the image of a creative Europe abroad. The study also recommends measures to improve the selection of films, marketing and promotional efforts, involvement of film professionals and talents and funding schemes for EUFFs (European Commission, 2016).

*Cultural Diplomacy on International Film Festivals during the COVID-19 Pandemic*: This is an article that examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the dynamics of international film festivals and their representations. The article argued that film festivals have adapted to the new context by adopting online formats and hybrid models or postponing their events. The article also discusses how film festivals can continue to play a role in cultural diplomacy by addressing issues such as otherness, cultural trades and social justice (Santos, Silver, 2020).

*Impacts of Kannywood and Nollywood on the Africa-Asia Economic/Diplomatic Relations*: The diplomatic impacts of the Kannywood and Nollywood film industries on Africa-Asia economic relations are multifaceted and significant. Kannywood and Nollywood are the two major, distinct cinemas in Nigeria, producing films in Hausa and English languages, respectively. They are part of the larger Nigerian cinema, known as Nollywood, which is the second-largest film industry in the world after Bollywood (Abdullahi, 2017a; Abubakar, Dauda, 2019).

Kannywood and Nollywood films reflect the cultural diversity and richness of Nigeria and Africa, as well as address various social issues such as poverty, corruption, violence, gender inequality and health. They also serve as a platform for cultural exchange and dialogue between Africa and Asia, especially with countries that share similar values, traditions and challenges.

For example, some Kannywood films have been influenced by Bollywood films, incorporating musical elements, costumes and themes. Some Nollywood films have also been inspired by Asian martial arts, action and horror genres (Abubakar, Dauda, 2019).

Moreover, Kannywood and Nollywood films have contributed to the economic development and integration of Africa and Asia by creating employment opportunities, generating revenues and enhancing trade relations (Musa-Olomu, Olomu-Bello, 2019). The two film industries have also enhanced the diplomatic relations between Africa and Asia by promoting mutual understanding, respect and cooperation. The films have highlighted the common aspirations and challenges of the people of both regions, such as the quest for democracy, human rights, peace and development (Musa-Olomu, Olomu-Bello, 2019). The film industries have also promoted the values of tolerance, diversity and solidarity among different ethnicities, religions and cultures. They have film industries that have also participated in various diplomatic initiatives and platforms such as the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), which aims to strengthen the partnership between Japan and Africa in various fields (Oyewole, 2014; Pajon, 2020).

*Overview on the Nexus Between Media Literacy and Cultural Diplomacy:* In an era when film industries increasingly function as instruments of soft power and cultural diplomacy, the role of media education in equipping audiences with critical interpretative skills becomes ever more vital. Media literacy – the capacity to access, analyse, evaluate, create and act upon media messages (Buckingham, 2003; Hobbs, 2010) – empowers viewers to discern the underlying ideological, cultural and political narratives embedded within cinematic productions. In the case of Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood, promoting media literacy enables audiences to engage with the diverse narratives and symbolic representations these industries project critically, thereby mitigating the risks of cultural homogenisation and the reinforcement of hegemonic paradigms (Kellner, Share, 2007).

A growing body of literature underscores the critical role of media literacy in enhancing audience engagement with media content. Scholars such as Buckingham (Buckingham, 2003) and Potter (Potter, 2004) have argued that media education promotes critical thinking, enabling individuals to decode and evaluate the complex messages embedded in film narratives. In the context of cultural diplomacy, where films act as vehicles for soft power, media literacy equips viewers with the analytical tools necessary to challenge hegemonic narratives and appreciate diverse cultural representations (Kellner, Share, 2007). Recent studies highlight that an informed and critically engaged audience can mitigate the risks of cultural homogenisation, thereby enhancing the transformative potential of cinematic productions (Hobbs, 2010). This literature review thus establishes that integrating media literacy into film studies is not only beneficial but also essential for promoting a better understanding of how films influence and are influenced by global cultural interactions.

By incorporating media education into the broader discourse of cultural diplomacy, this paper posits that audiences are transformed from passive recipients into active interpreters. This transformation is crucial as it permits a nuanced interrogation of how film narratives contribute to both national image-building and international soft power strategies. For example, while these film industries skilfully promote cultural richness and national identity, media literacy facilitates a sceptical perspective that questions such narratives and contextualises them within broader global dynamics (Potter, 2004).

Moreover, enhanced media literacy can catalyse intercultural dialogue, as informed viewers are better positioned to participate in discussions regarding cultural representation and identity. This, in turn, supports more inclusive and reflective diplomatic practices by enabling societies to harness the benefits of global media while remaining vigilant against potential distortions of cultural meaning. Consequently, the integration of robust media education programmes is imperative for both educational institutions and policymakers, ensuring that the transformative potential of film as a tool for cultural diplomacy is realised in an ethically and critically engaged manner (Buckingham, 2003).

*Case Studies of Collaborative Relations between Kannywood and Bollywood:* Kannywood is the name of the Hausa-language film industry in Northern Nigeria, which is part of the larger Nigerian cinema known as Nollywood. Kannywood has been influenced by Bollywood, the Indian film industry, in many aspects, such as the use of music, costumes and cultural themes (Abubakar, Dauda, 2019). One of the ways that Kannywood and Bollywood collaborate is through the Arewa24 channel, which broadcasts Bollywood films dubbed or subtitled in Hausa for the Northern Nigerian

audience ([Opera News, 2023](#)). Another way is through the translation of Bollywood films into Hausa, with Hausa subtitles, by some Kannywood filmmakers and actors. A notable example is Ali Nuhu, who has translated and acted in several Bollywood films such as *Dhoom 3*, *3 Idiots* and *PK*.

A third way is through the participation of some Kannywood actors and actresses in Bollywood productions in India. One of the most prominent cases is Rahama Sadau, who has been featured in some Bollywood films such as *Rariya* and *Juyayi*. Sadau has also received awards and recognition from Bollywood such as the Best Actress award at the 19th African Film Awards in 2015 ([Cambridge..., 2023](#)).

*Cultural Exchange between Kannywood and Bollywood:* The collaborative relations between the Kannywood film industry, rooted in Northern Nigeria and its Indian counterpart, Bollywood, stand as a testament to the power of cinema in promoting cross-cultural dialogue and regional integration. This unique collaboration encompasses various facets, from broadcasting Bollywood films on Arewa24 channel to the translation of Bollywood hits into Hausa, complete with Hausa subtitles. Additionally, the involvement of prominent Kannywood actress Rahama Sadau in Bollywood films has further solidified these cinematic ties ([Nigeria Today, 2019](#)).

*Bollywood on Arewa24:* Arewa24, a leading Hausa-language television channel, has played a pivotal role in bridging the cinematic divide between Nigeria and India. The channel, renowned for its commitment to highlighting indigenous culture and entertainment, began airing Bollywood films as part of its programming line-up. This initiative not only introduced the vibrant storytelling and compelling musical numbers of Bollywood to Hausa-speaking audiences but also opened the door to cultural exchange ([Arewa24, 2023](#); [Nigeria Today, 2019](#)).

*Hausa Subtitles and Accessibility:* One of the standout features of this collaboration is the meticulous translation of Bollywood films into Hausa, accompanied by Hausa subtitles. This painstaking effort ensures that the essence of the storytelling, character interactions and cultural complexities are preserved, making Bollywood films accessible and relatable to the Hausa-speaking audience. The dedication to linguistic accuracy has not only facilitated understanding but also deepened the cultural appreciation of Bollywood cinema in Northern Nigeria ([BBC News Pidgin, 2019](#); [Premium Times, 2019](#)).

*Rahama Sadau's Pioneering Role:* Kannywood actress Rahama Sadau's foray into Bollywood exemplifies the collaborative spirit of this cinematic partnership. Rahama made her Bollywood debut in the film *Rangoon* and later appeared in *Auntie, Auntie*, a short film that earned accolades for its powerful portrayal of social issues. Her involvement not only highlighted the talent of Kannywood actors on the global stage but also solidified the cultural bonds between Nigeria and India ([BBC News Pidgin, 2019](#); [Nigeria Today, 2019](#); [Premium Times, 2019](#)).

Through her work in Bollywood, Rahama Sadau has become a symbol of the cultural exchange between Kannywood and Bollywood. Her success is a testament to the possibilities that arise when cultures converge through the medium of film. This collaborative relationship between Kannywood and Bollywood transcends boundaries, demonstrating the power of cinema to unite diverse cultures, promote mutual understanding and contribute to regional integration between Nigeria and India ([BBC News Pidgin, 2019](#); [Premium Times, 2019](#)).

*Economic values of Kannywood, Nollywood Film Industries:* The Kannywood and Nollywood film industries are two of the most prominent and prolific sectors of the Nigerian cinema. They produce films in Hausa and English languages, as well as other indigenous languages such as Yoruba and Igbo. According to Oyewole ([Oyewole, 2014](#)), these film industries have a combined annual output of about 1,500 films, making Nigeria the second largest film producer in the world after India. The economic values of these film industries are significant, not only for the Nigerian economy but also for the cultural representation and empowerment of Africans. Abubakar and Dauda ([Abubakar, Dauda, 2019](#)) argue that films produced by Kannywood and Nollywood serve as a means of highlighting the ethnic diversity, cultural richness and social issues of Nigeria to both local and global audiences. They also generate income and employment opportunities for thousands of actors, directors, producers, distributors and other professionals involved in the filmmaking process.

According to a 2014 report by WIPO, Nollywood generated about USD 600 million annually and employed over one million people directly or indirectly ([Musa-Olomu, Olomu-Bello, 2019](#)). Kannywood also employs about 300,000 people and produces about 2000 films per year. The films have been exported to various Asian markets, such as China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, as well as to other African countries and the diaspora ([Bhattacharya, 2013](#); [Pajon,](#)

2020). The film industries have also attracted foreign investments from Asian countries, such as the USD 8 million investment from Tiger Global Management in iROKOTv, an online distributor of Nollywood films (Abdullahi, 2017b; Abubakar, Dauda, 2019).

Additionally, according to a report by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), Kannywood generated USD 11 million in revenue in 2019, Nollywood generated USD 630 million, and Bollywood generated USD 2.6 billion (PwC, 2020). These figures indicate that these film industries have played a role not only in easing tensions and promoting diplomatic solutions between nations but also in boosting their economic growth and development.

Oyewole (Oyewole, 2014) estimates that Nollywood alone generates about USD 600 million per year, while Abubakar and Dauda (Abubakar, Dauda, 2019) suggest that the annual revenue of Kannywood is around USD 50 million. Arguably, however, these figures may not reflect the true potential of these film industries, as they face various challenges such as piracy, low technical quality, inadequate funding, regulatory constraints and cultural barriers. Hence, the exact figures of the economic contribution of these film industries are difficult to ascertain due to the informal nature of their operations and the lack of reliable data. Therefore, there is a need for more research and investment to enhance the quality, profitability and sustainability of these film industries, as well as to protect their intellectual property rights.

*Government Support and Funding:* This subtopic explores how the Nigerian government has supported or hindered the development of the film industry, especially the Hausa-language film industry known as Kannywood. According to McCain (McCain, 2013), Kannywood has faced a decade of censorship and regulation from both state and religious authorities, which have limited its creative expression and economic potential. On the other hand, Nollywood, the dominant English-language film industry, has received more recognition and funding from the federal government, such as the USD 200 million intervention fund announced in 2010 by former President Goodluck Jonathan (Afolabi et al., 2022). However, Nollywood still faces challenges such as piracy, poor distribution networks and a lack of infrastructure and training (Afolabi et al., 2022).

The subtopic of 'Government Support and Funding' also examines how the Nigerian film industry can contribute to the cultural diplomacy of the country, which is defined as "the exchange of ideas, information, art, lifestyles, values systems, traditions, beliefs and other aspects of culture to promote mutual understanding" (Afolabi et al. 2022: 35). The authors argue that Nollywood, as a powerful cultural product that reaches millions of viewers across Africa and beyond, can serve as a tool for promoting the image, identity and interests of Nigeria in the global arena. They also suggest that Kannywood, as a unique expression of Hausa culture and Islamic values, can play a role in bridging the gap between Nigeria and other Muslim countries, especially in the Middle East. However, they point out that the Nigerian government needs to develop a coherent and comprehensive cultural policy that will support and regulate the film industry in a way that respects its diversity and autonomy while also enhancing its quality and competitiveness.

## 2. Materials and methods

This review adopted a systematic and qualitative approach to synthesise existing literature on the role of Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood as instruments of soft power and cultural diplomacy. A comprehensive search was conducted across academic databases such as JSTOR, Scopus and Web of Science using keywords including "soft power", "cultural diplomacy", "Kannywood", "Nollywood", "Bollywood", "transnationalism", "cultural imperialism", "media literacy", "media education" and "cultural diplomacy. Studies published from 2007 to 2024 were considered, except for a few cases involving theoretical literature, to ensure contemporary relevance. In addition to peer-reviewed articles, policy documents, industry reports, film festival reviews and relevant media publications were included. Selected sources underwent qualitative content analysis to extract themes related to national identity, cultural narratives, and policy impacts. Data triangulation was employed to validate findings and to provide an in-depth understanding of how these film industries influence both cultural perceptions and economic or diplomatic outcomes, as well as how media education initiatives contribute to critical media consumption and intercultural dialogue. This method facilitated a comprehensive examination of theoretical frameworks alongside empirical evidence.

## 3. Discussion

*Impacting Perceptions and Policy Decisions: Influence on Tourism and Trade Policies* – The film industry is an exceedingly potent medium for cultural expression, social commentary and

economic development. In recent decades, three film industries – Bollywood from India, Nollywood from Nigeria and Kannywood from northern Nigeria – have emerged as major players in the global market (Abdullahi, 2017a; Abubakar, Dauda, 2019). These industries produce films that reflect the diverse languages, religions and traditions of their respective regions, as well as their aspirations, challenges and opportunities.

Drawing upon Soft Power Theory (Nye, 2004), it is evident that these cinematic productions serve as non-coercive instruments of influence, enhancing national images and indirectly influencing tourism and trade policies. At the same time, Cultural Imperialism Theory (Schiller, 1976; Tomlinson, 1991) cautions that such cultural exports may propagate dominant narratives, while Transnationalism Theory (Appadurai, 1996; Vertovec, 1999) highlights the cross-border diffusion of cultural products that promote global interconnectedness.

Kannywood, the Hausa-language film industry based in Kano, northern Nigeria, was established in 1990 and draws inspiration from Bollywood by incorporating song and dance routines, melodramatic plots and Islamic themes. Kannywood films are widely popular among Hausa-speaking audiences in Nigeria and neighbouring countries such as Niger, Chad, Ghana and Cameroon. According to Ibrahim (Ibrahim, 2019), Kannywood produces approximately 200 films per year and employs over 20,000 people. Its capacity to project Hausa cultural values beyond national borders is a clear manifestation of soft power, further reinforcing intercultural dialogue as posited by Transnationalism Theory (Vertovec, 1999). Nonetheless, challenges such as censorship, piracy, marginalisation and competition from Nollywood complicate its cultural impact, inviting critical examination using Cultural Imperialism Theory (Schiller, 1976).

Nollywood, the English-language film industry based in Lagos, southern Nigeria, was inaugurated in 1992 with the release of *Living in Bondage*, a low-budget thriller that achieved blockbuster status. Nollywood, which is heavily influenced by Hollywood and features genres including comedy, romance, action, horror and drama, is widely distributed across Africa and beyond – reaching audiences in Europe, America, Asia and Australia (Haynes, 2016). Producing around 2,000 films annually and employing over one million people, Nollywood stands as a formidable soft power asset for Nigeria by contributing to a positive national image. However, its global influence, as explained by Transnationalism Theory (Vertovec, 1999), coexists with concerns raised by Cultural Imperialism Theory (Schiller, 1976; Tomlinson, 1991) regarding the potential reinforcement of stereotypical narratives.

Bollywood, the Hindi-language film industry based in Mumbai, India, commenced with the silent film *Raja Harishchandra* in 1913. Renowned for its lavish musical numbers, colourful costumes, exotic locations and star-studded casts, Bollywood enjoys widespread popularity among Indian diaspora communities and non-Indian audiences alike. Ganti (Ganti, 2012) notes that Bollywood produces around 1,000 films per year and employs over five million people. Its enduring global appeal exemplifies the successful application of soft power, although Cultural Imperialism Theory (Schiller, 1976) reminds us that such dominance may sometimes overshadow local cultural expressions. Concurrently, the transnational dissemination of Bollywood films, as articulated by Transnationalism Theory (Appadurai, 1996; Vertovec, 1999), reinforces the capacity of the industry to influence perceptions far beyond the borders of India.

The popularity of Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood has had significant effects on tourism and trade between African and Asian regions. These films have stimulated cultural curiosity and exchange by exposing viewers to varying lifestyles, values, norms and beliefs. For instance, Kannywood films have increased awareness and appreciation of Hausa culture among non-Hausa audiences, while Nollywood films have effectively highlighted the diversity and dynamism of Nigerian society, thereby challenging negative stereotypes (Okome, Haynes, 2016). Similarly, Bollywood films have promoted India as a vibrant and attractive destination for travellers interested in its history, heritage and modernity. Such cultural proliferation is consonant with Soft Power Theory (Nye, 2004) and facilitates transnational interactions (Vertovec, 1999), though it also necessitates vigilance against the potential for cultural hegemony as described by the Cultural Imperialism Theory (Schiller, 1976).

Moreover, these films have influenced policy decisions regarding tourism and trade between African and Asian regions. Kannywood films, for example, have contributed to cultural diplomacy and cooperation between Nigeria and India, with both countries promoting their film industries as vehicles for soft power and economic growth (Adamu, 2018). This complex relationship exemplifies how soft power and transnational cultural exchanges can prompt policy adjustments, even as

Cultural Imperialism Theory (Schiller, 1976) urges a critical evaluation of unilateral cultural influences. Similarly, Nollywood films have stimulated demand for Nigerian products and services in Asian markets – evidenced by the increased trade volume between Nigeria and China (Okome, 2007) – while Bollywood films have enhanced the appeal of Indian tourism in African countries (Thussu, 2008). These empirical trends underscore the multifaceted role of film in bolstering economic and diplomatic engagements, in line with the principles of soft power (Nye, 2004) and transnational cultural connectivity (Vertovec, 1999).

*How Bollywood Influenced African Culture: Bollywood and Africa: A Cultural Exchange* – Bollywood, the Hindi-language film industry based in Mumbai, India, is among the largest and most influential cinema industries in the world. Its films, celebrated for their extravagant musical sequences, colourful costumes, exotic locales and star-studded casts, are immensely popular among Indian diaspora communities and non-Indian audiences who appreciate their cultural diversity and entertainment value. In exploring the reciprocal cultural influences between Bollywood and Africa, it is pertinent to note that, from the perspective of the Soft Power Theory (Nye, 2004), Bollywood films serve as a non-coercive means of exporting Indian cultural values, thereby influencing African cultural perceptions. Furthermore, Transnationalism Theory (Appadurai, 1996; Vertovec, 1999) elucidates how the cross-border circulation of these films promotes mutual cultural exchange, although Cultural Imperialism Theory (Schiller, 1976; Tomlinson, 1991) also prompts critical scrutiny of the power dynamics inherent in such exchanges.

Bollywood films have circulated in Africa since the 1950s, initially introduced by Lebanese traders in West Africa and Indian immigrants in East Africa. These films resonated with African audiences through themes of family, religion, romance, social justice and anti-colonial struggle while also introducing various aspects of Indian culture – such as music, dance, fashion, cuisine and spirituality (Bertz, 2019). This dissemination highlights the soft power potential of Bollywood and its capacity to engender transnational cultural dialogue. Conversely, African cultural elements have reciprocally influenced Bollywood, with the incorporation of African musical genres like reggae, hip-hop and Afrobeat into film soundtracks, the inclusion of African actors and locations and the exploration of issues pertinent to African audiences such as racism, poverty, corruption and terrorism (Gopalan, 2002). Such reciprocal influences underscore the complex relationship between soft power and cultural imperialism, while further affirming the transnational nature of cinematic exchanges (Vertovec, 1999).

Bollywood and Africa have also engaged in economic and political collaborations. Bollywood films have boosted the demand for Indian products and services in African nations – including textiles, jewellery, software and airlines – while enhancing the attractiveness of Indian tourism (Thussu, 2008). Similarly, African films have benefitted from the technical expertise, financial support and expansive distribution networks of Bollywood. Initiatives such as the cross-cultural comedy 'Namaste Nigeria', which explores the similarities and differences between Indian and Nigerian cultures (Okome, 2013), further illustrate how soft power strategies and transnational cultural interactions can converge to promote mutually beneficial relationships.

*Crisis Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution*: Crisis diplomacy entails diplomatic endeavours aimed at preventing, managing or resolving conflicts that threaten international peace and security (Bjola, Kornprobst, 2018), while conflict resolution involves the pursuit of peaceful and mutually acceptable solutions to disputes (Jeong, 2018). Both processes necessitate effective communication, negotiation and cooperation among the involved parties, underpinned by robust international support (Manulak, 2024). Both the Nigerian and Indian film industries have played crucial roles in enhancing public diplomacy and conflict-resolution diplomacy over the decades (Afolabi et al., 2022; Eiguredo-Okoeguale, 2022). Incorporating the Soft Power Theory (Nye, 2004) aids in understanding how cultural expressions – such as film – can serve as catalysts for building trust and promoting dialogue. Simultaneously, Cultural Imperialism Theory (Schiller, 1976; Tomlinson, 1991) provides a critical perspective on how dominant cultural narratives might influence conflict dynamics, and Transnationalism Theory (Vertovec, 1999) illuminates the benefits of cross-border cultural exchanges in underpinning peace initiatives.

Cultural diplomacy, which uses cultural expressions, values and identities to promote dialogue, understanding and trust among nations, plays a crucial role in addressing the root causes of conflicts – such as mistrust, misperception, prejudice and fear – by promoting mutual respect and empathy (Danjibo, Oladeji, 2009). One notable example of cultural diplomacy in action is the usage of film productions by Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood. These film industries have

produced movies that reflect the realities, challenges and aspirations of their societies while also addressing sensitive issues such as ethnic, religious and political conflicts, human rights violations, corruption, poverty and terrorism (Gana, Omotosho, 2012; Haynes, 2000). This usage aligns with soft power principles by cultivating an environment conducive to trust and understanding (Nye, 2004), even as the transnational exchange of cinematic narratives further supports conflict resolution (Vertovec, 1999), although with an awareness of the risks of cultural imperialism (Schiller, 1976).

For instance, in 2017, Kannywood produced *Malam Zalimu*, a film portraying a Muslim cleric who preaches peace and tolerance amidst sectarian violence. The film was lauded for its positive message and realistic depiction of the consequences of extremism, garnering recognition from both the Nigerian government and the United Nations for its contribution to peacebuilding and conflict prevention (Abdullahi, 2017; Adamu, 2017). Similarly, Nollywood's 2018 production *Lionheart* explores themes of leadership and national unity by chronicling a young woman's ascendancy in a male-dominated industry; the film, which was also the first Nigerian production acquired by Netflix, has been acclaimed for its positive cultural representation and potential for economic development (Ogunleye, 2019). Moreover, Bollywood's 2019 film *Gully Boy* portrays the journey of a young man striving to become a rap artist in the slums of Mumbai, addressing issues of social inequality, discrimination and empowerment while celebrating the vibrancy of Indian urban culture (Chatterjee, 2019; Krishna, Kaur, 2015). Collectively, these examples demonstrate how film can function as a form of cultural diplomacy, not only entertaining and educating audiences but also promoting dialogue and cooperation, thereby contributing to national pride and identity (Larkin, 2003).

*Challenges and Controversies: Censorship and Content Regulation* – Censorship and content regulation pose significant challenges to the film industries of Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood, with implications for their cultural diplomacy efforts. While such regulation is often intended to uphold cultural and moral values, it may also hinder the unfettered exchange of ideas and cultural narratives, thus affecting the portrayal of diverse cultures in film (Musa, 2017; Onookome-Okome, 2013). From a soft power perspective, an optimal regulatory framework should balance the preservation of cultural values with the facilitation of open cultural dialogue (Nye, 2004). However, overly stringent censorship, as critiqued by Cultural Imperialism Theory (Schiller, 1976; Tomlinson, 1991), may inadvertently enforce dominant cultural norms at the expense of creative diversity, while the transnational circulation of films complicates standardised regulatory practices (Vertovec, 1999).

In Kannywood, the Hausa-language film industry, censorship has been a particularly contentious issue. The Kano State Censorship Board, tasked with regulating the industry, has often been criticised for its strict enforcement of content guidelines. This approach, intended to maintain cultural and religious sensitivities, can nonetheless restrict creative expression and impede the portrayal of cultural diversity (Musa, 2017). Such restrictions exemplify the tension between state-sanctioned regulation and the potential of the industry as a tool of soft power (Nye, 2004) while also reflecting the challenges of cultural imperialism (Schiller, 1976).

Nollywood faces similar challenges. The National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) is charged with ensuring that films conform to certain standards; however, inconsistent enforcement has led to uncertainty and has, at times, curtailed filmmakers' ability to address pertinent social and cultural issues. Recognising these challenges, recent governmental reforms have aimed to render the censorship process more transparent and responsive (Adesokan, 2016). These dilemmas highlight the complex balance between preserving cultural propriety and harnessing the soft power inherent in cinematic expression (Nye, 2004), alongside the risk of perpetuating dominant cultural narratives (Schiller, 1976).

In India, the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) oversees censorship for Bollywood. The CBFC grapples with issues arising from political sensitivities, regional variations and the need to reconcile creative expression with regulatory compliance (CBFC, 2023). The inconsistencies inherent in such a diverse regulatory mechanism not only affect the global circulation of films, as elucidated by Transnationalism Theory (Vertovec, 1999), but also underscore the ongoing tension between cultural preservation and artistic freedom.

Ultimately, overly strict censorship may lead to the misinterpretation or misrepresentation of a nation's cultural identity, thereby undermining its soft power potential (Nye, 2004) and impeding transnational cultural exchange (Vertovec, 1999). While censorship is ostensibly aimed at

upholding cultural values, striking an appropriate balance between regulation and artistic freedom remains an imperative challenge for Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood (Yola, 2018).

*Maintaining Cultural Authenticity in Film Production:* Maintaining cultural authenticity is a critical imperative for the film industries of Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood. While each industry strives to produce content that is both entertaining and globally appealing, there exists an inherent challenge in preserving the unique cultural identities and values of their respective regions. This delicate balance between global appeal and cultural authenticity is central to their cultural diplomacy efforts (Yola, 2018). According to the Soft Power Theory (Nye, 2004), the ability to project an authentic cultural narrative is essential for garnering international admiration and influence. At the same time, Cultural Imperialism Theory (Schiller, 1976; Tomlinson, 1991) warns that efforts to appeal to a global audience may dilute local authenticity, whereas Transnationalism Theory (Vertovec, 1999) underscores the benefits of cultural hybridisation in a globalised world.

In Kannywood, which predominantly produces films in the Hausa language, the preservation of Hausa cultural authenticity is paramount (Yola, 2018). Filmmakers diligently maintain linguistic accuracy and ensure that costumes, settings and props authentically reflect the traditions of Northern Nigeria (Musa, 2017; Yola, 2018). This steadfast commitment not only bolsters Kannywood's soft power credentials but also resists the homogenising pressures identified by Cultural Imperialism Theory while simultaneously appealing to transnational audiences (Nye, 2004; Schiller, 1976; Vertovec, 1999).

Nollywood, Nigeria's global film industry, faces the formidable task of authentically representing the country's vast cultural diversity. By exploring regional storytelling and collaborating with cultural experts, Nollywood strives to portray accurately the multifarious traditions of Nigeria (Adesokan, 2016; Onookome-Okome, 2016). In doing so, it not only enhances its soft power but also explores the challenges posed by global commercialisation and the risk of cultural homogenisation (Schiller, 1976; Vertovec, 1999).

Bollywood, renowned for its colourful depictions of Indian culture, likewise confronts the challenge of representing the extensive cultural diversity of India (Chatterjee, 2019). The industry relies on cultural consultants, historians and linguists to ensure the veracity of its cultural representations and it consistently demonstrates respect for traditional customs and rituals (Chatterjee, 2019). This relationship between global appeal and cultural authenticity is instrumental in sustaining the soft power of Bollywood, even as it contends with the complexities inherent in transnational cultural exchanges and the critiques of cultural imperialism (Nye, 2004; Vertovec, 1999; Schiller, 1976).

The tension between global appeal and cultural authenticity demands a nuanced approach. As Soft Power Theory (Nye, 2004) suggests, the projection of an authentic cultural narrative is crucial for international influence; however, this must be balanced against the risks of cultural dilution and hegemonic dominance highlighted by Cultural Imperialism Theory (Schiller, 1976), while embracing the shifting, transnational nature of contemporary cultural flows (Vertovec, 1999).

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that media literacy significantly enhances the public's ability to engage with film narratives critically. Viewers equipped with media literacy skills are more likely to recognise and challenge underlying ideological messages embedded in the cinematic productions of Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood. This critical engagement not only promotes a more nuanced understanding of cultural narratives but also serves to counterbalance the risks of cultural homogenisation and hegemonic representation, as noted by Cultural Imperialism Theory (Schiller, 1976; Tomlinson, 1991). Furthermore, the findings indicate that robust media education programmes promote a culture of active dialogue and informed debate among audiences, thereby amplifying the effectiveness of films as instruments of cultural diplomacy. Ultimately, integrating media literacy into the broader discourse on film and soft power enables audiences to transition from passive consumption to active interpretation, nurturing a more inclusive and critically engaged public sphere.

#### **4. Results**

The review revealed that Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood significantly contribute to the projection of soft power and cultural diplomacy. Kannywood, rooted in the Hausa-speaking regions, has effectively maintained local cultural authenticity while extending its influence across West Africa, thereby fostering a sense of shared identity and mutual cultural exchange. Nollywood, with its prolific production and diverse linguistic offerings, has emerged as a dynamic platform that

not only bolsters Nigeria's creative economy but also challenges stereotypical portrayals of African societies. Conversely, Bollywood's global appeal lies in its ability to fuse traditional Indian values with modern cinematic techniques, thus promoting India's cultural richness to a worldwide audience. However, the findings also indicate challenges such as issues of censorship, potential cultural homogenisation and the reinforcement of hegemonic narratives. Additionally, the transnational circulation of films – amplified by digital media – has further enriched cross-border cultural dialogues and economic interactions, highlighting the dual capacity of these industries to both empower and complicate global cultural diplomacy.

The review shows that media literacy plays a pivotal role in influencing audience interaction with film narratives. Empirical evidence indicates that individuals with higher media literacy are more adept at deconstructing and critically assessing the messages conveyed through films. In the case of Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood, media literacy has been associated with a heightened awareness of cultural nuances, enabling viewers to discern both the artistic and political dimensions of cinematic productions. Conversely, audiences with limited media literacy tend to be more susceptible to uncritical acceptance of soft power messages, which may inadvertently perpetuate dominant cultural narratives. These findings underscore the dual capacity of media literacy to empower audiences and to facilitate intercultural dialogue. They also highlight the need for concerted media education initiatives to cultivate a more discerning public, thereby optimising the role of film as a tool for cultural diplomacy and economic engagement.

Empirical research and theoretical analyses consistently affirm that media literacy is pivotal in shaping audience interaction with film narratives. Buckingham (Buckingham, 2003: 42) argues that media literacy. Similarly, Potter (Potter, 2004: 31) posits that individuals with higher media literacy are more adept at discerning the underlying ideological and persuasive elements in media texts, thereby reducing their vulnerability to uncritical acceptance of soft power messages. Moreover, UNESCO (UNESCO, 2011) highlights that comprehensive media literacy programmes empower audiences to recognise and challenge dominant cultural narratives, promoting a more reflective and discerning engagement with media. Complementing these perspectives, Kellner and Share (Kellner, Share, 2007: 15-16) provide evidence that enhanced media literacy mitigates the risk of internalising hegemonic messages, whereas individuals with limited media literacy are more likely to accept media content uncritically, potentially perpetuating dominant cultural stereotypes.

## 5. Conclusion

This article has examined the pivotal role of Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood in influencing global cultural diplomacy through their unique contributions as soft power ambassadors. Through the use of a multi-theoretical framework that encompasses Soft Power Theory (Nye, 2004), Cultural Imperialism Theory (Schiller, 1976; Tomlinson, 1991) and Transnationalism Theory (Appadurai, 1996; Vertovec, 1999), the study has demonstrated how these film industries not only project national cultural identities and values, but also facilitate intercultural dialogue and economic integration on a global scale.

The analysis reveals that Kannywood, Nollywood and Bollywood, while distinct in their cultural narratives and production contexts, collectively enhance the international image of Nigeria and India. Through the skilful use of cinematic language, these industries transcend conventional political and economic barriers to influence public perceptions and policy decisions in areas such as tourism, trade and international cooperation. Notwithstanding their significant contributions to soft power, the study also highlights the potential risks of cultural homogenisation and the inadvertent reinforcement of hegemonic narratives – a cautionary note emphasised by Cultural Imperialism Theory.

The transnational circulation of films underscores the importance of an interactive, cross-border exchange of cultural values, as described by Transnationalism Theory. In an era of digital connectivity, the ability of these industries to reach and engage diverse audiences further accentuates their role in promoting global interconnectedness and mutual understanding. However, challenges such as censorship, regulatory constraints and the tension between global appeal and local authenticity continue to influence the cinematic milieu.

Furthermore, the integration of media literacy into the study of film as an instrument of soft power and cultural diplomacy is both timely and essential. This article has demonstrated that media literacy empowers audiences to critically interrogate and interpret cinematic narratives; thereby nurturing a more informed and engaged public. As film industries such as Kannywood,

Nollywood and Bollywood continue to influence global cultural perceptions, educational institutions and policymakers must invest in comprehensive media literacy programmes. Such initiatives will not only bolster critical media engagement but also promote a balanced cultural dialogue that mitigates the risks of cultural homogenisation.

In light of these findings, policymakers, cultural practitioners, and industry stakeholders must collaborate to develop coherent cultural policies that not only support creative expression but also safeguard cultural diversity. Future research should explore the developing complexities of cultural diplomacy in the digital age, with particular attention to emerging media technologies and transnational audience engagement. Future research should also explore longitudinal impacts of media education on audience perceptions, as well as develop best practice frameworks for integrating media literacy into cultural policy. Advancing media literacy is crucial for harnessing the full potential of film as a catalyst for intercultural understanding and global soft power. Ultimately, this review study contributes to a richer understanding of how cinema can serve as a potent vehicle for cultural diplomacy, economic development and international cooperation in an increasingly globalised world.

*Recommendations for Future Research:*

1. *Impact assessment frameworks:* Researchers should develop comprehensive impact assessment frameworks to measure the influence of cinema on cultural diplomacy. This includes evaluating the effectiveness of film festivals, collaborative projects and cultural exchanges in promoting mutual understanding and influencing policies.

2. *Youth engagement studies:* Investigate the role of youth in influencing the cultural diplomacy milieu through film. Research on how young filmmakers and audiences engage with and contribute to cross-regional cultural understanding can provide meaningful perspectives.

3. *Digital cultural archives:* Explore the establishment of digital cultural archives that preserve and share cinematic narratives as historical and cultural assets. Research on the development and accessibility of these archives can enrich our understanding of the long-term impact of cinema on cultural diplomacy.

4. *Impact on tourism:* Conduct studies on how films and film-related cultural diplomacy initiatives impact tourism between African and Asian regions. Analysing visitor patterns and motivations can help identify opportunities for economic growth.

5. *Media literacy and cultural diplomacy:* Examine the role of media literacy programmes in enhancing the public's understanding of cultural diplomacy efforts through cinema. Research can focus on how media education contributes to a more informed and receptive audience.

*Recommendations for Policy:*

6. *Cultural diplomacy funding:* Governments and international organisations should allocate dedicated funding for cultural diplomacy initiatives involving cinema. This support should prioritise collaboration, training and the preservation of cultural heritage through film.

7. *Bilateral Agreements:* Encourage African and Asian governments to establish bilateral agreements that facilitate the exchange of films, filmmakers and cultural exhibitions. These agreements can streamline cross-regional cultural initiatives.

8. *Cinema in educational curricula:* Advocate for the inclusion of cinema and cultural diplomacy topics in educational curricula at all levels. This can nurture a generation of culturally aware citizens and future filmmakers.

9. *Cultural diplomacy frameworks:* Develop comprehensive cultural diplomacy frameworks that integrate cinema as a core component. These frameworks can guide government agencies and cultural institutions in strategic planning and implementation.

*Recommendations for Practice and Industry:*

10. *Cross-regional film collaborations:* Encourage filmmakers to explore cross-regional collaborations, addressing shared themes and narratives that resonate with both African and Asian audiences. Film production grants and incentives can support such initiatives.

11. *Film festival diversity:* Promote diversity in film festivals, encouraging the inclusion of more films from African and Asian regions. Festivals should aim to create platforms that highlight the richness of cultural storytelling.

12. *Community outreach programmes:* Filmmakers and cultural institutions should engage in community outreach programs that use cinema as a tool for promoting cultural exchange and social cohesion at the grassroots level.

13. *Digital accessibility initiatives:* Develop digital platforms and initiatives that make films

accessible to a global audience, catering to diverse languages, subtitles and cultural contexts.

14. *Artist residencies*: Establish artist residency programmes that bring together filmmakers from African and Asian regions to collaborate on projects that celebrate cultural diversity and unity.

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## Argumentative Discourse of a Media Review

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### Abstract

Review, including media reviews, are traditionally analytical genre. Today, literary, artistic and professional art history magazines have lost their leading role in cultural processes. Media are increasingly becoming platforms for reviewing, which inevitably leads to a transformation of the genre and a lowering of the acceptable standard. Today, an expanded view has been adopted, according to which even the texts of announcements and annotations have begun to be included in reviews. The article raises the issue about the essence of the analysis that recipients expect from a review, and the essence of arguments acceptable in this genre, since it is here that the problem of evidentiary interpretation and verification of review author's opinion on a particular work is the most acute. Arguments to the logos, factual argumentation, and the possibilities of a comparison topos are used to correlate the characteristics of a reviewed artifact with aesthetic criteria and social needs. This correlation includes both methods of inductive reasoning, when a conclusion is based on a set of presented facts, and methods of deductive reasoning, based on the truth of generally valid positions. The article examines the features of argumentative discourse based on literary, theatrical, television and film reviews published in the media. The article examines the features of argumentative discourse based on literary, theatrical, TV and film reviews published in media (first of all in Literary Newspaper, Komsomol Truth, Arguments of the Week). Semantic-stylistic and cognitive-pragmatic analysis is used. The problem of media literacy formation is in the centre of attention in modern society. The review culture is closely connected with media literacy formation and media education including literary and media critics. It is necessary for this to provide training, aimed at the formation of stable skills of perception and analysis. It is necessary to identify directions of media educational work that can proceed in creating the platform for teaching media literacy; to analyze media education technologies that can be used when creating the platform for teaching media literacy.

**Keywords:** media discourse, media communication, media literacy, media education, analysis, argumentation, evaluation, media review genre.

### 1. Introduction

A considerable number of works are devoted to the genre of review, both in synchrony and in diachrony (Bashkatova, 2013; Erman, 2011; Grinfeld, 2015; Molitvina, 2017; Moreva, 2016; Nabieva, 2010; Nersesova, 2012; Novikov, 2012; Petrova, Moreva, 2014; Tertychny, 2016; Vanko, 2021; Zemtsova, 2006, etc.). In researches and journalistic articles, complains about the deformation of the review genre have become common, the drift towards greater information

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content and less analyticity, greater advertising, even entertainment and less argumentation and evidence. This is considered to be the degradation of the genre itself, as well as the circumstances surrounding it – the venality of the reviews and the bias of the reviewers. “The fashionable postmodern rejection of value imperatives and canons, the substitution of essential meanings with simulacra; the already habitual loss of authorship” (Bashkatova, 2013: 3), this is the reason that reviews have turned into advertising and announcing the very “standardized”, “conveyor” literary product” (Molitvina, 2017; Saburova, Golikova, 2015).

V.I. Novikov is quite right that modern reviewers don't have the originality of their own style, but are satisfied with a certain widespread pattern, limiting themselves to ordinary, trivial passages: “Now people are engaged in criticism, on the one hand, they seem to be philologically “completed”, but they have the same language for all. They did not set themselves the problem of individualizing the language so that the very first phrase would say “it's me”. Little rhetorical technique, little skill, very loose composition and lack of interpretation” (Novikov, 2023).

There are numerous confirmations of this, including in such publications as *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (Literary Newspaper). In review by E. Velichko on the book by D. Voronin “Auntie Life and Mother War” (Voronin, 2024) there is nothing but a set of platitudes: *The life of modern Russia still needs to be understood. Many of stories by D. Voronin are dedicated to the villagers. The author draws them without embellishment, with all the flaws. The story “Serafimovich and Angelina” is a colorful sketch of provincial life, it reflects the inconsistency of human nature. The story “The Truth of Life” raises a difficult issue of interethnic relations... D. Voronin avoids dividing the world into black and white...* (Velichko, 2015).

Such phrases, of course, could take place as leads to some more meaningful opinions, but they do not lead to anything, and such phrases exhaust the review. T. Moskvina believed that a review should be neither kind nor evil – it should be witty. “The fascinatingly written article at least a little bit, but it decorates the noosphere” (Moskvina, 2015).

And in general, literary criticism, as has been the case since the time of V.G. Belinsky and N.A. Dobrolyubov, should be the most important cultural phenomenon. At universities, it is important at journalism faculties to revive the subject of Literary Criticism in its classical form, with the study of the examples by the “great masters” of this genre. If media rhetoric is based on knowledge of classical rhetoric, including knowledge of the speeches of great orators, then one can and should learn by imitating great examples.

It will be extremely fascinating journey called “media education” by studying the classics of reviewing, especially from the creativity of the “great critics”. And this, among other things, will develop a critical way of thinking, and will paint a worldview (Fedorov, 2001; Fedorov, 2009; Fedorov, 2010), and will show an algorithm for understanding many cultural processes, will help to form media literacy (Fedorov et al., 2014; Fedorov, Chelysheva, 2002; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2015; Fedorov et al., 2019; Gálik, Gáliková Tolnaiová, 2022; Gáliková Tolnaiová, Gálik, 2022).

Today, literary, artistic and professional art history magazines have lost their leading role in cultural processes. Media are increasingly becoming platforms for reviewing, which inevitably leads to a transformation of the genre and a lowering of the acceptable standard. Today, an expanded view has been adopted, according to which even the texts of announcements and annotations have begun to be included in reviews. “With the advent of new media, the unstable boundaries of genres in modern media discourse make it possible to refer texts close to reviews, announcements, annotations, and comments to reviews” (Molitvina, 2017: 5). However, the genre of a classical review assumes an educational orientation, social and aesthetic significance, which is difficult to expect from an announcement or annotation.

## 2. Materials and methods

The article examines the features of argumentative discourse based on literary, theatrical, TV and film reviews published in media (first of all in *first of all in Literary Newspaper, Komsomol Truth, Arguments of the Week*). Semantic-stylistic and cognitive-pragmatic analysis is used.

## 3. Discussion

Society cannot be satisfied with the displacement of the critical genre (Lane, 2020; Langer, Gruber, 2021; Macgilchrist et al., 2020; Stoumpos et al., 2023), the lack of media reviews (Ozbek et al., 2023; Švelch, 2022; Shin et al., 2022), their replacement with simple annotations (Kayal, Saha, 2023), and the fact that reviews sometimes get specific features. A great writer! It's a pleasure to

read it! He has his own telegram channel and a lot of subscribers, he posts something every day. The same goes for Rahim Jafarov. Islam Khanipayev constantly writes about Rahim Jafarov, and Rahim Jafarov constantly writes about Islam Khanipayev. This is such a cross-PR" (Solovyova, 2023). Or compare: "Sergey Chuprinin, the editor-in-chief of *Znamya* magazine, noticed that we never criticize each other: "Guys, do you all praise each other? "Great style", "amazing style!". And what will you leave for Gogol?!" (Obuh, 2024: 17).

Thus, it is alarming that the author of a critical article may see his goal not so much in analyzing the source text (Kang et al., 2022; Kulikova, 2020) as in drawing attention to it, that "the bias of newspaper and magazine critics is becoming more and more obvious. Moreover, its source is not necessarily money.

According to A.B. Berstadt "Often, the "bias" essence of certain reviews is due to corporate interests, friendships, etc. This is a very disturbing phenomenon, because in the context of the variety of book products available on the market, it is especially important to be able to choose high-quality literature, high-quality book editions among hundreds and thousands of second-rate ones" (Berstadt, 2009: 8). The same applies to the abundance of film productions (Shin et al., 2022), among which it is not easy to choose worthy works. But even today, of course, the "classics of the genre" remain.

These are the media reviews by V. Matzen, D. Korsakov, A. Kondrashov, T. Moskvina, in which it is clearly seen by what argumentative means a powerful effect on the reader is achieved. In the obituary dedicated to the recently deceased Tatiana Moskvina, it is rightly said: "At her best, she wrote amazingly, and when you read, you felt such delight that does not imply envy... I remember I had to give Volodin a new issue of *The Cinema Art*, sent with the opportunity ... and in the issue Moskvina's review on *The Siberian Barber* was contained, which caused such delight that I immediately called Volodin, read the text aloud to him, we laughed for half an hour in two voices — and only after that, waking up, I went to the subway with this magazine.... The magic of text. I have been giving it to students for many years as an exemplary one..." (Dmitrevskaya, 2025). In other words, Tatiana Moskvina's creativity makes us remember the times when criticism (first, before cinema, only literary one) made no less impression than the analyzed works themselves.

#### 4. Results

The well-known publicist T. Vojvodina recently complained that "even people with a formally high level of education (with a diploma) do not feel the need for rational evidence of any statement. They don't need any facts or logic, shamanic shouts are enough, something like the universal way of argumentation that has recently become widespread: "That's right!" (Voevodina, 2021).

According to Ya.I. Tyazhlov "Argumentation in media criticism, in the strict sense, is not an analogue of scientific arguments, however, it should certainly include that in classical rhetoric is called arguments to the logos. In other terminology, these are factual arguments" (Tertychny, 2016: 48), that is, the involvement of facts, the analysis of cause-and-effect relationships.

How vivid is the critic and publicist T. Vojvodina in proving her position, how vivid are the images she draws, depicting how she imagines the so-called activities of social scientists "at work" and actions to reform this "activity" to make that social scientists benefit the state. In her review on the article "Dead Sciences and their Servants" by Denis Sukhorukov, she supports the author when he gives his definition of this activity, calling it pleasant communication, in simple terms "discussion clubs". And this metaphor makes possible T. Voevodina herself, as the author of the review, to draw a new picture expanding Sukhorukov's metaphor using a rhetorical means – a parabola: "*They say scientists aren't paid enough? They get paid a lot! Compared to the achieved result. When I started participating in a scientific and humanitarian gathering about ten years ago, I was amazed. People (very nice, cultured, and likeable; I've come to love them from the bottom of my heart) gather in clean rooms, lighted and heated at government expense, and just talk about this and that. Mr. Sukhorukov correctly identified it: a discussion club. I've always enjoyed participating in these casual discussions, there's something ancient Greek about it. Free contemplation of reality and friendly discussion of what I've seen with pleasant people. Do we need discussion clubs? I think so. ... A discussion club is a kind of intellectual leisure and should take place, like any leisure activity, in their free time and at the own expense of these vacationing citizens. ... No one asks humanities social scholars for any result in the real world. They are probably being asked for some kind of game results: publications, participation at these conferences and symposiums, filling out such reports, but they do not participate in the real*

world, although we were taught in school half a century ago that science has become a direct productive force of society. Well, let's say university scientists teach, but those from research institutes don't do that either. However, the training of humanitarians, who later will become couriers and sellers, can hardly be considered a socially useful activity. <...> Social sciences should be organized in the same way. Is it impossible? No people? People usually show up when there is a clear request backed up by resources. Can't they? Don't they want to? No qualifications? No issues? Close it within a month. And the government money will be safe, and there will be no illusions. It goes without saying you have to pay for a scientific result. But it is for the result, not for the beat about the bush "... keep in mind, dear Shura, I do not intend to feed you for nothing. For every vitamin that I feed you, I will require a lot of small services from you" these wonderful words of Ostap Bender (The hero of the satirical novel-dilogy by I. Ilf and E. Petrov *The Twelve Chairs* and *The Golden Calf*) should be an unshakeable principle of the relationship between the state and scientists. And with the humanitarians, too" ([Voevodina, 2023](#)).

The review by A. Kudryashov on the film *Vertinsky* is based on a list of inconsistencies with the truth (known from *Vertinsky*'s memoirs), absurdities and absurdities: "... in the series, Vertinsky absolutely accidentally gets on an ambulance train and goes to war. It wasn't true, it was a deliberate, strong-willed step... but why was his real wife Lydia presented as such a moody and stupid hysterical woman? ... oh my God, in the series Slashchev turned into a woman, the head of counterintelligence, played by Anna Mikhalkova. If it is allowed that the whites had their own Rozaliya Zemlyachka, then... everything is allowed. This madame sends Vertinsky into exile, later she turns into a Soviet agent, then into an employee of the embassy in China, who sends the hero to the USSR. A brazen falsification of *Vertinsky*'s life story. Do not denigrate his name, name the hero, for example, Smertinsky and come up with whatever you want ([Kondrashov, 2021](#)).

Very often, the facts are such that they give rise not only to irony, but also to caustic sarcasm:

"...along with the sound and colour, the aroma or smell of Mexican serial soap spreads from the screen..." ([Matizen, 2025](#)). For example, D. Korsakov gave the title "Just a son of a bitch" to his review on the film *The Prophet. The story of Alexander Pushkin*.

D. Korsakov gave the title "Just a son of a bitch" to his review on the film *The Prophet. The story of Alexander Pushkin* (D. Korsakov used allusion on the well-known Pushkin's words which he addressed to himself after completion the historical drama "Boris Godunov": "Aj da Pushkin! Aj da sukin syn!". Literal translation: Heigh Pushkin, Heigh son of bitch! These Pushkin's words are an example of antiphrasis. The expression *son of a bitch* is offensive in another situation. The author in his review used both a precedent words, referring on Pushkin's words, and characterized the main character by expressing, выразив his attitude towards the interpretation of Pushkin, presented to the audience).

The facts of aggressive modernization cause rejection: "... there is a lyceum here, everyone is stomping, puffing, rapping to the beat, they are trying to ban Pushkin from performing in front of Derzhavin, but he gets to Derzhavin, and he also reads texts in front of his fair <...> ...Nicholas I, who teaches Pushkin to play tennis while rapping ([Korsakov, 2025](#)).

The classics of modern peer review actively use the comparison *topos* as evidence. Thus, the text of the review on the opera *Eugene Onegin*, staged by the Astrakhan Theatre, is based on a comparison of the reviewed performance of a classical opera with other productions of this opera, discusses what art is, and cites a poem by A.K. Tolstoy.

*"The performance turned out to be beyond all praise. The first thing that strikes me is the scenery. This is a wonderful painting – an old noble house. Wooden, with columns. A.K. Tolstoy wrote about such a house in a poem that I love very much.*

*It is so naturalistically painted that you can see: the wooden paneling has been washed by rains for many years, dried by the sun and wind. It is curious that in the last act, before which several years pass, this house reappears, and it has aged, and the foundation bricks seem to be visible.... This "special effect" is probably achieved by light, but I don't want to think about it and it's not interesting. This is the very house, a real noble nest. And everything that happens there is real. So, it seems. Although what could be more conventional than an opera? But, curiously, when you watch this performance, you forget that they are singing. They don't sing, they live their lives. I don't understand anything about opera singing, but this feeling that they are live means that they sing well. In general, it's a steady sign of craftsmanship and high quality when you don't notice how it's done. When you notice technology, what our literature teacher called "artistic features" means that it has not been done very well. Carefully done, with effort. But when*

*it is not noticed, then it is art... Is there any “innovation” in the performance? There is. Well-known events take place not exactly in the setting to which we are used and in which they occur in the novel. For example, the famous last declaration of the characters does not take place at Tatiana’s house, but on the street, against the background, it seems, of an ice drift on the Neva. Tatiana is writing a letter on the balcony. And the declaration with Onegin in the garden in the play takes place... in a boat. That is, the director changed a lot, treated the original text as if at ease, but quite in the spirit of Pushkin. It could have been. It is not for nothing that the corresponding fragment of the novel, written by Pushkin’s hand, appears on the backdrop of the stage at the beginning of each scene. The text is quite readable, especially through binoculars”.*

Further Tatiana Voevodina discusses the modern “reading of the classics”: “*This is the difference from those entertainers who cover their own wretched fantasies under the guise of classics. To be honest, I was afraid to get to something where Onegin and Lensky are gay friends, and Onegin kills Lensky out of jealousy, because he “traded him for a woman”.*

*After all, somebody constantly writes that such performances are played out here and there by quite respectable masters. Praise God, that didn’t happen. But the other day I heard on TV: some great modern director’s “Queen of Spades” was shown at the Bolshoi Theatre, where the case takes place in a madhouse, some nurses hang out there, Herman lies on a bed, something like that... I’ve been wondering for a long time why, in whose interests such an ugly thing exists. It is present in painting, too, and, in fact, everywhere, in all forms of art. It seems to me that it is the fruit of combining the incompetence of the “creators” with the mental timidity and phobias of the philistine – consumer of art”. T. Voevodina poses an eternal question of “poet and poetry”, in terms of literature: “When art was a cult, no one raised the issue of cost, labour costs and other such prosaic matters. There was any cost. Michelangelo, who was lying down painting the famous ceiling, did not raise the question of how long it would take, what the opportunity cost of this working time was, and what the labor protection conditions were. He served: God, the great and eternal art, against which he was small and insignificant. When the hack became institutionalized, and the works of art turned into art objects, it means ordinary goods, all the usual production criteria began to be applied to them. They began to reduce costs, simplify technology, etc.” (Voevodina, 2015).*

The review title “Art crooks and suckers” itself includes the argument, which accurately substantiates that “There is a simple effect at work here: it seems rubbish to everyone separately, but he/she is afraid of being considered retarded and says that it is very interesting and wonderful. Otherwise, they’ll think he/she is a provincial jerk. With proper marketing, a little boy who can shout that the king is naked is neutralized in a timely manner. He is being neutralized by the same philistines who are afraid of being known as suckers who are unable to understand Gauguin or Picasso” (Voevodina, 2015).

And it is extremely important that the argumentative discourse of a qualitative review offers generalizations, that is, the critic sees a social or cultural (anti-cultural) phenomenon in a particular case. “*Art crooks have been unable to forgive Khrushchev for decades for expressing with simple directness what he thought of the Soviet abstractionists. And this is understandable: Khrushchev played the role of the boy from the tale of the naked king, and this should not be allowed in any way. But Khrushchev was not a timid philistine, he felt in his right. And the philistine is not what to say, he’s afraid to even think”. But Khrushchev was not a timid philistine, he felt in his right. And the philistine not only can’t say he’s afraid even to think*” (Voevodina, 2015). In her generalizations, T. Vojvodina clarifies the meaning of the word “culture” on the basis of its etymology, drawing parallels: “*Culture is not only etymologically, but also essentially connected with a cult. Culture and art were born out of a religious cult, and the artist used his/her art to create a religious cult. That’s how he/she felt about it. An artist (of any profile) served art as something higher in relation to him/herself. It is not necessary for him/her to serve God, he could serve a Great and Eternal Art*” (Voevodina, 2015).

According to A. Kondrashov “our films, which are created as if for our audience, are marked by a passionate desire to attract attention somewhere “out there” (Kondrashov, 2020).

According to T. Voevodina in her article “Art crooks and suckers” who writes: “There is no art in this, because art is a artistry, skill. And it just isn’t there. Not to mention thoughts and feelings. Is that what they say it’s meant to be? Children, having drawn something unsuccessful or misspelled, also say: “But I didn’t try!” *So do modern daubers*”. Tatiana Voevodina is a master at exploiting substandard. “*THIS is a universal marketing formula that can be used to vtyuhat’*

(jargon: sell) *everything, and at exorbitant prices. Because people do not buy a product or its useful properties or remarkable quality at all – they buy an increase in self-esteem. And the self-esteem of a modern philistine is always sick and inflamed... If there's any art in all this, it's probably marketing, the ability to prodvinut' (jargon: market) this maznya (jargon: daub). That is, to convince a timid philistine that he/she is a fool and does not understand anything about higher life. After all, the philistine is constantly concerned about his/her "status" - so that he is not mistaken for ... by the way, for what? In a broad sense, for a loh (jargon: sucker)".* She proves very vividly why this happened: *"And when a person is the navel of the earth, and the purpose of life is money, that's when art becomes ugly. In short, art died when God died. A certain higher authority has died in the souls of people. Culture arose from a cult and died with the death of the cult. And a new barbarism began – lack of culture."* (Voevodina, 2015).

T. Voevodina, with her numerous reviews, asserts an irrefutable fact: now there is a transition from competence to incompetence. An essential part of a high-quality review is argumentative discourse, filling the artistic process with new meanings.

## 5. Conclusion

A review cannot be just a recommendation, informing the addressee about the need to get acquainted with something (watch a movie, read some text). The peculiarities of this genre are to evaluate a certain phenomenon in terms of linguoculture, to evaluate its significance for society. In a high-quality media review, an evaluation is the result of correlating the characteristics of a creation with aesthetic criteria and social needs. This correlation includes both methods of inductive reasoning, when a generalizing conclusion is based on a set of presented facts, and methods of deductive reasoning, which are based on the truth of generally valid positions. At the same time, criticism becomes "not only a means of broadcasting interpretative and evaluative content, but also a source of formation of new competencies for a mass audience" (Tyazhlov, 2016: 5), this helps to enhance the activity of personal perception of art. A review as a special genre of media discourse has parameters, the description and development of which is obligatory for media professionals, despite of their individual, professional preferences. The review culture is closely connected with media literacy formation and media education including literary and media critics. It is necessary for this to provide training, aimed at the formation of stable skills of perception and analysis. It is necessary to identify directions of media educational work that can proceed in creating the platform for teaching media literacy; to analyze media education technologies that can be used when creating the platform for teaching media literacy. This approach also determines a significant expansion of the effectiveness of media techniques.

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## Evolution of Family Images in Russian Soviet and Post-Soviet Feature Films

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### Abstract

The research investigates the evolution of screen family images in Russian feature films of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods and the use of the hermeneutic analysis of audiovisual media texts in studying films by university students. Hermeneutic analysis allows students to consider this evolution through the interpretation of symbols, signs and images that appear in films, as well as through the historical and cultural contexts. Moreover, the hermeneutic approach applied in media studies enables students to consider screen family images not only as a result of cultural and historical changes, but also as a way of interpreting social and family values. The family portrayal in Soviet and post-Soviet Russian feature films has evolved in response to the political, social, and economic changes. Soviet films often depicted the family as part of a broader socialist or patriotic project, while post-Soviet films reflect the complexity and crisis of family relationships. The family in contemporary Russian feature films serves both as a symbol of national ideals and a site of personal struggle, with films increasingly exploring the emotional and psychological complexities of family life. In both Soviet and post-Soviet films, gender roles within the family have evolved in complex ways. In the Soviet period, women were often depicted as the moral backbone of the family, while men were protectors or workers. In post-Soviet films, these roles began to shift, with more emphasis on individual autonomy and gender equality. As for the evolution of the child film image, in Soviet films, the child used to be a symbol of future socialism, embodying ideals of duty, discipline, and progress. In contrast, post-Soviet children's films portray a more complex view of childhood, where children are depicted as vulnerable victims of social transformations, symbols of personal freedom and self-expression, or a voice for social change.

**Keywords:** family, family upbringing, media education, feature film, Soviet and post-Soviet films, hermeneutic analysis.

### 1. Introduction

Media education based on analysing feature films about family and family education can be a valuable experience for university students for several reasons. To begin with, films often depict a variety of family models, offering students deep insight into different ways families can function. This helps them to challenge stereotypes and broaden their understanding of family life. Besides, analysing different screen family experiences allows students to empathize with characters' emotions and inner struggles. Thus, students begin to understand the complexities of family relationships and the challenges faced by others in their own lives: media education based on Russian feature films has significant educational and developmental potential in the context of creating a "family-centric" culture of youth and the enhancement of the social status of the family

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and the image of the family, if it is based on the development of critical thinking in the youth audience (Mikhaleva, 2024).

On the other hand, analysing feature films requires students to think critically about the narrative, characters, themes, and visual storytelling. Students can explore how families are portrayed and how these representations might shape societal views on family. Since family is a central theme in many feature films, and examining how different families are faced with challenges can teach students to explore such social and emotional concepts as conflict resolution, communication, loyalty, affection, and generational differences. Moreover, analysing family-oriented films provides a natural opportunity for classroom discussion: students get involved in debating how different families are represented, compare them to their own family experiences, and explore themes like family roles, values, and expectations. Finally, in today's world, students are constantly exposed to media, and media studies should teach them to read and deconstruct media messages critically, thus helping them become more aware of how family life is often idealized, simplified, or dramatized in popular culture.

## 2. Materials and methods

The material of our research is audiovisual media texts on the topic of family and family education of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. The main method is a comparative-hermeneutic analysis of Soviet and Russian feature films (1920–2020) devoted to family issues.

In our study, we analysed Russian and foreign scientific findings (Albada, 2000; Allen, 1999; Antunes, 2017; Bitney, 2022; Brown, 2013; Bruzzi, 2005; Callister et al., 2007; Mikhaleva, Lozovitskaya, 2024; Chopra-Gant, 2006; Douglas, Olson, 1995; Fedorov, 2014; Fulmer, 2017; Garlen, Sandlin, 2017; Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013; Levy, 1991; Lloyd, 2014; Potter, 2022; Tanner et al., 2003; Zurcher et al., 2018, 2020) devoted to family and family education in the mirror of Soviet and post-Soviet Russian feature films.

## 3. Discussion

The evolution of family images in Russian feature films of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods is a multi-layered process reflecting changes in the socio-cultural, political and economic situation of the country. The hermeneutic approach to analysing audiovisual media texts may allow students to consider this evolution through the prism of interpreting relevant symbols, signs and images that appear in films, as well as through the historical and cultural contexts: feature films about family life are powerful cultural artifacts that shape the upbringing of youth by modelling behaviour, reinforcing values, and addressing moral and ethical dilemmas. They provide young people with tools to navigate their own family relationships, foster empathy, and influence their aspirations for future family life. By portraying a range of family experiences, films help youth understand the complexity of relationships and the importance of communication, compassion, and responsibility in a family setting (Mikhaleva, 2024).

University students begin to understand how each generation and historical period conveyed its ideals and concerns in family images and family models. For instance, in the Soviet period, collectivism and socialist values dominated, while in the post-Soviet period, the emphasis shifted to individualized images, the restoration of traditional values, and social adaptation.

Let us consider the main stages of the evolution of family and education images in Russian feature films based on the hermeneutic approach.

In the first decades of Soviet film production, the family was presented as an element of collective consciousness and socialism construction. The screen family image was interpreted as part of the working class, in which it was important to unite efforts to achieve a common goal: the family could be completely replaced by a collective, which, under the leadership of the state, could educate, teach and form the necessary qualities. That is why, the feature films of that time actively dealt with the theme of revolution, the destruction of old foundations and the construction of a new life, often through the family image. Such family models can be found in the following Soviet dramas: *Mother* (1926), *Two Days* (1927), *Earth* (1930), *In Search of Joy* (1940). These films emphasize the importance of unity, overcoming difficulties, and raising children in the spirit of the new era.

During the Great Patriotic War and in the post-war years, the family image in Soviet feature films was interpreted through the prism of patriotism and spiritual strength. The family became a symbol of overcoming unimaginable hardships, the basis of moral and physical survival. These films tended to portray national unity, cohesion and support, as well as the importance of raising children

in the spirit of Soviet ideals: hard work, patriotism, perseverance and collectivism. For instance, the war dramas *She Defends Her Motherland* (1943) and *Sons* (1946) are devoted to this theme.

In the late Soviet period, the ideology of the family somewhat changed: the emphasis shifted from the collective to personal family relationships: the family became a microcosm for examining issues of identity, personal struggle, and societal expectations. Soviet feature films of the Thaw era offer a rich tapestry of family images that reflect a complex interplay between personal and societal changes during that period. By focusing on individual experiences and emotional depth, these films provide a critical lens through which to understand the evolving of Soviet family life and the broader cultural transformations of the era.

Family values still remained an important element of screen family models, and raising children became a topic for reflection. Moreover, feature films began to touch upon more individual aspects of family relationships, including the difficulties of raising children in the context of rapid urbanization and social changes. For example, students could analyse the Soviet feature film *We'll Live Until Monday* (1971). This film addresses the issues of adolescence and family problems, focusing on the interactions between children and parents, as well as the relationships with teachers and educators. During the "stagnation" period despite the official positive narratives, the films increasingly raised issues of the crisis of family relations, the conflict of generations and moral dilemmas, which spoke of the real problems of society. The worldview of the film characters of the "stagnation" period is characterized by a combination of conformism, the desire for stability and an internal search for the meaning of life against the background of general social stagnation. The characters are torn between traditional family values and a feeling of internal dissatisfaction, which creates tension and forces them to solve personal and moral dilemmas.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian film production experienced a significant transformation in depicting family and family upbringing. This period was characterized by profound changes in the social and economic structure, and a desire to restore traditional values, which was reflected in films. In the 1990s, Russian feature films often portrayed the family as broken or in crisis, which was associated with the general instability in the country. The family became extremely vulnerable, thus reflecting the general reformation of the socio-cultural landscape. Many films during the period presented the family as a field of struggle for survival, where children and parents faced severe living conditions, crime, corruption, and social instability: perestroika-era feature films explored such themes as emotional alienation, marital breakdowns, and the pressure of social expectations on individuals. Film characters, particularly children and teenagers, were often depicted as questioning authority, whether that of parents, teachers, or the state itself. On the other hand, this theme emphasized the idea that, in times of political or economic turmoil, a supportive family could be the key to personal and collective survival.

In this respect, for classroom hermeneutic analysis one can take the drama *Brother* (1997). Although the film is primarily about growing up and finding one's place in the world, it also touches upon the theme of a broken family, where the main character faces the consequences of the collapse of the Soviet family.

The 2000s brought rehabilitation of the family image in cinema. Since the beginning of the 2000s, a new family model has begun to form in Russian film industry – a return to traditional values and social stability. In these feature films, the family became a symbol of hope, and upbringing children was emphasized as the most important goal for restoring the moral and spiritual foundations of society. At the same time, there appeared Russian dramas and melodramas that exposed the problem of domestic violence, infidelity, alcoholism and other vexed social problems: *The Road* (2002), *Another Woman*, *Another Man* (2003), *Bury Me Behind the Baseboard* (2008), *Goodbye, Mom* (2014), *Not Together* (2017), *Loveless* (2017), *Nearest and Dearest* (2017) and others.

Generally speaking, family images in Russian feature films have become more diverse in recent years. Along with the traditional family images, other models are also shown, since the family is no longer seen solely as an instrument of education, but as a space for self-realization, the search for identity, and the fight against internal conflicts.

#### **4. Results**

When working on Russian feature films about family and family upbringing, we suggest using the hermeneutic analysis of audiovisual media texts: "Hermeneutic analysis involves understanding the media text through comparison with cultural tradition and reality; penetration

into the logic of the media text; analysis of the media text through comparison of artistic images in the historical and cultural context. Thus, the subject of analysis is the media system and its functioning in society, interaction with a person, the language of the media and its use" (Fedorov, 2014: 8).

In this regard, when discussing the topic "The sociocultural, political, ideological, and gender contexts of creating and functioning of audiovisual media texts about family and family education" in the classroom after studying the main learning material for the lesson, university students are asked to compile a comparative characteristic of the sociocultural, political, ideological, gender aspects of the audiovisual media texts under analysis based on comparing Soviet and post-Soviet feature films of different historical periods. In **Table 1** below there is an example of such a task for film studies.

**Table 1.** Sociocultural, political, ideological, and gender contexts of creating and functioning of Soviet and post-Soviet feature films about family and family education

Time period	Sociocultural context	Political and ideological contexts	Gender context
Films of the silent film period: 1920–1930	Films were created to educate the masses, promote socialist values, and document the struggles and triumphs of the Soviet people.	The era of "war communism". Cinema was seen as a tool for mass education and propaganda and an important means of shaping the collective consciousness of people.	Gender differences are insignificant. Filmmakers promoted gender equality and sought to represent the new Soviet man and woman, dedicated to socialism and collective work.
Films of the Stalin era and the first post-Stalin years: 1931–1955	Strengthening the state's totalitarian control over society. Socialist realism in art and cinema. The Great Patriotic War led to the production of many war dramas, where the heroism of common Soviet people, and the victory over the enemy became core themes.	Cinema became a tool for shaping the public opinion. Films portrayed the working class, peasants, and Soviet leaders as heroes who contributed to socialism construction.	The dominant idea of family ties between all Soviet people living by common ideals and values. Labour exploits of men and women
Films of the Thaw period: 1956–1968	Soviet filmmakers began to explore the complexities of family life, reflecting the social and political changes. The family became a microcosm for examining issues of identity, personal struggle, and societal expectations	De-Stalinization, openness in public discourse and artistic expression. The general easing of censorship. Reawakening of intellectual and cultural life.	Emerging gender roles, evolving relationships between men and women. Conflicts arising from traditional and modern gender roles and values.
Films of the "stagnation" period: 1969–1985	Political, economic, and social stagnation in the country. Strict censorship from the state. Many filmmakers turned to "aesthetic escapism" to avoid direct confrontation	Soviet government maintains stability and order through the propaganda of a strong and stable family	The crisis of family relations, the conflict of generations and moral dilemmas are presented in media texts. Women's emancipation versus women as keepers of the hearth.

Time period	Sociocultural context	Political and ideological contexts	Gender context
	with the state.		
Films of the Perestroika period: 1986–1991	Relaxed censorship allowed Soviet filmmakers to tackle more controversial and sensitive issues. Greater artistic freedom. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.	Political and social reforms (glasnost and perestroika). Cultural openness and Western influence.	Filmmakers engaged with gender roles and social issues in Soviet society. Feature films reflected concerns about the role of women and family structure.
Contemporary Russian films: 1992–2020	Post-Soviet transformation and identity crisis. Economic challenges and the rise of commercial cinema. Emphasis on patriotic heroism and family ties.	The collapse of state socialism and the transition to a market economy left many people feeling disillusioned and isolated. Later filmmakers focused on national unity, historical pride, family honour, patriotism and heroism.	Changing gender roles and women's representation: complex female characters. Sacrifices made for family and the nation. Exploring new family challenges (emotional isolation, personal identity crisis, marital breakdown, and the generation gap).

It should also be understood that the evolution of family models in Soviet and post-Soviet feature films is deeply intertwined with the social, political, and economic changes that occurred in Russia from the early 20th century through the post-Soviet era. As the country transitioned from revolutionary ideologies to Soviet socialism and later into the market-driven society of contemporary Russia, these shifts were reflected in the screen portrayal of family models. The family, both as an idealized model and a site of social critique, has been a central theme throughout Russian cinematography, with its depiction evolving in response to political and ideological priorities, economic conditions, and social transformations. In this context we suggest that students should trace this evolution in Soviet and post-Soviet films about family and family upbringing (Table 2).

**Table 2.** The evolution of family models in Soviet and post-Soviet feature films

Time period	Family models
1. The Soviet era (1920s–1980s)	The Soviet state played a major role in shaping the idealized family model in feature films, which was often used as a tool for ideological propaganda. The portrayal of family life in Soviet films was heavily influenced by Marxist-Leninist principles and the government agenda to create a new, collective, and progressive society.
The formation of the Soviet family model: 1920–1930s	In the early Soviet period, filmmakers were supposed to portray the family as part of the broader revolutionary project, involving the creation of a new socialist citizen. The family was often shown as a revolutionary collective, and feature films explored themes of social transformation and the breaking down of the old bourgeois family model. The traditional patriarchal family was shown as oppressive, while the new Soviet family was presented as more egalitarian and collectively oriented (V. Pudovkin's <i>Mother</i> , 1926).
Stalinist family ideals: 1940–1950s	Under I. Stalin, the ideal family model became more traditional in line with the state's desire for stability and power consolidation. The family was depicted as a moral pillar of Soviet society, reinforcing ideals of patriarchy and the nuclear family. Soviet cinema, particularly during and after World War II, portrayed families as both a site of personal sacrifice and a symbol of national strength. Family members, particularly mothers and wives,

Time period	Family models
	were presented as the emotional heart of the Soviet people. The state's emphasis was on patriotism, heroism, and unity of all the family.
The Thaw and the development of new themes: 1960–1980s:	The period of N. Khrushchev's Thaw (1953 – 1964) and the subsequent Brezhnev era (1964 – 1982) brought some liberalization, but Soviet filmmakers still had to work within strict ideological constraints. Films began to explore personal relationships more openly, though within the bounds of socialist realism. The family was still portrayed as the core of the socialist ideal, but films also began to highlight the personal struggles and difficulties of Soviet families. Gender roles within the family were largely traditional. However, there was also growing recognition of the emotional and psychological burdens placed on individuals within the family, especially during difficult times. Sometimes the family was depicted as an institution that might stifle the individual's emotional or intellectual needs (A. German's <i>My Friend Ivan Lapshin</i> , 1984).
2. Post-Soviet Era (1992–2020)	With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russian cinematography experienced a dramatic shift in its approach to family models. The chaotic and turbulent 1990s and the more stable 2000s saw films portraying families in more diverse and complex ways, reflecting the considerable changes in Russian society and politics.
The collapse of the Soviet family model and new realities: 1990s	The 1990s were a time of profound economic and social upheaval in Russia, marked by the end of the Soviet system, the rise of capitalism, and widespread poverty. These social and economic shifts significantly influenced how family relationships were portrayed on screen. In the 1990s, families were often depicted as struggling to survive in the midst of economic hardship (Aleksei Balabanov's <i>Brother</i> , 1997). The idea of family as a refuge from societal chaos became more pronounced, with themes of family disintegration or the failure to adapt to post-Soviet realities reflected in feature films: media texts explored the impact of social instability on family life, focusing on themes of betrayal, survival, and the moral compromises that families made in the face of financial distress (P. Chukhray's <i>The Thief</i> , 1997).
Family as a site of national unity: 2000–2020s	The Russian government sought to reaffirm traditional values, including the nuclear family. This political agenda influenced the screen representation of families, which began to focus on social responsibility, patriotism and national unity. For example, N. Mikhalkov's film <i>Burnt by the Sun 2</i> (2010) and F. Bondarchuk's <i>Stalingrad</i> (2013), though primarily concerned with war and historical events, emphasize family loyalty, sacrifice, and patriotism as key themes. While traditional family models were promoted, some feature films also began to examine the psychological challenges that family members faced: emotional neglect, divorce, or estrangement, such as A. Zvyagintsev's drama <i>Loveless</i> (2017) focused on a divorced couple's neglect of their child, mirroring the breakdown of human connections.

It is worth mentioning that the portrayals of mothers and fathers in Soviet and post-Soviet Russian cinema reflect the changing political and social landscape of Russia that can be thoroughly analysed in film and media studies with university students. In the Soviet era, for instance, film images of parents were largely idealized to fit the needs of the state dominant ideologies, with mothers as self-sacrificing revolutionaries and fathers as strong protectors. In the post-Soviet era, these images became more complex, or even sometimes absent, reflecting the emotional turmoil and instability of a society in transition. While traditional family roles have been reasserted in some respects, contemporary Russian films increasingly depict the emotional and psychological struggles of both fathers and mothers, highlighting the personal crises that often accompany the social changes in contemporary Russia (Table 3).

**Table 3.** The portrayals of mothers and fathers in Soviet and post-Soviet Russian feature films

Time period	Film images of mothers	Film images of fathers
1. The Soviet era (1920–1980s)	In the early Soviet period, the representation of both fathers and mothers in cinema was shaped by the October Revolution and the subsequent plan to create a new socialist citizen. Filmmakers were to promote socialist values, including equality, collectivism, and patriotism. These themes were strongly reflected in the screen portrayal of parents.	
The new Soviet family: 1920–1930s	Mother as a revolutionary symbol. In early Soviet films, mothers were often depicted as symbols of sacrifice and revolutionary idealism. Films portrayed the mother as a patriotic and moral figure, often fighting for the collective good. She was not only a mother to her children but also to the broader working class, embodying the values of selflessness and solidarity in the fight against capitalism.	Father as a revolutionary leader. Fathers were often shown as protectors of the family. They were portrayed as strong, ideological figures who instilled discipline and loyalty to the state in their children. However, in the early Soviet period, the traditional paternal role was sometimes de-emphasized, as the state itself was intended to take on the responsibility of guiding and protecting the people.
Stalinist influence and the rise of the patriarchal family: 1940–1950s	Mother as the heart of the soviet family. Under Stalinism, the mother became a symbol of the traditional family. The Soviet state began to promote the nuclear family as the basis of social stability. Mothers were the emotional and moral centre of the home. This was reflected in films, where mothers played an important role in maintaining family values and patriotism during severe times.	Fathers were shown as protectors and providers for their families, especially in wartime. During World War II, fathers were portrayed as heroes who sacrificed for their country and family. Soviet wartime dramas glorified the father as a symbol of courage, duty, and patriotism. Fathers in feature films were depicted as strong, brave, and self-sacrificing characters.
The Thaw and complex family relationships: 1960s–1980s	Mother as a moral character. Soviet cinema began to explore more nuanced portrayals of family life, though the mother remained unchanged. She was still seen as the moral centre of the family but began to be shown as more complex and emotionally driven. Mothers expressed personal desires and inner conflicts.	Father as moral authority. In the Brezhnev era, fathers were shown as authoritarian characters, upholding traditional Soviet values but also dealing with the contradictions of life in the bureaucratic system. Fathers could be portrayed as stern but loving characters who maintained discipline in the family while also struggling with their own personal moral dilemmas.
2. The post-Soviet era (1992–2020)	With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russian film industry entered a new era marked by political instability, economic transformation, and the revival of traditional values. The portrayal of mothers and fathers became diverse, reflecting the complexities of life in the post-Soviet society. The images of the father and mother shifted from idealized models to more complex characters.	
Crisis of family roles: 1990s	Mother as the sole family provider. The mother in post-Soviet feature films was portrayed as a heroic survivor, taking on the role of both	Father as an absent, distant or dysfunctional family member. The 1990s were marked by economic crisis and social change. In this context, fathers were often depicted

Time period	Film images of mothers	Film images of fathers
	mother and father. She was depicted as the moral centre of the family, but also as someone who had to face the harsh realities of the changing society.	as characters who were unable to provide emotional or financial support to their families (P. Chukhrai's <i>The Thief</i> , 1997).
The legacy of the 1990s and new challenges: 1995–2020	Films depicted the rise of the “new Russian” mother – a mother who got adapted to new economic and social realities by becoming more independent and focused on securing a better life for their children. The image of the mother in modern Russian feature films reflects both the traditional values associated with motherhood and the challenges faced by women in contemporary society.	The father as a provider and protector, tried to shield their children from the harsh realities of life. ( <i>American Daughter</i> , 1995). The father in modern Russian cinema embodies a blend of traditional and modern ideals, reflecting the complexities of contemporary Russian identity and family life.

Additionally, the evolution of a child film image (a son or a daughter) in Soviet and post-Soviet Russian children's feature films can be analysed in the classroom during film studies as it reflects the changing social values, political ideologies, and cultural shifts within the country. Since children's cinema has historically been a tool for shaping the next generation's worldview and aspirations, it would offer representations of childhood that both aligned with the state ideals and responded to social change (Table 4). For instance, in the Soviet Union, children's cinema was closely tied to the state's ideological goals. The image of the child in Soviet films was constructed to reflect and promote the ideals of socialism, community, and collective progress. Whereas the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 fundamentally changed Russian society and, by extension, the way children were portrayed in feature films. Post-Soviet children's films evolved to reflect a more complex and sometimes fragmented world.

**Table 4.** The portrayals of children in Soviet and post-Soviet Russian feature films

Time period	Film images of children
Soviet children's cinema: idealized childhood and socialist values	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The pioneer child: idealized and heroic. The child was presented as a model citizen: obedient, hardworking, and loyal to the state (<i>Timur i ego komanda/Timur and His Team</i>, 1940).</li> <li>2. The heroic child in times of war or crisis: children and youth were depicted as making tremendous sacrifices for the state and their families, both on the home front and in wartime settings (<i>Neulovimye mstiteli/The Elusive Avengers</i>, 1967).</li> </ol>
Post-Soviet children's cinema: children as witnesses or victims of social change	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The child as a witness to societal dysfunction (1990s). With the breakdown of the Soviet Union, Russian cinematography began to explore social change through the eyes of children, who often served as witnesses to the adult world's problems, conflicts, and moral contradictions (<i>Malen'kaya Vera/The Little Vera</i>, 1988; <i>Brat/Brother</i>, 1997). Films reflected a new cultural reality in which children were exposed to such negative adult challenges as corruption, poverty, and personal crisis, but were shown resilient and resourceful in their attempts to understand the world around them.</li> <li>2. The child as a victim of society's changes (1990s-2000s). These children were often portrayed as disoriented, abandoned, or traumatized by the changing society, reflecting the instability and uncertainty that many Russian people felt during that period (<i>The Return</i>, 2003).</li> </ol>

Time period	Film images of children
Modern children's cinema: children as symbols of freedom and self-expression or voices for social change	<p>1. The child as an individual: autonomy and personal growth. The image of the child became more focused on personal development and self-discovery, rather than on fulfilling societal or state-imposed roles (<i>The Irony of Fate. The Sequel</i>, 2007). These children might rebel, question authority, or take their destiny into their own hands, showcasing the shift from the Soviet emphasis on collective identity to the post-Soviet focus on personal freedom and self-expression.</p> <p>2. The child in a new Russia: adapting to capitalism, consumerism, and individual success (2000–2010s). Children who, though still innocent, were growing up in a world defined by economic inequality and a new set of moral dilemmas (<i>The Edge</i>, 2010).</p> <p>3. The child as a voice for social change (2010–2020s). Russian children's films depicted children as agents of change – characters who challenged the status quo and fought for social justice or a better future. Children embarked on adventures that tested their moral beliefs, challenged societal norms, and gave them the opportunity to reshape their environment. Films reflected a more modern, post-Soviet focus on individualism and the empowerment of youth to influence the world around them (<i>The Last Warrior</i>, 2017).</p>

## 5. Conclusion

The evolution of screen images of family and upbringing in Russian cinematography reflects a wide range of changes in the social and cultural life of Russia. If in Soviet times the emphasis was on collectivism and the upbringing of a citizen oriented towards public interests, then in the post-Soviet period cinema focuses on personal problems and the search for a balance between traditional and modern values. The hermeneutic analysis has allowed us to identify how these changes occurring in society are expressed in cinema, emphasizing the importance of the family as a key unit of society in any historical period. Thus, the hermeneutic approach applied in media studies will enable university students to consider these family images not only as a result of cultural and historical changes, but also as a way of interpreting social and family values.

The portrayal of family in Soviet and post-Soviet Russian cinema has evolved in response to the political, social, and economic alterations. Soviet feature films often depicted the family as part of a broader socialist or patriotic project, while post-Soviet films reflected the complexity and crisis of family relationships in the period of rapid transformation. The family in contemporary Russian feature films serves both as a symbol of national ideals and a site of personal struggle, with films increasingly exploring the emotional and psychological aspects of family life.

In both Soviet and post-Soviet films, gender roles within the family evolved in various ways. As for the Soviet period, women were depicted as the moral backbone of the family, while men were protectors or workers. Later, in post-Soviet feature films these roles began to shift, with more emphasis on individual autonomy and gender equality, particularly in the context of divorce, family breakdown, or economic survival. However, despite the portrayal of more independent women, traditional gender expectations persisted, with films exploring the tensions between women's emancipation and their family obligations.

As a rule, the parental characters were symbolic representations of large cultural and ideological concepts, including state control, gender roles, and family values. As Russian cinematography evolved from the Soviet era to the post-Soviet period, so did the screen representations of fathers and mothers, reflecting transformations in political ideologies, sociocultural conditions and family models.

Speaking of children's images in Soviet and post-Soviet children's feature films, they also reflected the changing political, cultural, and social landscape of Russia: in Soviet films, the child was a symbol of the collective and the future of socialism, embodying ideals of duty, discipline, and progress. In contrast, post-Soviet children's films portray a more complex and multifaceted view of childhood, where children are depicted as vulnerable victims of social change, individuals in search of personal meaning, or witnesses to the transforming world around them.

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## Reinforcing National Identities: The Intersection of Nationalism and Sports in Bollywood Movies

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### Abstract

Through blending individual triumphs with belonging as a nation, Bollywood sports films convey nationalist narratives. This study examines how popular Bollywood sports films employ themes of resilience, unity, and social-political struggle to construct nationalism. By focusing on prominent films such as *Lagaan* (2001), *Chak De! India* (2007), *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* (2013), *Dangal* (2016), *83* (2021), and *Maidaan* (2024), this study explores the way sports as a metaphor for national pride and social transformation is employed in these films. For conducting this study, this work employs critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis of film assists in the deconstruction of how language, images, and narrative schemes are used in constructing and expressing power relations, ideology, and social forms. It examines the different ways in which films transmit messages, represent society, and influence perceptions among audiences. The focus in this study is on the narrative structure, leading characters and depiction of evil forces. Additionally, this research also evaluates how patriotic speeches, the display of the Indian flag as a symbol and underdog narratives in stories assist in portraying sports as a means of expressing unity. This research demonstrates how film could be a cultural and ideological instrument to consolidate national identity and social cohesion by tracing the evolution of nationalist motifs in Bollywood sports movies.

**Keywords:** Bollywood, sports films, nationalism, character archetypes, sports and identity.

### 1. Introduction

While movies project reality, they are also produced for eliciting responses from audience members. The movie-making process has changed substantially since the initial moving image pictures flashed onto screens in the mid-1890s (Crosson, 2013). Well-crafted sports films have evoked strong viewers' emotions. Sports dramas find a resonance with audiences, which is one of the main reasons why filmmakers keep making films in this genre. From the early 20th century, cinema has been a powerful force in shaping social consciousness in India, impacting millions through its visual interpretation of social realities. Together with television, Hindi cinema has profoundly influenced Indians' perceptions of themselves and their country. The medium has traditionally been a vehicle of bourgeois hegemony, constructing narratives that interweave nationalism, communalism, gender, and social identity (Deshpande, 2009).

Bollywood films not only reflect historical and contemporary reality but also construct it, often serving as an instrument of power that influences public mentality and national discourse. While films succeed in arousing profound emotions in the audience, they also provide significant insight into the competitive world of sports. Sports biographies have sporadically appeared in

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Hindi mainstream cinema. Even with India's fervent cricket craze, there have been more prominent biopics about wrestlers and athletes (Setlur, 2024). The concept of sports movies in mainstream Hindi cinema has undergone a major transformation over the last fifteen years, courtesy of *Lagaan* (Gowariker, 2001) and *Chak De! India* (Amin, 2007). The former was likely the earliest of the initial so-called sports films that effectively showcased the hybridity of popular Hindi cinema by integrating a concept such as a cricket match between Englishmen and Indian villagers in the late 19th century with a broader narrative encompassing themes of race, nation, religion, and caste. And unlike *Lagaan*, *Chak De! India* demonstrated that a sports film could transcend genre convention by combining individual stories of redemption with a grander nationalistic concept.

Nationalist histories often feature renowned historical figures and events that are shown to be turning points in the history of the country, usually exaggerated to reinforce national solidarity and pride (Kohn, 2025). Movies such as *Bhag Milkha Bhag* (Mehra, 2013), *Dangal* (Tiwari, 2016), *83* (Khan, 2021), and *Maidaan* (Sharma, 2024) are a quest for the same type of practices. Muscular nationalism is a synthesis of masculinity and nationalism that identifies martial power, physical vigour and tenacity as characterizing features of national identity. Bollywood, as a cultural entity, has contributed substantially towards consolidating this ideology by presenting virile, athletic male heroes (Banerjee, Williams, 2018). *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* is a prime example, taking the life of legendary athlete Milkha Singh and adapting it to symbolize India's quest for regional supremacy and national pride through sports. With the success of *Lagaan*, Hindi appeared to have found a formula for making films by fictionalising cricket. Thus, we saw many movies around this theme, including *Iqbal* (2005), *Stumped* (2003), *Say Salaam India* (2007), *Victory* (2009), *Hattrick* (2007). The genre mainly exists in two formats: one is a sports-themed story and another in which the plot at first sight seems to focus on the sporting activity but afterwards incorporates the sporting activity within some social, political or cultural phenomenon. The implications of the sports film are indirect in comparison to the implications of other types of genres due to the fact that it reports broader themes obliquely (Chintamani, 2017).

## 2. Materials and methods

The research utilizes qualitative study design, employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore how Bollywood sports movies build and disseminate nationalist narratives. Through the analysis of major elements like plot organization, underdog achievers, and symbols of the nation, the study aims to understand the discourse strategies used in successful sports films to evoke a sense of patriotism and national identity. The research is carried out through the analysis of five commercially and critically acclaimed Bollywood sports movies produced in the last two decades, chosen because of their cultural significance, nationalist overtones, and depiction of sports as a metaphor for national pride. The chosen films are *Lagaan*, *Chak De! India*, *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*, *Dangal* and *Maidaan*. These films are chosen as they exemplify nationalist storytelling through sports, encapsulating themes of struggle, perseverance, and national pride.

The primary dataset consists of the films' screenplays, dialogues, visual imagery, and symbolic elements to discuss the nationalistic undertones of these movies. To systematically analyse how nationalism is constructed within these films, Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA (Fairclough, 2013) is employed, which includes textual analysis in examining dialogues, monologues, and symbols that reinforce nationalist themes, discursive practices in analysing the representation of underdog achievers, sports as a battleground for national pride, and mentor figures as nation-builders and social practice to understand how these narratives align with broader socio-political ideologies. Key themes used for analysis include plot and narrative structure, underdog achiever and nationalist heroism, and use of symbols in promoting nationalism.

## 3. Discussion

Nissim Manathukkaren examines (Manathukkaren, 2021) the persistence of nationalist narratives in Indian sports films despite economic liberalization. While some scholars argue that Hindi cinema has moved toward a post-national framework, the author challenges this view, asserting that sports films continue to reinforce a market-driven nationalism (Ncube et al., 2023). These films prioritize national triumph over individual struggles, often glossing over internal social and political complexities. However, the author suggests that the genre holds the potential to reimagine nationalism by addressing its inherent contradictions. Many researches have highlighted the political dimensions of sports in the past, analysing their role in shaping global perceptions and

national identity through visual and textual narratives (Descamps, 2023). While, another study highlights how filmmakers often prioritize commercial success over narrative depth in sports films. Research suggests that these films frequently blend multiple elements to create an engaging spectacle but, in doing so, tend to rely on stereotypes, artificial dramatization, and formulaic storytelling (Büyücek, 2024). This approach, while aiming for mass appeal, can sometimes dilute the authenticity of real-life events and social contexts, resulting in a more sensationalized rather than a nuanced portrayal of sports and national identity (Rohman, 2019).

Several scholars have emphasized that cinema serves as an ideal medium for the portrayal of heroic archetypes and influential narratives like nationalism. While films often depict Indigenous athletes heroically in sports like football, lacrosse, and rodeo, a deeper analysis reveals the fragile reality of marginalized communities where sports serve as a means of survival (Bauer et al., 2021). This is primarily due to two factors: first, the use of established tropes enables audiences to easily identify central characters, and second, cinema, as a form of mass entertainment, plays a crucial role in reinforcing societal norms (McClearen, 2023). Through repeated narrative patterns, films contribute to shaping both individual identities and collective cultural consciousness, making them a powerful tool for ideological and psychological influence (McGuire, 2023). Academic discourse on Indian nationalism in cinema has examined patriotism through historical and ideological perspectives. The Bollywood films like *Rang De Basanti* (2006) fit into a larger trend of Bollywood films that glorify martyrdom and violent resistance. According to the study of Srivastava (Srivastava, 2009), combining historical revolutionaries with modern youth movement, the film promotes middle-class nationalism that resonates with modern audiences. The author claims that this recounting of anti-colonial history promotes bourgeois nationalism, making patriotism more accessible to urban, educated viewers. This essay discusses how Bollywood films create national identity, political discourse, and post-liberalization socio-political ideas in India.

More and more academics studying Bollywood's influence on national identity have looked at how movies serve as ideological instruments in creating the country's self-concept. The nationalist rhetoric in Bollywood films is examined in this study using a transnational feminist lens, with a focus on citizenship, identity, and the impact of ideology. In both domestic and global contexts, Bollywood reinforces cultural and political narratives that define Indian identity by promoting particular imagined groups (Rajgopal, 2011).

Research on nationalism has increasingly highlighted concerns over the rise of extreme nationalist ideologies, often propagated by influential political leaders at both national and international levels (Iordache et al., 2023). Another research on sportive nationalism suggests that national pride linked to sports success is relatively weak and temporary. While individuals engaged in or following sports online exhibited higher levels of sportive nationalism, these sentiments fluctuated with athlete and team performances as nationalistic sentiments in sports may decline over time due to perceived failures or diminishing enthusiasm (Shibli et al., 2021). Scholars argue that while political figures promote hostile and exclusionary nationalism, popular culture, particularly cinema, often presents alternative nationalist discourses that emphasize individual freedom, equality, and social progress. This study by Felani et al. (Felani et al., 2020) employs the discourse historical technique created by Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl to examine the portrayal of nationalism in American and Indonesian cinema, juxtaposing these narratives with the nationalism advocated by political leaders.

An examination of 10 American and 10 Indonesian films uncovers divergent patterns in the depiction of nationalism within each nation's cinematic framework. Research on sports films highlights their role in reflecting collective social imaginaries, though certain sports, while many others have been overlooked. However, an analysis of 29 international films reveals that filmmakers use other in-famous sports as a metaphor for broader social themes, including love, historical narratives, education, and cultural diversity, demonstrating its deeper symbolic significance in cinematic storytelling (Bauer, Lin, 2022).

Bollywood sports dramas have increasingly engaged with the intersection of gender, motherhood, and national identity. The study of Routray and Gaur (Gaur, Routray, 2025) examines postcolonial feminist narratives in Indian sports films, which reveals that how women's choices are shaped by larger social hierarchies and power structures, rather than mere individual agency (Free et al., 2024). Further research suggests Bollywood's portrayal of sportswomen highlights both progressive and regressive narratives, where some films challenge societal norms while others reinforce gendered stereotypes. By critically examining these representations, scholars argue that

sports films have the potential to transcend traditional prejudices and offer a reimagined role for women in Indian sports and society. Cultural industries mirror capitalist inequalities, like Bollywood and slums have become parallel symbols of "authentic India" in the global market, with the promise of authenticity driving their appeal as major tourist destinations (Clini, Valančiūnas, 2023).

Research on national identity in Bollywood films highlights how Indian cinema reflects evolving socio-political dynamics and the influence of globalization. A study by Clelia Clini (Clini, 2020) explores how martial arts were integrated into Indian films within the socio-cultural and political context of postcolonial India. Drawing on Yvonne Tasker's concept of the 'anticolonial narrative,' the study argues that martial arts in Hindi cinema challenged colonial stereotypes of Asian masculinity as effeminate and weak. Another study examines the portrayal of masculinity in post-2010 Turkish action films. It highlights that male characters are depicted as either heroic figures who sacrifice for family and nation or as socially unapproved negative figures. The study discusses how these representations reflect broader societal perceptions of masculinity in a particular geographical location (Ege, Gürkan, 2023). The 1980s emerge as a crucial period in this transformation, marking significant shifts in the articulation of nationalism in popular films. Scholars have traced how Bollywood employs varied genres to inscribe nationalistic themes, shaping perceptions of national identity through storytelling.

Researchers have explored the emotional structure of inspirational media also, using computational and quantitative content analysis. Findings reveal that inspirational films follow an emotional arc marked by a final positive shift in sentiment, with alternating peaks and valleys throughout the narrative. The study provides insights into how emotional dynamics shape the audience's experience of inspirational content (Dale et al., 2023). Prior studies have examined how films embed nationalism within different cinematic formats, reinforcing or reinterpreting dominant political ideologies. This body of work contributes to a broader understanding of how popular Indian cinema functions as a tool of national narration, reflecting cultural and ideological shifts over time (Catterall, Karmakar, 2025).

One of the study by Krueger (Krueger, 2021) explores the psychological distinction between nationalism and patriotism, emphasizing their different social and psychological underpinnings. The research demonstrates how cultural products perpetuate nationalist sentiments. The study underscores that nationalism, despite historical shifts, remains deeply embedded in cultural representations and continues to shape collective identities. This study by Kumar and Raghuvanshi (Kumar, Raghuvanshi, 2023) also explores how many Bollywood films play a role in shaping popular imagination through cinematic narratives. It highlights how selected films reinforce a nationalist perspective, thereby contributing to cartographic fundamentalism and shaping public perceptions. Another research publication examines the intersection of football, fascism, and national identity in Spain, focusing on how sports films propagated nationalistic ideologies. Through a multi-layered analysis the research highlights how cinema has historically functioned as a tool of cultural assimilation and national identity reinforcement.

It further links the legacy of these nationalist narratives to Spain's contemporary football culture, notably during the 2010 World Cup victory, suggesting that sports and cinema continue to shape national consciousness, emphasizing themes of unity, class mobility, and cultural supremacy (Crosson, 2021).

In the study of Radhakrishnan and Ray (Radhakrishnan, Ray, 2023) says that the sportsman in Hindi sports films has evolved from a symbol of national unity to a culturally conservative patriarch. It shows how pre-globalization sports films portrayed athletes as agents of social emancipation representing composite nationalism, but post-2010 films equated athleticism with tradition-backed masculinity. The study shows how modern sports cinema quietly promotes cultural dominance over national diversity in India's polity. The sports hero goes from a symbol of national inclusivity to a guardian of patriarchal ideals, affecting how sports films represent nationalism. Emphasizes gender equality and Indian women's potential to shine, thereby evoking nationalism.

#### 4. Results

The plot or the historic event chosen for making such sports films itself speaks about the intention of the makers towards promoting and evoking nationalist narratives. As nationalist narratives frequently portray significant historical personalities and occurrences as pivotal moments in the nation's progress and development, often glorifying them to reinforce national unity and pride (Garner, 2022). If we will examine the films like *lagaan* and *Chak de India*, we can

clearly separate that the plot of these movies sometimes directly and often indirectly presents the matter of national pride through their plot. Be it the moment in the film *lagaan* where the poor villagers were challenged to play the game of cricket with British officers to get redemption from the tax for three years. Although the film is a work of fiction set in British colonial India and centred around a cricket match, it portrays the victory against the British as a national triumph, as cricket was one of the few platforms where Indians could challenge the English on equal terms. Additionally, the manner in which the team unites towards the overarching objective of defeating the British in the game underlines the notion of unity in diversity, a fundamental tenet of nationalism. Cricket as a sport in the film was utilized as a means for India to establish its identity, and it served as a breeding ground for nationalism merging it with a much bigger theme that includes issues of race, religion, and caste in its narrative. These films influence public opinion by emphasizing heroism, sacrifice, and the vilification of perceived adversaries, thereby strengthening the audience's emotional connection with the nation-state.

*Chak De! India* demonstrated that a sports film can go beyond mere genre classification, embracing the larger message of nationalism alongside individual narratives of redemption, unlike *Lagaan*. The film, set in the fields of hockey, through its plot and character development constructs an impacting nationalist narrative, although it seems intertwining the themes gender bias and empowerment as well. Unlike this, *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* is a biographical sports drama that tells the inspiring story of Milkha Singh (Indian track and field sprinter). Protagonist's achievements as an athlete are presented not merely as his personal victories but national milestones. The film highlights his participation in international competitions and Olympics, emphasizing how his performance symbolized India's presence on the global stage. The film dramatizes his failures and triumphs as moments of national pride and collective aspiration, reinforcing the idea that individual success contributes to India's global reputation.

Plot of the film *Dangal* also showcases the same trait of transforming personal victory into national glory. Mahavir Singh Phogat's (Amir Khan) unfulfilled dream of winning gold for India introduces the nationalistic desire for international recognition. His dream of winning gold for India is not presented in the film as personal but a nationalistic mission. Choosing the winning moment as the climax, symbolizes the victory of both the girls and the nation. These films serve as prime examples of how Bollywood constructs nationalism by promoting a sense of collective loyalty and prioritization of national interests over individual ethics. A significant aspect of such kind of films is their ability to blur the line between historical representation and ideological propaganda, making nationalism a central theme in their storytelling. By highlighting nation-first narratives, they create a sense of unity while also contributing to polarized political discourse. This aligns with broader patterns in Bollywood, where not only sports films but war films, and historical dramas frequently promote nationalist sentiments (Das, Iyer, 2024).

Field hockey, being historically tied to India's international sports success, has played a pivotal role in shaping national, ethnic, and community identities, particularly in India. Moreover, the sport has significantly contributed to the development of women's sports (Watson et al., 2024). Hockey along with football in the recent time had become an emblem of national identity through cinema as well. Films like *Chak De! India* (2007) and *Maidaan* (2024) exemplify how sports narratives foster nationalism as a medium of historical pride, cultural unity, and gender empowerment. Both the film demonstrates how the representation of heroic figures, national symbols, and emotionally charged narratives in sports films cultivates patriotism.

Indian cinema often utilizes dramatic narratives to unify diverse sociocultural audiences by portraying culturally significant themes, including sports as a symbol of national pride. Film exemplify how sports narratives foster nationalism as a medium of historical pride, cultural unity, and gender empowerment (Raj, Suresh, 2024). Both movies use interesting historical events and well-thought-out plots to show how heroic characters, national symbols, and emotionally charged stories in sports movies can make people more patriotic. The film *83* begins with India's underdog status during the 1983 Cricket World Cup, and the team was undervalued and mocked. But when the film progresses, showing incidents of internal and external scepticism, and climaxes with the victory of the Indian cricket team in the world cup, claiming global recognition, it tries to rewrite India's global sporting identity. The plot aligns with India's struggle for global recognition, metaphorically framing the World Cup victory as a national breakthrough. Similarly in *Maidaan*, the story begins in post-independence India, where coach Syed Abdul Rahim (Ajay Devgan) fights to establish football and the rise of Indian football parallels India's post-colonial resurgence. Rahim

unites players from diverse religious backgrounds, showcasing India's cultural diversity and subtly reflecting India's unity in diversity. The climax shows India winning the Asian Games and the plot implicitly positions football victory as a national victory.

Modern Bollywood films often centre on narratives of the Indian underdog achieving victory after confronting adversity or an external threat. The success of the charismatic male protagonist who fulfils his obligations, rescues the nation, and restores Country's lost pride through the sport adds salt of nationalism in the whole narrative. Film *Chak de India* is majorly focused on the journey of former captain of the Indian men's hockey team, who is falsely accused of being a traitor after India's loss to Pakistan in a crucial hockey match. His ostracization from society and further labelling as a 'gaddar' (anti-national) makes him an ideal underdog achiever when he returns as the coach of women hockey team and makes it a winning team out of all odds, becomes a symbolic act of redemption of an underdog hero. The phenomenon is presented in such a manner in the film that it not only reclaims his dignity but also reasserts his national identity. Protagonists struggle and then the success mirrors the idea of proving one's loyalty to the nation, which is a core element of nationalism.

This is not a new phenomenon to Indian film makers. Bollywood's strategy of endorsing nationalist discourse through the exaltation of historical figures or events may be traced back to the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century only. But in the past two decades and the half has seen it occurring more often. Bollywood effectively utilizes cinema as a form of soft power to evoke nationalist sentiments, shaping public perceptions and reinforcing a collective sense of identity. Joseph Nye's concept of soft power refers to a nation's ability to influence others through cultural appeal rather than coercion. Bollywood, as a cultural force, plays a crucial role in fostering nationalism (Dwyer, 2021). In this row, film *Bhag Milkha Bhag*, the story of an Indian sprinter who overcame personal trauma to achieve national glory. The film not only showcases Milkha's journey but also uses various cinematic techniques to promote nationalism and patriotism. This historical backdrop of the film which includes traumatic childhood during the Partition of India in 1947 easily establishes the nationalistic undercurrent of the film, portraying Milkha's struggle as a reflection of India's own pain and resilience post-Partition. His transformation from a refugee (sufferer) to a national hero mirrors India's own journey towards self-reliance and global recognition.

Sports function as distinct genres, each with its own narratives, rules, and ideological underpinnings, evolving through rule changes, demographic shifts, and socio-cultural transformations. This fluidity influences how sports films construct meaning. Milkha's coach, Guruji played by actor Pavan Malhotra, plays a significant role in shaping Milkha's journey, constantly reminding him that his success is not just for himself but for the country. The recurring theme of national duty over personal ambition aligns with the larger discourse of nationalism in Indian cinema, where athletes are depicted as warriors and fighters, fighting for the honour of their nation. Lead characters of the film *Dangal*, the Phogat sisters, represent ordinary rural girls, initially forced and eventually motivated to break societal norms to achieve international glory not only to them, their native but also to the nation. Their struggle symbolizes India's fight for global recognition in sports. Despite all the odds of being women wrestlers, their victory story in the film metaphorically link India's rise in international sports to national pride. Sports documentary that sheds light on female athletic experiences while prompting audiences to reflect on gender issues in sports. As sports documentaries are often perceived as historical reflections of reality, they play a crucial role in authenticating particular viewpoints. While the film challenges traditional gender ideologies and highlights barriers to female athletic success (Heinecken, 2021).

By employing reverse engineering, biopics reconstruct historical narratives to align with contemporary political and cultural agendas, embedding themes of national pride, patriotism, and cultural exceptionalism. Historical characters are deliberately crafted to appeal to modern audiences, fostering a hyper-politicized nationalist sentiment (Győri, 2024). Same goes with the character archetypes built in the sports biopics like *83* and *Maidaan*. Kapil Dev (Ranveer Singh) is portrayed as an ordinary man leading a less experienced team, The British media and commentators repeatedly undermine India's potential. Their disbelief symbolizes colonial underestimation. But Kapil Dev's success as an underdog cricket captain and the victory of an underestimated cricket team parallels India's rise as a global power and as a post-colonial triumph. Whereas, coach Rahim represents India's indomitable spirit and His obstacles to leadership mirrors India's political struggle, but the way in which film presents and build both the characters as underdog achievers and later develops them as representations of India's global potential establishes the fact that Bollywood sports films are

using certain types of character archetypes in Glorifying sporting successes as a metaphor for national pride. While sports films often reinforce dominant ideologies, they also critique and modify them, highlighting the tension between reality and its cinematic construction (Ewers, 2023). This duality makes sports films simultaneously celebratory and unsettling, strengthening their role in both perpetuating and interrogating cultural narratives.

*Symbols: to subtly voice-up nationalist narratives*

Sports films, while primarily focused on athletic triumphs, serve as potent mediums for fostering national pride by embedding subtle yet evocative nationalist symbols. While sports films do not directly inspire people to participate in sports, they serve as powerful sources of motivation by fostering emotional connection. These films employ elements such as the tricolour flag, salutes, emotional climaxes, and patriotic dialogues to reinforce the connection between individual victories and national identity. Sports films contribute to social and cultural discourse by promoting values like perseverance, teamwork, and national pride (Padmanabhan et al., 2024). It is like Indian filmmakers have taken a page from *lagaan* on how to pitch nationalistic narrative in the right way, even when the title, trailer and first look of the film don't show it prominently.

These films often include displays of the national flag, salutes, and tears to show national pride. One of the most poignant moments in the film occurs when Milkha Singh stands on the podium, draped in the Indian flag, as the national anthem plays. In addition to this in Indo-Pak athletic competition held in Lahore, when Milkha wins the race and is honored with the title "The Flying Sikh" by Pakistan's President. These scenes serve as a direct appeal to the audience's patriotic sentiments, framed as a moment of Indian triumph over its past adversary, reinforcing a nationalistic narrative of resilience and victory. Thus, illustrating how sports can be a vehicle for national unity and identity.

Similarly in the film *83* when Kapil Dev plays an extraordinary inning in the cricket world cup and India makes to semi-finals, one of the team mate call him freedom fighter and salute him which shows Indian flag flurrying in the background. The film uses the presence of an Indian child as a cricket fan and the Indian flag in his hand. These scenes are featured in such a way that these incidents are evoking patriotic emotions in the players, which eventually turns to wins and thus amplifying the audience's nationalistic emotions.

These movies celebrate a moment of shared solidarity produced by sporting triumph that is typically nationalistic, drawing on feelings that might not be entirely rational. The iconic dialogue of film *Danga* "Mhari chhoriya chhoron se kam hai ke?" (Are my daughters any less than sons?), clearly emphasizes gender equality while subtly invoking sentiments of nationalism by highlighting the capacity of Indian women to elevate the nation's prestige. Sub-textually, it also conveys that true patriotism lies in empowering women to represent the nation. Another dialogue of the film similar emotion "*Gold to gold hota hai... chhora laave ya chhori*" (Gold is gold, whether a boy wins it or a girl) strongly dismantles traditional gender roles and aligns success with national honour, evidently reinforcing the importance of national pride through sports achievements, irrespective of gender.

Films, as a powerful form of mass media, possess a complex nature that enables them to act as vehicles for social discourse, often reflecting and shaping societal values. Movies commonly convey messages that resonate with on-going social phenomena, subtly embedding cultural and nationalistic themes (Widodo, 2023). Apart from the dialogues, cinematographical techniques of showing tri-colour and use of India's national anthem as a background score during Geeta phogat's (Fatima Sana Shaikh) victory amplifies the nationalistic emotion of the audience. In the final scene, when Geeta wins gold in the wrestling match and the camera captures a clear, elevated shot of the tricolor flag being raised. The slow-motion capture of the flag-raising moment and emotional close-ups of Mahavir Singh Phogat, screening tears of pride in his eyes as the national anthem plays, fortify pride in India's global representation at Commonwealth Wrestling Championship.

The cinematography captures the connection between personal victory and national pride, subtly and symbolically embedding nationalism in the viewers' consciousness. In the film *83*, World Cup (1983) finals at Lord's (London), being the Mecca of Cricket, represents colonial dominance but the winning moment of Indian cricket team in the same stadium, symbolizes India's break from colonial subjugation. Throughout the tournament, the tricolour flag repeatedly appears. The climactic moment when India wins the World Cup shows the flag hoisting as well. Additionally, the iconic dialogues in the film like "We here to win!" and "Pehli baar world cup mein humara tiranga sabse upar lehreyega" (*For the first time, our tricolour will fly the highest in the World Cup*) not only amplify patriotic sentiments but also position sports as a metaphor for India's

social progress and resilience. By aligning sporting victories with national honour, these films construct a collective emotional experience that transcends rational discourse, subtly embedding nationalism into the viewers' consciousness. Ultimately, through the interplay of visuals, dialogues, and character arcs, Indian sports films perpetuate a unifying nationalistic spirit, celebrating the power of sports as a symbol of India's identity, progress, and triumph on the global stage.

#### *Media Literacy and National Identity in Hindi Sports Films*

Hindi sports movies seem to be all about athletic success. The narrative in the film functions on a much more profound level. They are interwoven into larger national narratives. These movies employ the rhetoric of sports to convey stories not only of individual or team success, but of national pride, unity and identity. A media-literacy approach discloses how this narrative is anything but coincidental. It entails a sensitivity to how cinematic devices—character trajectories, visual motifs, and narrative form—are employed consciously to equate individual victory with the notion of a revived, cohesive nation. Movies such as *Lagaan* (2001), *Chak De! India* (2007), and *Dangal* (2016) do more than trace athletes through their setbacks and triumphs. They design symbolic victories. For instance, in *Lagaan*, a cricket match is used as a metaphor for anti-colonial struggle. Similarly, in *Chak De! India*, the coach is a national redeemer who defies communal stereotypes. In *Dangal*, wrestling, which is often a ignored sport, becomes a narrative of empowerment, connecting the nation's progress with gender progress. In all these instances, the personal is deployed to reflect the political.

The close observation also reveals the highlighting of the underdog, the outsider redeemed, the outsider who is assimilated into the national fold. These are strong points because they access mass sentiment. They are also simplification devices. They take the complexity – gender, religion, class, regional difference—and simplify it into something everyone can understand. For instance, victory tales and a unifying narrative. Emotional manipulation is at the core of this process. Music swells at the right moment, flags wave in slow motion and words are an invitation to patriotism. In films like *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* and *Maidaan*, the coordination between the visual and sound signals results in a shared national celebration around individual achievements. But media literacy is not so much about recognizing how films make us feel. Rather, it is asking what is missing. Which of the nation's selves are idealized as icons, and who remains excluded? Do female competitors have finished stories, or they just serve as symbols of empowerment? And how are religious and regional minorities represented? Films like *Dangal* and *83* give nationalist cheerleading that frequently precludes space for institutional criticism or problematizing history. Hindi sports films, therefore, are more than a spectacle. They are cultural texts that normalize how the nation envisions itself. To read them critically means to pay attention to not only what they depict but also to what they choose not to show.

### **5. Conclusion**

Bollywood sports movies have become a powerful platform for the development of nationalist narratives through the integration of sports with issues of national pride, determination, and communal identity. Using critical discourse analysis, this research has illustrated how movies like *Lagaan*, *Chak De! India*, *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*, *Dangal*, *83*, and *Maidaan* purposefully developed nationalist emotions through narrative structures, underdog success stories, and symbolic icons. These movies not only commemorate sporting achievements but also as ideological tools affirm hegemonic narratives of patriotism and national unity. The deployment of nationalist narratives in Indian cinema imperceptibly frames the audience's understanding of national identity, patriotism, and history.

Bollywood films through their narrative structure, emotional appeal, and key historical references encourage the notion that personal struggle and national pride are deeply intertwined. The selected films place the career trajectory of persons in the featured position as a symbol of India's own emergence, employing sports as a tool to encourage nationalism and generate collective pride among the public. The depiction of underdog heroes overcoming adversity – whether colonial oppression, gender bias, or societal scepticism – transforms sports into a stage for national redemption. Through the dramatization of sports history and personal struggle on the part of athletes, selected films appeared to convert individual triumphs into moments of shared national pride. Additionally, the frequent application of nationalist icons, including the Indian flag, the national anthem and melodramatic speeches, further consolidates their place in fostering patriotic enthusiasm among spectators. Nevertheless, although these movies promote national unity, they also pose significant issues regarding selective representation of history and ideological reinforcement.

The celebration of national triumphs tends to oversimplify the intricacies of socio-political realities, effacing the differences between historical truth and cinematic mythology. In conclusion, notwithstanding this, Bollywood sports films remain cultural artefacts that entertain as well as influence public consciousness about sports, identity, and nationalism. Future studies can further investigate the impact of such films on audience perceptions of nationalism and whether or not they add to a more inclusive or exclusionary vision of national pride. Through the analysis of how Indian sports films adapt to shifting political and cultural realities, researchers can learn more about the convergence of cinema, sports, and national identity in India.

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## Transformation of the Creative Industries Image Due to the Media Literacy of the Social Media Audience

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### Abstract

Active measures are being taken to stimulate the growth of the creative economy at the state level in many countries. Therefore, the integration of the media literacy into public communication about the cultural and creative industries development becomes urgent. That will help the society not only to navigate the extensive information flow of various practices supporting the culture sphere and stimulating the creative production, but also to effect consciously on public policy in these areas. The research purpose is to regard how the creative industries image is transforming due to the media literacy of the social media audience, and with which of the existing creative economy development concepts (policies) this image correlates. The research results were obtained by using the monitoring and the content analysis of materials about the creative and the cultural industries from YouTube, Telegram and VKontakte. The author also carried out the statistical accounting of the various forms of media literacy among the Russian-speaking audience in the social media thematic channels and communities. As a result, the rating of the most popular creative activities was formed. The quantitative data presented in the article clearly demonstrate that the Russian-speaking audience of the social media thematic channels and communities consciously differentiates and selects the content about such creative industries as development of computer games and digital products, production of modern music, marketing, advertising and PR, industrial and environmental design. The research confirms that the cultural industries image is rapidly transforms into the creative industries image under the media literacy influence, and the "CreaTech" idea prevailing in its base combines itself the creative skills, innovations and digital technologies. Thus, due to the media literacy, the demand for the more active discussion about the role of creative work and education in creative professions between the state and the society is forming.

**Keywords:** media literacy, media literacy level, social media, thematic communities, media content, image, creative industries, cultural industries, creative economy.

### 1. Introduction

Over the past decades, the UN Conference on Trade has played a key role in supporting and promoting the Creative industries. In 2021, the Conference organizers presented the data according to which the creative industries provide about 30 million jobs and make 3 % of global gross domestic product, employ more young people (at the age of 15-29 years) than any other sector, as well as employ women of almost half of the workforce (UNCTAD, 2021).

Governments of many countries are attempting to devise long-term policies for the development of the creative economy. In the USA, Great Britain, Germany, France and other advanced countries, different approaches to the development of industries based on the creative

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activity of people have been tested. They have come a long way, from trying to make the subsidized cultural sector self-sufficient to carrying a strategy to develop an inclusive creative economy that, along with market profits, can provide positive social benefits for a large part of the population (Azeem et al., 2021; Dent et al., 2020; Lee, 2022; Wilson et al., 2020).

Their experience has demonstrated that public support for populist or, conversely, moderate policy in the creative economy development largely depends on the media literacy level of the country's population (Mason et al., 2018; Mihailidis, 2014; Tully, Vraga, 2018). The ability to receive information from various media, critically analyze, evaluate, independently create and transmit messages in various forms influences people's civic activity and leads to social change (Camarero et al., 2019; Martens, Hobbs, 2015; Silverblatt, 2018).

If representatives of the creative industries have the opportunity to broadcast information about the results and problems of their professional activities through independent media, then society can form an adequate image of the creative industries, correlate it with reality and with state policy (Aufderheide, 2018; Celik et al., 2021; Friesem, 2019; Van der Meer, Hameleers, 2021). Under such conditions, the creative economy will have natural incentives for effective development.

In the Russian Federation it is just beginning to take steps for the creative economy development. In September 2021, the Concept for the development of creative industries and mechanisms for their state support in large urban agglomerations and megacities until 2030 was approved (Rasporyazhenie..., 2021).

The emergence of this Concept led to the actualization of the following questions: how much does Russian society ready to take a direct part in its implementation, does it support a change in state priorities towards the development of the creative economy and, as follows, in a reduction of funding for the cultural sector, does Russian society share the opinion about the great potential of creative industries and what are the types of creative activities considered the most demanded in it? The answers to them should be given within the media literacy context of the Russian-speaking population that is directly involved in the production and consumption of creative labor products.

Respectively in the study, the author attempts to objectively assess whether there is a critical understanding of information about the culture and creative industries development in Russian society, whether there is an active reaction from the audience of independent social media that can influence public policy in this area.

## **2. Materials and methods**

The research is empirical. Its object is various forms of media literacy among the Russian-speaking audience of social media participating in communication on issues of creative industries development. The study subject is the creative industries image in the quality of reflecting the media literacy level for this audience.

The research purpose is to regard how the creative industries image is transforming due to the media literacy of the social media audience, and with which of the existing creative economy development concepts (policies) this image correlates.

Achieving this goal is realized through the following research tasks:

1. Analysis of existing theoretical concepts (policies) of the creative industries development.

2. Collection, processing and interpretation of empirical data on the changes for the audience size among thematic channels and communities in independent social media that produce and distribute the content about creative and cultural industries, creative activities, creative work, creative professions and creative products.

3. Collection, processing and interpretation of empirical data on the forms of media literacy among the Russian-speaking audience of social media when choosing the content dedicated to certain creative activity types.

4. Comparative analysis of empirical data for 2022-2024.

5. Making a conclusion how the media literacy of the Russian-speaking audience in independent social media affects the content of the creative industries image, and what concept of the creative industries development (State policy) the audience is ready to support as a result of studying the content about achievements and problems in the creative and cultural industries.

Duration of the research: 01.01.2022 – 31.12.2024.

The research methodology is based on a system approach and involves the use of theoretical and empirical methods.

The theoretical analysis of materials on the media literacy role in the adequate image formation for the creative industries, based on a critical information understanding the process of their development, allowed the author to form the optimal, non-redundant methodology of achievement the research goals and objectives.

At the theoretical level, we also compared various concepts of the creative and cultural industries development, which are approved by the governments of Western Europe and Asia, the USA and Russia, and are implemented in their public policies.

The empirical research consisted of collecting, processing, analyzing and interpreting quantitative data from social media in two directions:

– The audience size of channels and social media communities that specialize in producing and broadcasting content about the creative and cultural industries;

– The activity degree among the Russian-speaking audience of thematic channels and communities in social media, as well as its response forms to the content about various types of creative and cultural industries.

To implement the empirical research, we used data from the following social media: social Internet service VKontakte, video hosting Youtube (Russian-language channels) and cross-platform instant messaging system Telegram. As sources, this selection for research data is justified by the high audience coverage, the possibility of its content parsing, and also the presence of built-in mechanisms for taking into account feedback.

As part of the empirical research, we used methods that allow us to obtain quantitative data, which is necessary to achieve our purpose and tasks. These include such methods as social media monitoring, content analysis of messages posted in thematic communities and channels during the research period, and statistical accounting of feedback data on these messages from the Russian-speaking audience.

The empirical research technique included organizing and conducting the following activities:

1) Compiling a semantic core of queries from the Russian-speaking users on two topics – “creative industries” and “cultural industries” by using the online systems Wordstat.Yandex and Trends.Google.

2) Selecting and monitoring of communities and channels in social media, which is based on a compiled semantic core of queries from the Russian-speaking users.

3) Systematic collection, processing and accounting of the following data from selected social media:

– The total number of thematic communities and channels for each query of the semantic core;

– The number of participants (followers) in each thematic community and channel;

– The most popular publications (posts) ratio about various types of creative industries and cultural industries which is determined by feedback indicators – the number of “likes”, “reposts” and “comments” from the Russian-speaking audience.

4) Comparative analysis and interpretation of the data obtained.

5) Formation the conclusions in accordance with the research purpose and tasks.

The research methodology presented by the author was automated with the web analytic systems (mostly parsing programs). The methodology relies on accounting for quantitative data about various response forms to the content, and it is applicable not only to analyze the content changes of the creative industries image as the media literacy reflecting result among the social media audience, but also to identify current public requests for the information about creative activities, creative products and professions.

### **3. Discussion**

To achieve the research purpose, it is necessary to consider the existing concepts of cultural industries and creative industries, which are implemented by governments of different countries.

Historically, the concept of cultural industries was the first. Its authors defined cultural industries as production sectors in which the main factor is the people's creative activity, and the demand for created products is very difficult to predict. This causes cultural industries specific problems, which are associated primarily with the low level of capital accumulation and the high level of investment risks (Garnham, 2005; Gross, Wilson, 2019; Moore, 2014; Pratt, 2011; Throsby, 2008). When a person from the cultural industry (artist, musician, writer, director, etc.) makes a

product, it is extremely difficult to predict will it be popular or will it be in demand among real consumers (Cooke, De Propis, 2011; Lange, Schüßler, 2018).

Thus, Scott Lash and John Urry in their work "Economies of Signs and Space" describe the process of changing national social structures to "global information and communication structures," when any cultural artifact has many chances to turn into a disposable product that loses all meaning for society (Lash, Urry, 1994).

At the same time, significant costs for the production of cultural goods (music, films, novels, art objects, etc.) are recouped through their relatively cheap reproduction and circulation in the media space, as well as their possibility of re-consumption by the mass audience. This makes cultural industries an extremely promising sector of the economy for any state (Grodach, 2013; Jessop, Oosterlynck, 2008; Scott, 2014).

The main problem for public policy, according to experts, is the cultural industries regulation for the protection of creative entities copyright, which requires this area constant legislation improvement and the effectiveness monitoring of its application in practice (Boccellaa, Salerno, 2016; Hausmann, Heinze, 2016).

By the early 2000s, the media began actively broadcasting to the masses the idea of creative industries, which was first conceptualized by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport of Great Britain. In this way, it had become more popular than the concept of cultural industries.

For the first time, IT activity was included as one of the most promising industry for post-industrial economy growth in the concept of creative industries development, in comparison with the concept of cultural industries. Such innovative approach implied that traditional culture sectors, which have always existed on subsidies from the state and sponsors, should now become self-sufficient and should make a profit through the effective use of the intellectual labor, the automatic production of creative products and their wide replication in electronic media and in the network Internet.

This new approach gave rise to the term of "creative economy" (Carter, Carter, 2020; Khedhaouria et al., 2015; Mordanov, 2021). The phrase was first used by Bloomberg Businessweek economics editor Peter Coy in his article in 2000. He wrote about the "growing power of ideas" in creative industries and their growing role in development of the US economy (Coy, 2000). Then in 2001, John Hawkins, an architect and member of the United Nations Creative Economy Advisory Council, championed the idea in his book *The Creative Economy: How People Make Money from Ideas*. He clarified it is "a new way of thinking and doing that is revitalizing production, services, retail and entertainment industries" (Hawkins, 2001).

This was an unconditional turn towards innovation in the field of production, primarily digital. When the ideas production takes precedence over the things production, a strong connection arises between creativity and digital technology. That produces a powerful basis for competition among creative professions representatives, where digital transformation specialists and digital products creation are beginning to play a special role (Chan et al., 2019; Hanchi, Kerzazi, 2020; Li, 2020).

However, the new concept raised a pressing question: which industries are included in the creative economy, that is, which industries can ensure the effective integration of creative work, innovative ideas and technologies?

In response to this question, several different approaches have been formulated by researchers and practitioners. Let's present the main ones.

1) Creative industry – is a startup in any industry (Hirudayaraj, Matić, 2021).

2) Creative industry – is an industry in which intellectual activity is capable to ensure the products production with high added value (Bélanger et al., 2016; Bergendahl, Magnusson, 2015).

3) The creative industry – is an industry in which each created product is endowed with a symbolic meaning, and its economic value is measured not by the current market need, but by the cultural society value (Hannekam, Bennett, 2017; Potts, Cunningham, 2008).

4) The creative industry – is an industry in which products have a special consumer value that can satisfy both the material and spiritual needs of society (Duffy, Wissinger, 2017; Horng et al., 2015).

5) Creative industry – is an industry in which creative product is produced, i.e. the product that has both symbolic and functional types of value at the same time (Belentsov, 2023; Belski et al., 2019; Cohendet et al., 2021).

Let's summarize the above. The creative industries policy is international, it goes beyond national cultural markets and develops in conditions of global international competition. This policy implementation is ensured by intensive, ideally total, commercialization and privatization of the cultural goods production means. It directly affects the working conditions transformation in cultural sector and its integration with innovative sectors of the economy. All this, according to the concept, should lead to the creative production concentration in megacities and the new creative class formation, numerically superior to the service workforce.

Thus, after considering the concepts (policies) for the cultural and creative industries, it is possible to present the empirical research results and its comparison with one of the existing concepts.

#### **4. Results**

Some empirical measures were implemented to identify how the media literacy of the Russian-speaking audience affects the creative industries image transformation in thematic channels and social media communities. Let us describe the results.

At the first study stage, ten semantic cores were compiled by two key topics – “creative industries” and “cultural industries”. Let's introduce some of them:

1. Semantic core “Cultural activity” consisted of requests: cultural activity, artistic activity, spiritual activity, cultural development, self-development, artistic ideas, sociocultural design, artistic occupation, spiritual practices, artistic thinking, spiritual thinking, talent development.

2. Semantic core “Creative work” consisted of requests: creative labor, creative work, creative personnel, payment for creative work, team work, opening a startup.

3. Semantic core “Cultural sphere work” consisted of requests: working in the cultural sphere, artistic labor, artistic work, workers in the cultural sphere, labor resources in the cultural sphere, payment for cultural workers, payment for artistic work.

4. Semantic core “Creative product” consisted of requests: creative product, creative idea, creative project, creative thinking, technological product, innovative product, unique product, exclusive product, original product, creative child, creative personality, idea, creative education.

5. Semantic core “Cultural product” consisted of requests: cultural product, artistic product, original thinking, artistic contest, artistic idea, fashion trend, art school, artistic child, artistic personality, folk art, cultural good.

6. Semantic core “Directions for the creative industries development” consisted of requests: video games, computer games, animation, cartoons, cinema, VR (virtual reality), AR (augmented reality), design, gastronomy and molecular cuisine, media, mass media, Internet, photo and video production, modern music, modern art, digital and IT products, advertising and Public relations, performance, organization of events, creative specialties, science, scientific inventions, innovative technologies.

At the next study stage, online services with parsing technology were used to increase the monitoring procedures efficiency in social media and content analysis of their communities. This allows automating the collection and systematization of data from open sources in accordance with specified scripts. Such services usage is highly justified in research related to the media literacy of the social media audience, since their functionality allows to exclude “bots” (i.e. non-existing subscribers) from the collected data.

Step by step, keywords from the semantic cores were entered into the search bar of online services and then communities and channels were monitored by them for the following social media – the social Internet service VKontakte, the video hosting Youtube (only Russian-language channels were selected) and the cross-platform instantaneous messaging system Telegram. Based on the results, a comparison was made between the number of social media users that subscribe to content about the creative industries and content about the cultural industries.

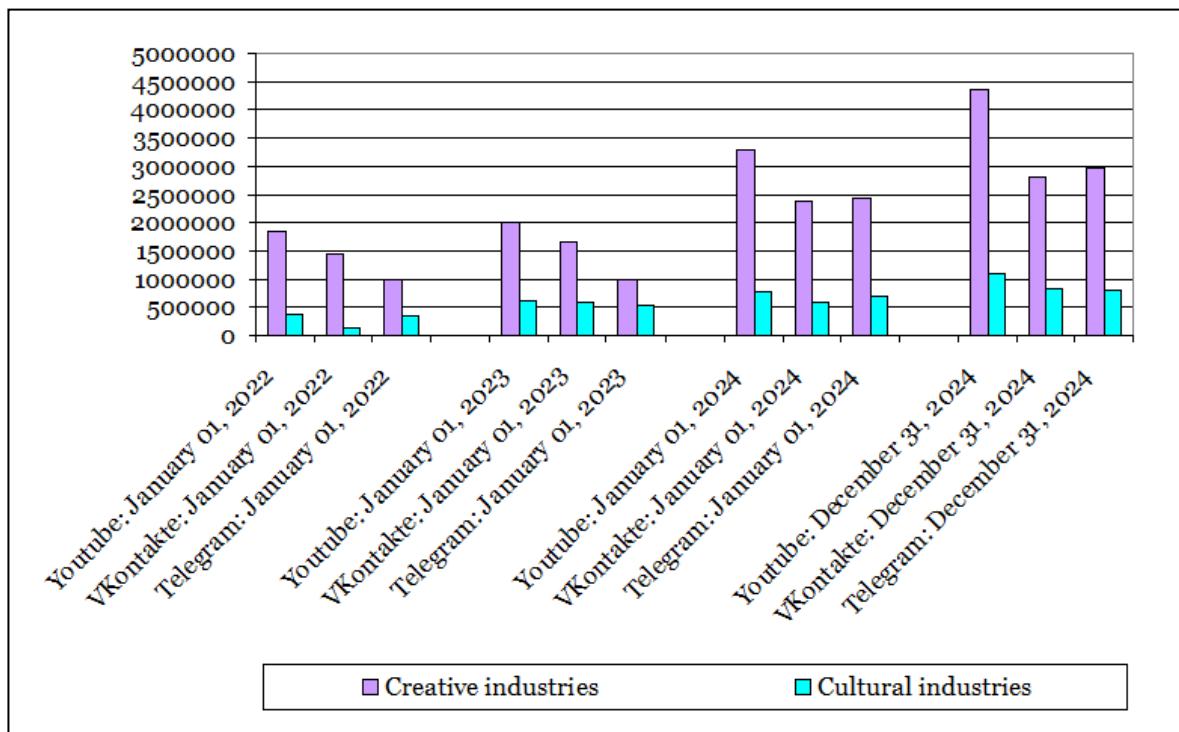
Let us present the data obtained as a monitoring result in [Figure 1](#). It reflects the total audience size of communities related to creative industries and the total audience size of communities related to cultural industries, as well as the changes in the audience size of these communities during the study period on the dates: 01 of January 2022, 01 of January 2023, 01 of January 2024 and 31 of December 2024.

As can be seen from the histogram presented in [Figure 1](#), the audience of thematic communities and channels grew steadily in all social media studied from the beginning of 2022 to the end of 2024. At the end of 2024, the aggregate audience of communities dedicated to the

creative and cultural industries in all three social media has reached 12,869,456 subscribers, compared to 4,819,858 subscribers on the 01 of January 2022.

Video hosting site YouTube has the largest audience of the communities about the creative and cultural industries content both. Its total number is 5,456,981 subscribers at the end of 2024.

The cross-platform messenger Telegram overtook the social Internet service VKontakte for the total audience number of communities dedicated to creative and cultural industries both by the end of 2023. This tendency continued in 2024. On the 31 of December 2024, the total audience of Telegram thematic channels has reached the indicator for 3,779,809 subscribers and of VKontakte thematic channels – for 3,632,666 subscribers respectively, although their positions on this indicator were the opposite at the beginning of 2023.



**Fig. 1.** The subscribers number of the cultural industries and creative industries communities

During the study period, the growth rate of communities audience for the creative industries and for the cultural industries differed in each social media. For example, in the social Internet service VKontakte, the audience number of creative industries communities increased only by 1.9 times from 1,455,201 to 2,800,004 subscribers during January 2022 to December 2024. For comparison, the audience number of cultural industries communities increased by 6.4 times from 131,022 to 832,662 subscribers over the same time period. On the contrary, in the Telegram messenger, the audience number of creative industries communities increased almost by 3 times from 980,755 to 2,979,774 subscribers during January 2022 to December 2024, and the audience number of cultural industries communities grew only 2.3 times over the same time period: from 342,111 to 800,035 subscribers.

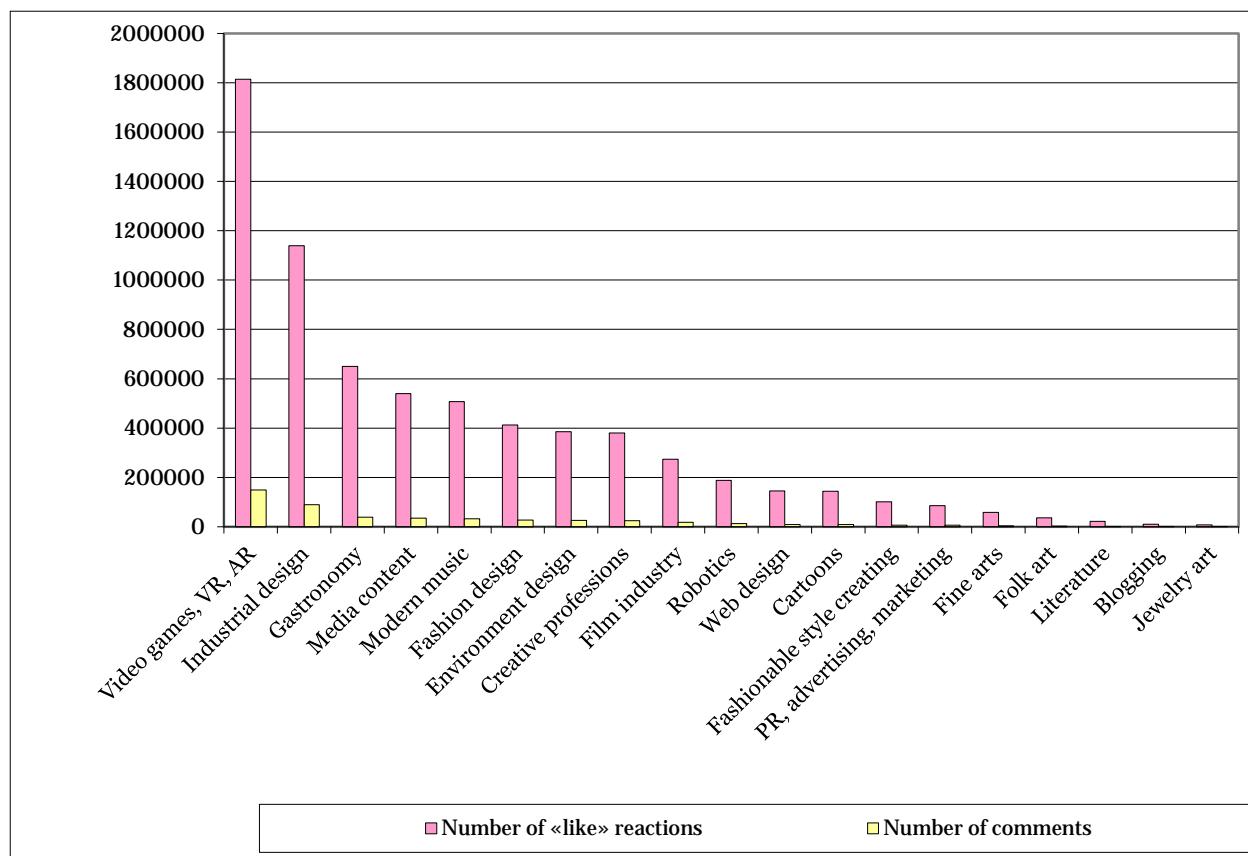
The audience size subscribed to creative industries information significantly exceeds the audience size subscribed to cultural industries information in social media. For example, at the beginning of 2022, the audience of channels posting video content about the creative industries development was almost 4.9 times higher than the audience of channels posting materials about the cultural industries development in the YouTube video hosting service. By the end of 2024, this ratio decreased slightly: the audience of the creative industries channels exceeded the audience of cultural industries channels by 4.2 times. In Telegram, at the beginning of 2022, the audience of communities posting information about the creative industries development exceeded the audience of communities about the cultural industries development by 2.9 times. By the end of 2024, this ratio increased slightly: the audience of creative industries channels exceeded the audience of cultural industries channels by 3.7 times.

The audience of communities dedicated exclusively to the creative economy development is quite small among the social media studied. For example, in the social Internet service VKontakte it was only 32,448 subscribers by January 2022, and 174,880 subscribers by December 2024.

However, a significant increase in the audience number among Russian-language channels and communities dedicated to creative industries as one of the media literacy manifestation forms in the social media, does not yet allow us to conclude the rapid transformation from the cultural industries image into the creative industries image (Festl, 2021; Manca et al., 2021; Tandoc et al., 2021). In order to reveal how the subscribers media literacy among thematic channels and social media communities affects the content of this image, it is necessary to analyze the variety of its manifestation forms – "likes", reposts and comments that demonstrate the perceiving way for the content by the audience.

In this way, the 10 most popular media materials were selected in each channel and community of social media and dedicated to the creative and cultural industries development: posts, videos, photographs, etc. The sampling frame included media materials that received the highest responses number among the subscribers over the past three years: "I like" or "I'm for it", reposts and comments. Their content was analyzed and assigned to the specific type of activity: creative or cultural. Then a summary calculation of open quantitative data was made by active reaction various forms that the selected media materials received from the social media audience. Based on these calculation, the rating of creative industries was formed.

Let us present the creative industries rating in [Figure 2](#). The rating was compiled based on the data received from thematic YouTube channels for the period 2022–2024.



**Fig. 2.** The feedback reactions on videos about the creative and cultural industries on YouTube

As can be seen from the histogram presented in [Figure 2](#), the top 10 industries by the reactions number from the thematic YouTube channels audience were: the computer games industry (including games with virtual and augmented reality), industrial design, gastronomy, media content, modern music, fashion design and environmental design, creative areas and specialties education, film industry and robotics.

Computer games industry, which is developing within the creative industries concept, is the absolute leader among the YouTube audience. At the time of the study, the most popular videos on the theme were viewed by the total of 23,217,773 people, were noted with the reaction "I like" by 1,813,713 people, were commented by 149,144 people.

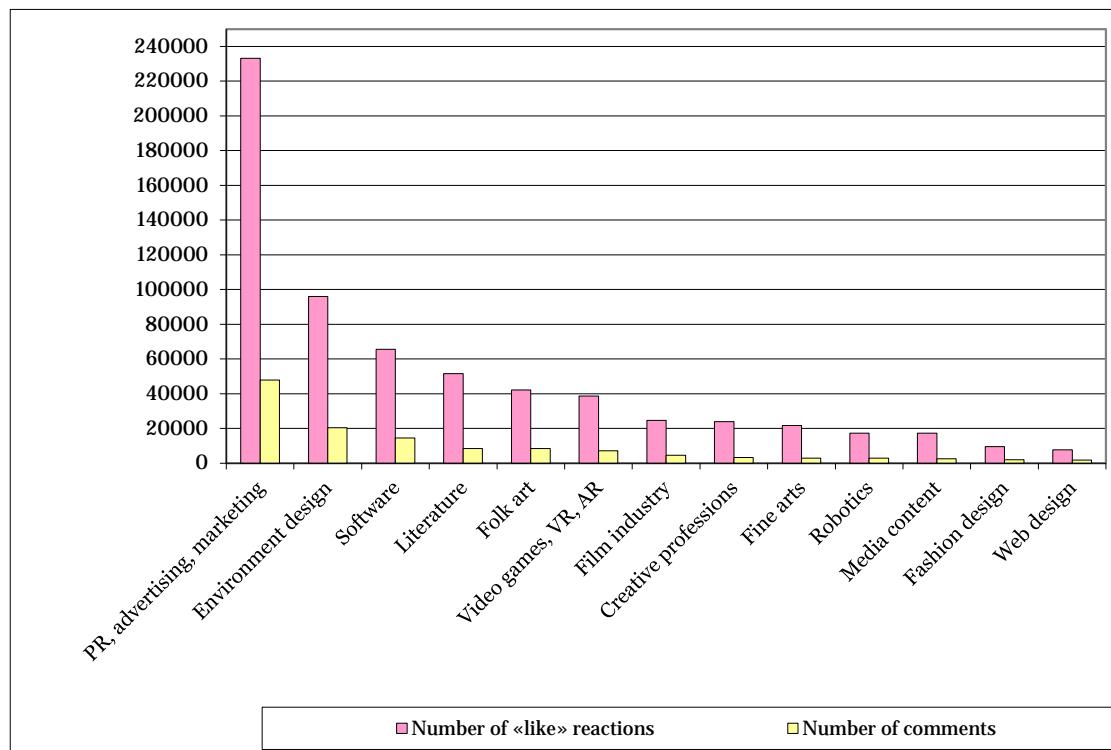
For comparison, video materials about jewelry industry (which is in the last 19th rating place of the most popular publications on thematic YouTube channels) were viewed by the total of 92,671 people, were liked by 7,734 people, were commented by 502 people.

The most popular videos about gastronomy (the 3rd place in the rating compiled) that can be attributed to both cultural and creative industries, were browsed 7,841,573 times, received 649,933 "like" notes and were commented by 38,903 people. At the same time, among of all the video materials about gastronomy, according to the results of content analysis, 64 % of videos cover the molecular gastronomy topics and technologies for the genetic modification of products, and 36 % of videos report the various countries traditional cuisine.

Similar results were for videos about the creative professions training (the 8th place in the rating compiled): 71 % of all popular videos in this category cover the IT field professional training, mainly the artificial intelligence creation.

So, a quantitative assessment of the media literacy various forms among the audience in YouTube thematic channels has shown that the content of the creative industries image correlates mainly with the current Western concept, which promotes the creative activity merge with technology and digital transformation. Beyond that, videos about such key areas for the cultural industries concept as folk art, art, literature and jewelry do not receive significant reaction from the audience, unlike videos about computer games, media, modern music, design (products, environment, clothing), robotics, marketing, PR, advertising and other areas of the creative industries.

Below the creative industries analogous rating, but compiled based on the data received from thematic Telegram channels for the period researched is presented in [Figure 3](#).



**Fig. 3.** The feedback reactions on posts about the creative and cultural industries on Telegram

As can be seen from the histogram presented in [Figure 3](#), the creative industries rating with a basis of thematic Telegram channels differs significantly from the analogous rating with a basis of thematic YouTube channels. Thus, the top 10 industries by Telegram included: PR, advertising and marketing, environmental design, software development, literature, the computer games

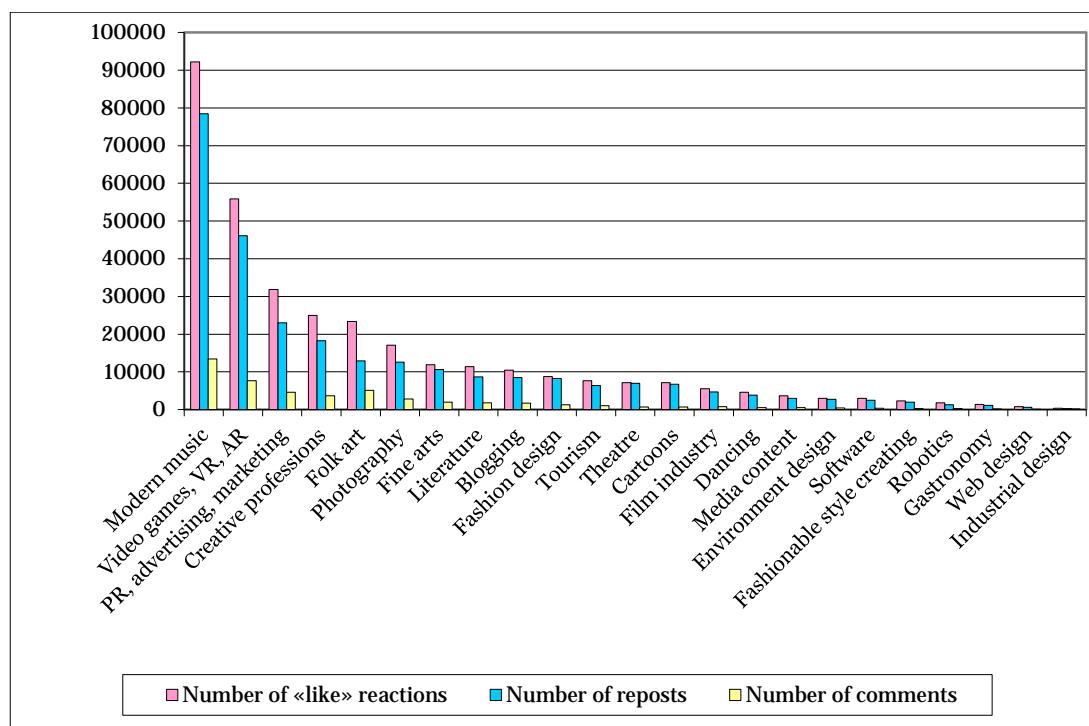
industry (including games with virtual and augmented reality), film industry, creative areas and specialties education, art, robotics.

The leader of the creative industries rating among the thematic Telegram channels is the industry of PR, advertising and marketing. The most popular messages were viewed by a total of 5,055,267 people, were marked by a total of 233,090 people with the "like" reaction, and were commented by a total of 47,940 people.

The audience reaction of the Telegram thematic channels for the environmental design content and the software development content, which are on the 2nd and 3rd places in the formed rating, is much less than to content about PR, advertising and marketing. The most popular messages on the topic of the environmental design were collectively viewed by 2,161,928 people, were liked by 96,054 people, and were commented by 20,448 people. The most popular posts on the topic of the software industry were collectively viewed by 1,413,966 people, were liked by 65,534 people, and were commented by 14,442 people.

At the same time, the thematic Telegram channels audience shows the more pronounced reaction to messages on cultural industries in comparison with the thematic YouTube channels audience. At the time of the study, the most popular messages on the literature and poetry theme were viewed by a total of 1,226,008 people, were «like» reacted by a total of 51,510 people, and were commented by a total of 8,477 people. The situation is similar for messages on the folk art theme, which takes the 5th position of the generated ranking.

The creative industries rating, which was compiled based on the data received from the thematic communities of the social network VKontakte for the period from the 1 of January 2022 to the 31 of December 2024, is presented in [Figure 4](#). When forming it, it was possible to take into account the statistical data not only for "I like" reactions and for comments, but also for the number of reposts messages to the subscribers personal accounts.



**Fig. 4.** The feedback reactions on content about the creative and cultural industries in VKontakte

As can be seen from the histogram presented in [Figure 4](#), the top 10 creative industries rating with a basis of thematic VKontakte channels included: modern music, computer games, PR, advertising and marketing, creative areas and specialties education, folk art, photography, art, literature, blogging, fashion design.

The diagram data also shows the wider scope of creative and cultural activity types among the content in the social media VKontakte thematic communities, compared to the social media studied above. The audience media literacy was displayed with high feedback on 23 different

creative and cultural industries in the VKontakte thematic communities, while the Youtube audience showed similar feedback on 19 industries, and the Telegram audience showed feedback only on 13 industries. Such industries as photography, tourism, theater arts and dance appeared in the VKontakte ranking.

In the formed rating of social media VKontakte the leader was the music industry, which creates and replicates modern music by means of the digital content format. Through the VKontakte thematic communities the messages about new musical products were marked with a "I like" reaction by a total of 92,183 people, were reposted to their personal accounts by 78,413 people, and were commented by 13,402 people. The messages about the computer games industry, which is the second most popular in the rating, were marked with a "I like" reaction by a total of 55,840 people, were reposted to their personal accounts by 46,126 people, and were commented by 7,632 people. And the messages about the industrial design industry and the gastronomy industry, which occupy the 2nd and the 3rd places in the generated YouTube rating, got to the last place by popularity among the audience of thematic VKontakte communities. In total they were marked with the "I like" reaction by 1 769 people, were reposted to their personal account by 1,403 people and were commented by 336 people.

If we evaluate the media literacy of the Russian-speaking audience in thematic channels and social media communities through the available activity forms, then on average only 8 % of subscribers leave an "I like" reaction and 0.5 % of subscribers post a comment after watching videos about creative and cultural industries in the Youtube video hosting. Both of these indicators increased 3.17 times in 2024 compared to 2022. Thus, the growth rate activity is higher than the audience growth rate of thematic channels on Youtube, the number of which increased by 2.46 times from 2022 to 2024. The situation is differ slightly in Telegram: on average, 4,5 % of subscribers leave a "like" reaction and 1.1 % of subscribers post a comment after viewing messages in thematic channels. These figures in average increased by 2.82 times in 2024 compared with 2022. This is proportional to the audience growth of thematic channels in Telegram, the number of which increased by 2.86 times from 2022 to 2024. In VKontakte, 5.5 % of subscribers note posts about the creative and cultural industries with a "like" reaction, 4.4 % of subscribers make a repost to their personal account and 0.7 % of subscribers leave their comment entering into a discussion for the content. With the audience increase by 2.29 times among thematic communities in VKontakte from 2022 to 2024, these three indicators in average increased only by 1.8 times, which is lower compared to Telegram or Youtube social media.

## 5. Conclusion

Based primarily on the quantitative approach the research results showed that under the influence of the media literacy among Russian-speaking audience in thematic channels and social media communities, the cultural industries image is rapidly transforming into the creative industries image. It is beginning to correlate more with the Western European concept (policy). The audience of independent social media, such as VKontakte, Youtube and Telegram, changes the creative industries image through the differentiation of the content about the creative activities variations and the results produced in them. An assessment of the media literacy forms available on social networks showed that the Russian-speaking audience among thematic channels and communities consciously chooses content about industries related to the creative economy, such as computer games and software development, digital marketing, popular music, and others.

Thus, it can be concluded that more and more people are involved in the production and consumption of the content about creative economy development, and the number of the discussions and other media literacy forms are increasing among Russian-speaking audience. In turn, the representatives of the creative and cultural industries are making an explicit request to increase the media literacy level for the society, which exert on the area public policy. This can be solved by expanding the audience involved in the alternative content creation about the achievements and problems of creative work, and its replication through independent media.

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## Digital Storytelling and Brand Positioning in the Media Age: Building Consumer Trust through Narrative Authenticity

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### Abstract

A crucial factor for digital consumers, is to foster trust in brands. A strong brand position helps distinguish a brand amidst intense competition, while advanced digital storytelling techniques enable brands to craft authentic and engaging narratives that resonate with contemporary audiences. This research delves into the intricate dynamics underlying the trust building process, focusing on how brand positioning and digital storytelling contribute to trust formation. Specifically, it addresses two core questions: (1) the individual and combined effects of brand positioning and digital storytelling on consumer trust, and (2) the mediating role of narrative authenticity in shaping this relationship. In doing so, the study also highlights the increasing importance of digital media literacy, as consumers today are not only expected to interpret brand narratives but also to critically assess the intent, structure, and authenticity of such messaging. As brand narratives become embedded in digital culture, media literacy equips consumers with the capacity to evaluate persuasive strategies and identify manipulation, particularly in social media contexts.

A quantitative research methodology was employed, involving a systematic survey of a diverse consumer group. Respondents provided insights into their experiences with brand positioning elements, digital narratives, and perceptions of brand trust. The data was analysed using correlation, regression, and mediation analysis, ensuring precision and methodological rigor through the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The results provide a detailed understanding of how modern narrative strategies and positioning efforts influence consumer trust in brands. This study contributes to ongoing discourse in media and marketing studies by offering practical insights for researchers and practitioners seeking to refine their narrative and positioning strategies in brand management. Ultimately, it highlights the growing significance of digital storytelling, media literacy, and brand positioning in fostering trust in today's rapidly evolving media environment.

**Keywords:** digital storytelling, brand positioning, consumer trust, narrative authenticity, modern brand narratives, marketing communication, media literacy, digital media.

### 1. Introduction

The digital transformation of brand communication has changed how users interact with brands and decide what to buy. Because consumers are vastly exposed to brand related information due to the growth of social media, digital advertising, and online reviews, trust is a pivotal factor in determining a brand's success. Research indicates that brand trust is a fundamental factor in

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consumer decision making, as it influences perceptions of reliability, credibility, and authenticity (Chinomona, 2016). However, in an era where brands craft narratives across multiple digital touchpoints, the challenge lies in understanding how brand communication strategies, particularly brand positioning and digital storytelling, contribute to trust formation.

Brand positioning and digital storytelling are among the most effective strategies for shaping consumer trust, as they help brands create meaningful and memorable identities (Gupta, 2022). Brand positioning establishes a brand's identity in the competitive landscape by differentiating it from competitors and reinforcing key attributes that appeal to consumers (Bogomolova, Romaniuk, 2005). Meanwhile, digital storytelling enables brands to craft compelling narratives that evoke emotions and strengthen consumer brand connections (Bulmer et al., 2024). Research suggests that consumers are more likely to trust and engage with brands that communicate through authentic, well-structured narratives rather than traditional marketing messages (Marder et al., 2018).

Despite the effectiveness of these strategies, trust in digital environments remains fragile due to concerns over misinformation, brand inconsistency, and skepticism toward digital content. This changing digital environment has intensified the need for media literacy. As Costa and Singler et al. (Costa, 2011; Singler et al., 1983) argue, literacy today extends beyond the ability to decode messages, it includes the capacity to apply critical understanding within specific cultural and technological contexts. In particular, "brand literacy," a concept introduced by Bengtsson and Firat (Bengtsson, Firat 2006), highlights how consumers make sense of marketing strategies used to create and maintain brand images. As brands increasingly participate in popular culture and digital spaces, consumers are required to evaluate not just content but the intent behind it. Media literacy empowers individuals to identify persuasive strategies in branded content and engage with it meaningfully, whether by resisting manipulation or embracing authentic messaging (Song, Kim, 2025).

Additionally, media education is increasingly viewed as essential to prepare audiences, particularly younger consumers for interpreting the narratives and strategies embedded in commercial communication (Naderer, 2023). The growing influence of brands in digital storytelling, combined with the blurred lines between entertainment, information, and advertising on social media platforms, calls for critical engagement with content. Livingstone et al. (Livingstone et al., 2013) emphasize that media knowledge has both stimulating and securing characteristics, enabling people to engage with media in a creative and critical manner while also preparing them to cover against its adverse impacts. It's pivotal to take into account the position of media knowledge of consumers in order to comprehend how they perceive and respond to digital brand narratives.

While prior studies have examined brand positioning, storytelling strategies, and consumer trust separately, limited research has explored the interplay between these factors in digital environments. Specifically, there is a gap in understanding the mediating role of narrative authenticity in trust formation. This study aims to address this gap by analyzing the individual and combined effects of brand positioning and digital storytelling on consumer trust and examining how narrative authenticity mediates this relationship. By integrating digital marketing, branding, and media education perspectives, this study contributes to both theoretical and practical discussions on how brands can enhance trust through authentic storytelling and strategic positioning. The findings offer valuable insights for brand managers, marketers, and media scholars in navigating the complexities of digital brand trust.

To explore these relationships, the study is guided by two key research questions: (1) How do brand positioning and digital storytelling influence consumer trust in brands, and what is the role of digital media literacy in this relationship? (2) How does narrative authenticity mediate the relationship between brand positioning, digital storytelling, and consumer trust in brands? Correspondingly, the objectives of this study are (1) to analyze the individual and combined effects of brand positioning and digital storytelling on consumer trust in brands and (2) to examine the mediating role of narrative authenticity in this relationship, between brand positioning, digital storytelling, and consumer trust in brands.

## 2. Materials and methods

The research methodology for this study adheres to a quantitative model, signifying a data driven approach meticulously designed for the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of numerical data. Central to this methodological framework is a survey based research model,

wherein a meticulously crafted questionnaire, replete with Likert and ordinal scales, serves as the primary instrument for data collection.

Upon the completion of data collection, an exhaustive statistical analysis was undertaken, leveraging the capabilities of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The chosen research approach is supported by a robust and comprehensive conceptual framework, intricately detailed, encompassing pivotal aspects such as Brand Positioning, Digital Storytelling, Trust in Brands, and Narrative Authenticity.

This methodological structure, constructed with precision, lays a solid foundation for an in-depth exploration of the nuanced interconnections among the aforementioned variables, thereby providing a robust groundwork for this research endeavour. The methodological plan in action underscores the commitment to methodological rigor, facilitating the precise examination of the research queries under scrutiny.

**Table 1.** Analytical Methods for Assessing the Impact of Brand Positioning and Digital Storytelling on Trust in Brands

Research Objective1: To investigate the individual and combined effects of brand positioning and digital storytelling on trust in brands as perceived by consumers.	
Analysis Used	
Correlation Analysis: Assess the relationships between Brand Positioning, Digital Storytelling, and Trust in Brands.	
Regression Analysis: Investigate how Brand Positioning and Digital Storytelling individually and jointly predict Trust in Brands.	
Dependent Variable	Independent Variable
1. Trust in Brands	1. Brand Positioning 2. Digital Storytelling

**Table 2.** Analytical Methods for Exploring the Mediating Role of Narrative Authenticity in Building Consumer Trust

Research Objective 2: To explore the mediating influence of narrative authenticity in the association between brand positioning, digital storytelling, and trust in brands among consumers.		
Analysis Used		
Mediation Analysis: To investigate whether narrative authenticity mediates the relationship between brand positioning, digital storytelling, and trust in brands.		
Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Mediating Variable
1. Trust in Brands	1. Brand Positioning 2. Digital Storytelling	1. Narrative Authenticity

#### *Data Collection*

##### *Survey*

The survey questionnaire employed an inverted funnel sequence design and comprised 12 items, excluding respondent demographics. Responses were collected using Likert and Ordinal scales. The questionnaire was targeted at consumers who use social media and are exposed to social media content related to various brands and have opinions about these elements. Respondents were aware of how brands use these strategies to shape their image and influence consumers. The study aimed to ensure that the sample size was sufficient to detect statistically significant effects given the expected effect size and needed level of statistical power. 250 samples were determined to be necessary to get the requisite power. The survey was conducted for a duration of 1 month amongst users of the social media platform Instagram from Delhi/NCR (India).

- a) Structure of Survey: Questionnaire (close ended questions).
- b) Calculated survey sample size: 250.

- c) Sample Frame – Social media users aged 18 and above who are active social media users and follow various brands.
- d) Respondents: Social media users who have had exposure to social media branding strategies.
- e) Time horizon: From January 2024 to February 2024 (One Month).

### **3. Discussion**

Digital storytelling, fosters connections by sharing meaningful content and emotionally connecting with users (Herskovitz, Crystal, 2010; Lund et al., 2017). These stories help create a deeper sense of connection between consumers and the brand. The stronger impact of storytelling in this study supports research showing that emotional and engaging content often influences audiences more than purely factual messages (Henrickson et al., 2022; Nurhadi et al., 2024). Stories allow people to feel like they are part of the brand's world, especially for younger audiences who prefer interactive and visual formats (Marder et al., 2018).

Additionally, storytelling is no longer one way. Consumers now take part in shaping brand narratives through their own content and interactions (Bange, Moisander et al., 2019; Chatterjee et al., 2023; Muniz, Schau, 2005). This co-creation of content is not just about marketing but also about identity formation people use brand stories to express and explore who they are (Alvesson et al., 2008; Kates, 2004; Luedicke, Thompson, Giesler, 2010).

The study also reflects a broader shift in how trust is built in the digital age. Consumers no longer judge brands only by product quality. They also consider whether a brand is ethical, consistent, and true to its values across digital platforms (Cardoso et al., 2022; Strazzullo, 2024). Storytelling supports this by making brand communication feel more human and memorable. A well-crafted story doesn't just say a brand is trustworthy it shows it.

Narrative authenticity plays a key role here. It serves as the link between what a brand communicates (positioning) and whether consumers actually believe and trust it. Even if a brand is well positioned, people may not trust it unless the story feels honest and real (Shams et al., 2024). This finding supports earlier work that shows people evaluate brands based on sincerity, consistency, and shared values.

In the case of digital storytelling, authenticity partly explains why it leads to trust. Even when a story is not entirely authentic, it may still have a positive effect in the short term. However, for long term trust, people need to feel that the story reflects the brand's true identity and values (Han, Orlowski, 2024; Pera et al., 2016). As consumers are now more exposed to influencer content, AI generated media, and branded user posts, it becomes harder to tell what is real. This makes authenticity more important and more difficult to achieve (Kaufmann et al., 2016; Lou, Xie, 2021).

Building trust through storytelling also requires understanding the tools and platforms where stories are told. Creating strong digital stories is not just about narrative skills, but also about using technology effectively (Jones, Leverenz, 2017). On platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, 'stories' are now a format in themselves short, visual, time limited posts. These stories often blur the lines between marketing, personal expression, and community interaction (Henrickson et al., 2022). For this reason, companies must adapt their storytelling approaches to fit both the emotional and technical expectations of digital audiences.

This study shows that brand trust is not just a result of good strategy or storytelling it is a dynamic, co-created relationship between brands and consumers. As consumers become more aware and critical, authenticity becomes the factor that sustains trust, builds long term engagement, and gives meaning to brand stories. Future research should explore how authenticity functions in newer forms of digital storytelling, such as AI driven content or virtual influencers.

In light of these findings, the role of media literacy emerges as increasingly significant. Media literacy encompasses more than apprehension of content; it also involves the capacity to estimate brand narratives critically, especially when they're presented in an emotionally stirring or intensively immersive manner (Costa, 2011; Singler et al., 1983). This is especially important in digital contexts where branded messages often appear within personal social spaces. The concept of brand literacy, as described by Bengtsson and Firat (Bengtsson, Firat, 2006), reflects consumers' ability to decode and respond to marketing strategies that shape brand images and influence behavior. As consumers participate in both creating and consuming brand content, media literacy empowers them to navigate this process with greater awareness and critical thinking.

Importantly, being media literate does not necessarily mean rejecting brand narratives; rather, it enables consumers to engage more meaningfully with those that align with their values (Song, Kim, 2025). For younger audiences in particular who are highly active on social platforms and often targeted by branded storytelling media education plays a vital role in developing this critical lens (Naderer, 2023). As (Livingstone et al., 2013) argue, media literacy has dual benefits: it protects users from manipulation while also empowering them to creatively and analytically engage with digital content. Understanding how media literate consumers interpret narrative authenticity can help brands refine their storytelling strategies and foster deeper, more trust based relationships.

#### 4. Results

*Correlation Analysis:* All three pairs of variables (Brand Positioning and Digital Storytelling, Brand Positioning and Trust in Brands, Digital Storytelling and Trust in Brands) show statistically significant positive correlations. This suggests that there is a relationship between these variables; as one variable increases, the other tends to increase as well. The Pearson correlation coefficients and their corresponding significance levels are detailed in the table below:

**Table 3.** Correlation Analysis of Brand Positioning, Digital Storytelling and Trust in Brands

	<i>Brand Positioning and Digital Storytelling</i>	<i>Brand Positioning and Trust in Brands</i>	<i>Digital Storytelling and Trust in Brands</i>
Pearson Correlation	0.376**	0.312**	0.397**
Significance	<.001	<.001	<.001
Sample Size	250	250	250
Significance	The p-value being less than 0.001 suggests that this correlation is statistically significant	This correlation is statistically significant since the p-value is lower than 0.001	This correlation is statistically significant as the p-value is lower than 0.001.
Conclusion	This indicates that Digital Storytelling scores generally rise in tandem with Brand Positioning scores.	As scores for Brand Positioning rise, so do scores for Trust in Brands, and vice versa.	This suggests that Trust in Brands scores tend to rise in tandem with Digital Storytelling scores.

A Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.376 signifies a moderate positive correlation between brand positioning and digital storytelling variables. Suggesting that a rise in Digital Storytelling is identified with a rise in Brand Positioning. There's a relatively positive correlation between Brand Positioning and Brand Trust, as indicated by the Pearson correlation measure of 0.312. With a p-value less than 0.001, this correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 position, indicating a relationship between rising Brand Positioning and rising Brand Trust. A relatively positive correlation is indicated by a Pearson correlation measure of 0.397. At the 0.01 position, this correlation is statistically significant, with a p-value less than 0.001, indicating that an increase in Digital Storytelling is associated with an increase in Trust in Brands.

*Regression Analysis:* Table 4 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis with 'Brand Positioning' and 'Digital Storytelling' as predictor variables. The constant (intercept) of the model is 1.907, which is the dependent variable's anticipated value when all predictor variables are set to zero. With a p-value below 0.001 and a t-value of 9.734, statistically significant, suggesting that the model significantly predicts the dependent variable.

'Brand Positioning' has a coefficient of 0.151, indicating that for each unit increase in Brand Positioning, we expect an average increase of 0.151 units in the dependent variable, assuming all other variables are held constant. This variable is statistically significant with a t-value of 3.066 and a p-value of 0.002.

'Digital Storytelling' has a coefficient of 0.304, suggesting that for each unit increase in Digital Storytelling, we expect an average increase of 0.304 units in the dependent variable,

assuming all other variables are held constant. This variable is statistically significant with a t-value of 5.263 and a p-value less than 0.001.

The Beta values represent the standardized coefficients, which measure the number of standard deviations that the dependent variable will change as a result of one standard deviation change in the predictor variable. 'Brand Positioning' has a Beta of 0.190, and 'Digital Storytelling' has a Beta of 0.326, indicating that 'Digital Storytelling' has a stronger relationship with the dependent variable when the variables are standardized.

In conclusion, both 'Brand Positioning' and 'Digital Storytelling' are significant predictors in this model, with 'Digital Storytelling' having a slightly stronger relationship with the dependent variable. The overall model significantly predicts the dependent variable. Further research could explore the potential interactions between these variables and their combined impact on the dependent variable.

**Table 4.** Regression Analysis of the Effects of Brand Positioning and Digital Storytelling on Trust in Brands

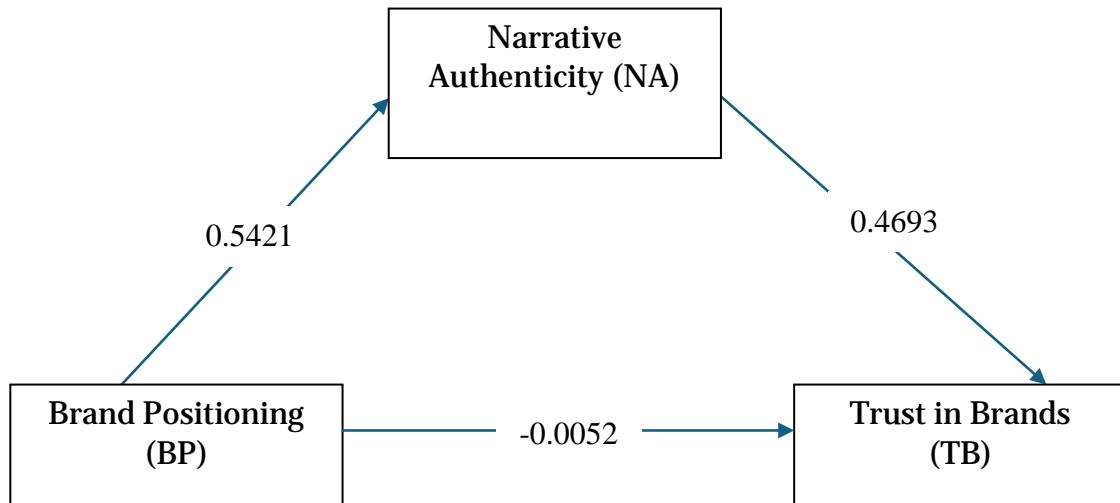
R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Standard Error of the Estimate	F	Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Significance
0.434	0.188	0.182	0.778	28.680	Trust in Brands	1.907	0.196	-	9.734	<0.001
P<0.001					Brand Positioning	0.151	0.049	0.190	3.066	0.002
					Digital Storytelling	0.304	0.058	0.326	5.263	<0.001

*Mediation Analysis* *Mediation Analysis one:* The mediation analysis was conducted using the PROCESS macro by Hayes (2022) with a sample size of 250. The independent variable in the model was Brand Positioning (BP), the dependent variable was Trust in Brands (TB), and the mediator was Narrative Authenticity (NA).

**Table 5.** Results of Mediation Analysis of the Effects of Brand Positioning and Narrative Authenticity on Trust in Brands

Path	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
A (BP – NA)	0.5421	0.0432	12.5543	< 0.0001
B (NA – TB)	0.4693	0.0644	7.2914	< 0.0001
C (BP – TB)	-0.0052	0.0560	-0.0931	0.9259
Indirect effect of X on Y (BP on TB through NA)				
Effect	Bootstrapped SE	Bootstrapped LLCI	Bootstrap ped ULCI	
BP – NA – TB	0.2544	0.0439	0.1767	

As seen in **Figure 1** and **Table 3**, the results of the analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between BP and NA (Path A), with a coefficient of 0.5421 ( $p < 0.0001$ ). This suggests that an increase in BP is associated with an increase in NA. The effect of NA on TB (Path B), controlling for BP, was also significant and positive, with a coefficient of 0.4693 ( $p < 0.0001$ ). This indicates that an increase in NA, influenced by BP, is associated with an increase in TB. However, the direct effect of BP on TB (Path C), controlling for NA, was not significant, with a coefficient of -0.0052 ( $p = 0.9259$ ). This suggests that the relationship between BP and TB is fully mediated by NA. The total effect of BP on TB was significant, with a coefficient of 0.2492 ( $p < 0.0001$ ). The indirect effect of BP on TB through NA was also significant, with a bootstrapped coefficient of 0.2544 and a 95 % confidence interval of 0.1767 to 0.3508.



**Fig. 1.** Model of mediating role of narrative authenticity, brand positioning and trust in brands  
Source: authors

In conclusion, the results suggest that NA fully mediates the relationship between BP and TB. The direct effect of BP on TB, controlling for NA, is not significant, suggesting full mediation. The total effect of BP on TB is significant, but the effect appears to be carried through the mediator NA. These findings provide valuable insights into the complex relationships between BP, NA, and TB, and have important implications for interventions aimed at reducing TB by managing BP and NA.

*Mediation Analysis Two:* The mediation analysis was conducted using the PROCESS macro by Hayes (2022) with a sample size of 250. The independent variable in the model was Digital Storytelling (DS), the dependent variable was Trust in Brands (TB), and the mediator was Narrative Authenticity (NA).

The results of the analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between DS and NA (Path A), with a coefficient of 0.5579 ( $p < 0.0001$ ). This suggests that an increase in DS is associated with an increase in NA. The effect of NA on TB (Path B), controlling for DS, was also significant and positive, with a coefficient of 0.3801 ( $p < 0.0001$ ). This indicates that an increase in NA, influenced by DS, is associated with an increase in TB. The direct effect of DS on TB (Path C), controlling for NA, was significant and positive, with a coefficient of 0.1590 ( $p = 0.0091$ ). This suggests that DS has a direct effect on TB, in addition to its indirect effect through NA. The total effect of DS on TB was significant, with a coefficient of 0.3710 ( $p < 0.0001$ ). The indirect effect of DS on TB through NA was also significant, with a bootstrapped coefficient of 0.2121 and a 95 % confidence interval of 0.1473 to 0.2837.

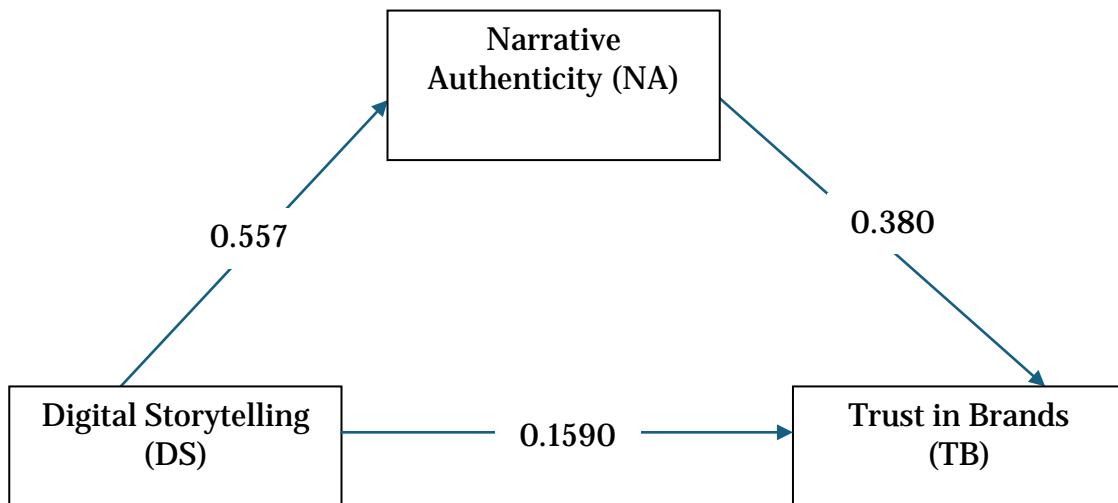
In conclusion, the results suggest that NA partially mediates the relationship between DS and TB. Both the direct effect of DS on TB and the indirect effect through NA are significant. The total effect of DS on TB is significant, suggesting that both DS and NA are important factors in TB. These findings provide valuable insights into the complex relationships between DS, NA, and TB, and have important implications for interventions aimed at reducing TB by managing DS and NA.

The data analysis has revealed some key insights about the interplay between Brand Positioning (BP), Digital Storytelling (DS), Narrative Authenticity (NA), and Trust in Brands (TB).

The correlation analysis showed positive correlations between BP and DS, BP and TB, and DS and TB, indicating that an increase in one is typically associated with an increase in the others. Specifically, BP and DS, BP and TB, and DS and TB all showed moderate positive correlations.

**Table 6.** Results of Mediation Analysis of Effect of Narrative Authenticity on Trust in Brands Through Brand Positioning

Path	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
A (DS - NA)	0.5579	0.0541	10.3161	< 0.0001
B (NA - TB)	0.3801	0.0593	6.4041	< 0.0001
C (DS - TB)	0.1590	0.0604	2.6306	0.0091
Indirect effect of X on Y (DS on TB through NA)				
Effect	Bootstrapped SE	Bootstrapped LLCI	Bootstrapped ULCI	
DS – NA – TB	0.2121	0.0344	0.1473	



**Fig. 2.** Model of mediating roles of narrative authenticity, digital storytelling, and trust in brands  
Source: authors

The regression analysis further underscored the significance of both BP and DS as predictors of TB. Both variables had significant relationships with TB, but DS had a slightly stronger link. This highlights the importance of digital storytelling in building brand trust, along with brand positioning.

Two mediation analyses were conducted to explore the role of NA in the relationship between BP/DS and TB. The first analysis revealed that NA fully mediates the relationship between BP and TB, meaning that the impact of BP on TB is entirely channelled through NA. On the other hand, the second analysis showed that NA partially mediates the relationship between DS and TB, suggesting that DS influences TB both directly and indirectly through NA.

## 5. Conclusion

The study's findings reveal the intricate dynamics of building brand trust through brand positioning and digital storytelling. Digital storytelling is identified as a key factor in fostering brand trust, with a positive correlation and significant direct effect on trust in brands, emphasizing the importance of engaging narratives. Narrative authenticity is found to be a crucial mediator in the relationship between brand related factors and trust in brands, enhancing the effectiveness of brand positioning and the impact of digital storytelling on brand trust. The interaction between

brand positioning and digital storytelling is nuanced, with brand positioning influencing trust mainly through narrative authenticity. These findings highlight the importance of integrating authentic storytelling into brand positioning strategies, suggesting that by creating resonating narratives that reflect brand values, organizations can enhance trust and loyalty among their target audience. Furthermore, the use of digital platforms to convey authentic brand narratives can foster meaningful engagement and relationship building with consumers.

An important implication of these findings lies in the role of media literacy in strengthening consumer trust.

Media knowledge enables digital customers to critically assess the legitimacy and consistency of brand narratives in a crowded digital setting where consumers are constantly exposed to clashing brand messages. Consumers with higher media literacy are more adept at identifying persuasive intent and aligning their trust with brands whose messages reflect genuine values. Therefore, promoting media literacy is essential not only for protecting consumers from misinformation but also for enabling more informed and trust based consumer brand relationships.

This research illuminates the complex relationship between brand positioning, digital storytelling, narrative authenticity, and trust in brands, suggesting that by understanding and leveraging these dynamics, brands can forge stronger connections with consumers and establish enduring trust in a competitive marketplace. Future research could delve into the nuanced effects of specific storytelling elements on brand trust and examine the efficacy of authenticity driven interventions in enhancing consumer brand relationships. Despite the valuable insights this study offers, it acknowledges several constraints such as the limited sample size of 250, the use of a cross sectional design, potential biases in self reported data, and assumptions made in the mediation analyses. These limitations suggest areas for future research to enhance the external validity of the results, provide a more holistic understanding of the evolving relationships between brand positioning, digital storytelling, narrative authenticity, and trust in brands, mitigate potential measurement issues, and validate the mediation models. Building on the findings, future research could explore the temporal dynamics of these variables through longitudinal studies, the influence of cultural factors through cross cultural studies, and the effectiveness of interventions through experimental designs. Additionally, qualitative methods could offer a richer understanding of consumer perceptions and experiences, and the impact of emerging technologies on brand storytelling and consumer trust could reveal innovative strategies for creating immersive brand experiences and engagement.

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