



AUDIOVISUAL CREATION IN THE INTERNET ERA

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PARTICIPANTS :

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Baptiste Lorber, comedian/author/film maker, co-founder of 10minutesaperdre.fr (March 2010 – June 2013) and of the YouTube channel Bapt&Gael.

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In the presence of Stéphane de Freitas, CEO of Indigo Co-op and Ibrahim Bechrouri, Arena coordinator.

Has Internet developed a creation of an audiovisual diversity (on Internet and others older supports of broadcasting: TV, cinema...)?

Is the development of this newer forms of creation a threat or an opportunity for the “traditional” audiovisual industry?

What is the connection between these two existing universes? Can we make it all one day to the Internet Era? Those are the numerous questions we studied during this arena.

THE ARRIVAL OF INTERNET: A SLAP!

The biggest groups of French audiovisual and a large bunch of the production firms didn't react in time to face a new wave as the key element now is speed. The traditional French players of the audiovisual domain were left behind by the revolution brought thanks to the opportunity to create the content, to offer it instantly and for free to millions of potentials users online. Major French groups of audiovisual and a big part of productions audiovisual firms have reacted too slowly to face a new situation which have speed as main feature.

As well as these privates players, State actors got together to try to protect their savings to face Web giants such as Google and Facebook. But, nevertheless, their reaction has been too slow and isn't adapted to the European level and it is the level where it all begins, where the biggest privates firms of the Internet are.

This lack of reactivity can be explained partly by the difficulty to set up these regulations at the European level, but it can also be understood by taking into account the gap age between the web players and the leaders of the audiovisual industry.

Internet has a user base which is quite young whereas the European political class grows older and older. Even worse, the same phenomenon may be found among French audiovisual players.

Canal + employees minimum age is 52 while the main goal of the TV channel is to be a attractive for young people; in the case of France Televisions, the minimum age is 65 years old.

A real problem of incomprehension of the new logic exists for some players of the traditional audiovisual industry who didn't grow up using Internet.

These participants confirmed their results thanks to the evaluation realized on the website Mediametrie, an organization specialized in the measure of the audience on traditional media platforms, of which the liability is constantly put into question while web medias such as YouTube allows to measure the popularity and views in real time.

Mass Medias don't really understand the codes that created the numeric economic as it exist nowadays. Youtubers can testify of this evolution. They work hand in hand with the biggest TV channels and they tell us they have been brought to light thanks to people's children in charge of discovering interesting profiles for big TV channels. This is the real symbol of this new generation of players.

A general example which is going to have a greater significance is the decline of an online video service, WAT, produced by TF1, which was well ahead from all its YouTube concurrent but in which the channel ceased to invest out of a feebleness of mind regarding this new media.

THE NECESSITY TO OPEN UP TO NEW MODES OF PRODUCTION

New modes of production and spreading of audiovisual content, which can be produced more easily and with less money because more and more players can assume many roles at the same time(acting, writing, lighting engineering, editing...), represent a new important element of competition for the traditional players of audiovisual. It is more likely that the big players of the French audiovisual will survive in the end but they will pay a heavy tribute. There will be certainly, or should we say there is already, a process of destruction of jobs in this field of activity. What is at stake here is the survival of players that bring diversity to the French and even international broadcasting landscape like the French-German channel Arte which doesn't attract a large audience but have a real public use.

But the era of Internet is both a threat and an opportunity for the traditional players of the sector who can decide to refuse the change and disappear or can jump on the bandwagon even if it means big investments in the short term. Canal+ initiated this kind of tactics through the program Canal Factory and by purchasing the YouTube channel Studio Bagel which already had good results on the Internet. The advent of the era of Internet also implies less expensive advantages for the traditional audiovisual players who can discover new talent at a lower cost on the web instead of depending on café-théâtres. Nevertheless the costs for an Internet production aren't necessarily lesser. For the programmer Scènes de Ménage broadcasted on M6, the set costs of production are often lesser than those of the YouTube channel Golden Moustache.

A destruction of the traditional structures of the audiovisual domain could nevertheless have positive effects if some actors who depend on the public subsidies question their economic model. The subsidies would be used at best and distributed to create quality content.

The governmental subsidies should protect the fragile actors like they do for the players in the cinema industry who offer a quality content against the American giants on the Internet, who could try to impose their rules in France and threaten the cultural diversity of the contents.

However if the French system adopt a standardization of codes and methods of production, which would be based on those of the American model of blockbusters, it could threaten its stability. If those methods and models have advantages, they also present disadvantages and the audiovisual production needs to avoid at all costs to be uniformed, to respect only one standard and one economic logic, to preserve the diversity of the content.

INTERNET OR THE BOOST OF THE AUDIOVISUAL CREATION

This evolution would be even more harmful as an even greater diversity of content emerged since the beginning of the era of Internet: many actors who couldn't make a name for themselves normally are now able to live on the income of their artistic production. Even if we can criticize the multiplication and the success of some formats (counselling videos, gaming, face camera), we find on the Internet a greater diversity of production than on TV. So, some formats that can be found on specialized channels in extreme sports or documentaries have a final product more and more qualitative thanks to the democratization of some technologies like the drones with an on-board camera or the 5D camera. The offer of productions less popular and super specialized like the videos treating the subject of hard sciences is also more important and diversified than on the traditional TV channels.

Nevertheless, the algorithms developed by the Web giants don't emphasize the potential of these specialized contents. The same kind of contents are always put on the top pages .Some actors may try to standardize their production to increase the number of views as well as their chance to be noticed and their remuneration(which is based on the number of views on YouTube).

Regarding creativity, originality and the production of unusual content, the era of Internet brought a lot to the French audiovisual which used to lack of no limit content since the launching of Canal+ in the 1990s. We have to ask ourselves if the algorithms rekindled diversity and creativity in this domain, to the point of breaking the taboos, when rules and televisual habits repressed them. The era of Internet is the source of a dual diversity, first in terms of content promoting expression inside and outside of the norms of television and then in the repartition of the content with a larger distribution of every kind content than on any TV channel. If they have still the opportunity to distinguish themselves from the others thanks to the production of content in need of bigger budgets, they don't have much time left to change as Youtubers produce more and more “science fiction” content with bigger production means.

“AN ILLUSORY” LIBERTY TO CREATE ONLINE?

This double diversity of audiovisual production would let you think that this kind of productions have more freedom than the productions of traditional audiovisual. First of all this diversity of the audiovisual web creation is solely possible as long as the big private investors such as Facebook and Google allow it. Google has already taken the decision to stop optimizing more than 200 German daily newspapers, in the future the company could choose to optimize only some types of YouTube videos.

Then, the algorithms that we already mentioned earlier select some types of videos which are put forward while others aren't. To gain more visibility, it might become necessary for a Youtuber to set aside a part of his artistic identity.

In the same way, it might not be possible to post all types of content anymore on this platform where nudity for example is highly prohibited and easily detected by algorithms which cannot tell the difference between an artistic performance and a real problematic content.