

A Comparative Analysis of Young Thai and Filipino People's Use of Facebook Page as a Tool for Empowerment

Bulwach Sereechaiporn and Darrel Marco
Aarhus University, Demark

Abstract

This comparative analysis incorporates Couldry's (2004) practice theory and Johansen's (2018) mediatized play framework in analyzing the media practices of two popular Southeast Asian juvenile content creators, Niana Guerrero (14yo), a dancer from the Philippines, and Prae (Natthanan Sanunrat) (13yo), a makeup artist from Thailand. We explored their practices on their Facebook Pages because Facebook is one of the widely used social media platforms in both of our countries. The paper aims to answer: "How do young people like them use social media as a tool for empowerment?", and to fill in the gap in research of children's media usage outside of the school context, which is severely lacking in our countries. We define empowerment using the definitions provided by James and James (2008), Boyd (2014), Gullestad (2004), James (2007) and Paus-Hasebrink et al. (2019). In a nutshell, empowerment is related to one's identity development and his/her ability to recognize one's feelings, take actions, make decisions to achieve one's goals, and negotiate in relationships. Employing Johansen's (2018) mediatized play framework, the analysis is presented in three parts: (1) Coping and Doing, (2) Media and Identity, and (3) Physical and Material Organization of Play. We found that the internet empowered children by providing them a space to practice the knowledge they had gained from online and offline activities, and then further refine their skills from socializing with their followers in social media. The affordances of media also allow them to express themselves, gain visibility, and participate in activities that subvert assumptions on children's abilities in their communities. In Prae's case, she was even empowered by recognizing online abuses and taking action against them. Prae and Niana are also empowered socio-economically through the commodification of their identities and interests, which raises questions about the boundary between mediatized play and commercialization, children's empowerment and exploitation. As the extent of this commodification of children's media practices manipulated online and offline is still underexplored, further research is needed. Comparative analysis of mediatized play across various social media platforms, and between child creators from Southeast Asia and Europe can also be undertaken.