Making Meaning of Reality Television Celebrities: The Reception of South African Idol by Young Adults in Joza, Grahamstown

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Abstract

Reality television or "factual entertainment" is a hybrid of old television formats and factual programming in order to create a "new" entertaining show designed to draw the attention of audiences and increase viewership ratings. South African Idol is one popular local example. Adapted from the British programme Pop Idols, the show promises upward mobility for the young star who wins the competition. This show has become a subject of conversation amongst young people in South Africa who aspire to the "success" and "celebrity" status that is produced by participating on the show. This paper uses of a Cultural Studies framework in order to examine the relationship between texts and audiences as an aspect of the "circuit of culture," with its interrelated moments of production, texts, consumption and lived experience. Our research focuses on the text and audience "moments" of this circuit. Audience studies research suggests that we should situate television viewing and the meanings made of TV programs in the natural setting of the home, and that this setting should be taken seriously as a unit of analysis. This study therefore, seeks to understand the ways in which audiences make meaning of this television programme within the domestic context.

Keywords: South African idol; Factual entertainment; Television; TV programs

Introduction

This focuses on the South African media context within which South African Idols is broadcast before moving on to examine the research context of Grahamstown, the small town in the Eastern Cape in which viewers encounter the show. It more specifically locates the study within the township of Joza and the socio-cultural and economic conditions that constitute the lived environment in which the viewers, who are the respondents of our study watch, talk about and mutually reflect on the show and its contestants.

The broad South African broadcasting context within which the show is produced looked at. Here, we examine some of the critiques of broadcasting of the post-apartheid state in order to situate Dstv's M-net, the platform that produces the show and its structure as the first subscription television network in South Africa. This examination of the broader broadcasting context and of Dstv will enable me to examine the agenda setting of the network, and how it promotes some audiences while marginalises the audience according to socio-economic factors. In the same instance, the network not only just marginalises some identities, but at the same time, it is about the promotion of others. This forms the backdrop to the history of South African Idols as a reality television show, including the show's target audience and its ratings, which indicate its popularity amongst young adult viewers, visible on social media platforms such as Facebook and twitter.

Media Context

In all societies, human beings engage in the production and exchange of information and symbolic content [1]. With the latest technological developments, the way in which media messages are produced has also transformed in a significant way [1]. In his argument, Thompson proposes an approach to the study of the media that is 'cultural'. This cultural approach is concerned both with the meaningful character of symbolic forms and with their social contextualization. According to Thompson [1], communication media are concerned with the production, storage and circulation of materials, which are meaningful for the individuals who produce and receive them. Thompson further reminds us that, mediated communication is contextualized and because the social context in which communications occurs is structured in various ways, this has an impact on the kind of communication that occurs [1].

In keeping with Thompson's position, we argue that it is easy to focus on the symbolic content of media messages and ignore the complex array of social conditions which underline the production and circulation of these messages [1]. Our

study of the meanings made by young people in Joza from watching South African Idols makes use of this approach. In this way, without ignoring the ideological implications of the symbolic forms of the show's messages, we seek to show how "mediated communication is an essential part of the broader contexts of social life" [1], as the meaning that are made from these forms of mediated communication are interpreted in relation to the social, cultural and economic factors of the recipients.

South African Broadcast Media during Apartheid

The history of broadcasting in South Africa reflects the national history within which it developed. Initially, the development of broadcast media in South Africa was largely shaped by the establishment and evolution of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) [2]. The SABC played a significant part in both constructing and supporting the governance structures of apartheid in South Africa. It primarily supported the then government's efforts to combat what were seen as the "revolutionary forces" ostensibly marshalled by the African National Congress (ANC) in exile during the apartheid regime [3]. It also played a significant role in the apartheid project of separate development and ethnicisiation of black South Africans [3,4]. The apartheid attitude of 'separate development' was not confined to the political sphere, but extended to cultural matters, thereby contributing to the infusion of the arts with political meanings [4].

The Social Context: South Africa, Grahamstown and Joza

Despite the transition to democracy in 1994, South Africa continues to be a country marked by severe and increasing inequalities [5]. This is still evident in the society that we live in today. Even though a number of black people have managed to get better chances of employment and education. The conditions are still dire in many black communities. As researchers have observed it, some South African children grow up amid extraordinary affluence and privilege. But this is not the case is areas like Grahamstown, where majority of black youth are still unemployed and in some cases with only a Matric certificate at their disposal. "The boundaries of privilege have extended beyond whiteness to include considerable numbers of black children growing up within the fast-growing black elite and middle class". However, this observation is valid, but it is only applicable to the minority of the black population. This means that groups that were marginalized during the apartheid era remain marginalized to this day.

Even within black communities there is some segregation between working class blacks and middle class blacks, blacks who have versus blacks who don't have. Nevertheless, the truth of the matter is that, majority of black youth still live in dire conditions of poverty and limited or no access to resources. In The post-apartheid South Africa, class has replaced race as the foundation of deep social cleavages [6]. The unemployment rate amongst the youth, women and black people is drastically increasing instead of decreasing [6]. This will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

The truly remarkable nature of South Africa's transition to a new state was portrayed in the election and the inaugural of Nelson Mandela as the new president in 1994 [7]. In order to map out this transition we will adopt the transition theory as explained by Adler and Webster. These two authors identify three factors that have contributed to the country's transition to democracy. They argue that; in order for South Africa to be where it is today, there had to be contestations between those who had power and those who were disadvantaged [7]. This is still evident in the society we live in today; where young people are always striving to get access to better education and other opportunities.

Due to the well-known fact that the government of today has failed to provide resources and services to its citizens, this has led to the public venturing in other options to find means of survival. It is for this reason that shows like Idol are very popular amongst young people, especially those who are looking to better themselves. If young people cannot get employment opportunities, shows like Idol are a promise of a better life for them.

Alongside with all the things that needed to be done during the transition period, at the helm of it was the focus on developing the young people which were seen as the future leaders of the country. The transition period also came up with its challenges. When the African National Congress (ANC) gained power post the 1994 general elections, many promises were made including eradication of poverty, access to education and employment opportunities for young people. While a lot has changed in policies, the practicality of these promises has proven to be difficult to implement. This is evident in the current socio-economic status of our country which is characterized by the lack of employment opportunities, especially amongst young people reference.

Young people are always among the first to experience the challenges and possibilities of social change [8]. The youth embodies and performs the 'flow of cultural modernization' that accompanies the economic, political, and technological transformations that shape their lived context [8]. Willis argues that young people usually look at themselves in relation to political and economic shifts and respond to these in different ways. His insight offers us a way of studying how young people form and reform their ideas about themselves or others when their social and political context fractures [9]. Often their responses are seen as violent, mischievous and rebellious.

Today, young people are emerging as one of the central concerns of African studies. Located at the heart of both analytical apparatuses and political action, they also have become a preoccupation of politicians, social workers, and communities in Africa. Undoubtedly, the centrality of this subject is connected to the extraordinary change over the last three decades in the way African societies see them.

Youth are an increasingly compelling subject for study in Africa, entering into political space in highly complex ways. To pay attention to youth is to pay close attention to the "topology of the social landscape-to power and agency; public, national, and domestic spaces and identities, and their articulation and disjuncture; memory, history, and sense of change; globalization and governance; gender and class".

In most African societies, distress as well as success adhere to the body and are read on the body, especially among young people. By living life on the margin, young people abolish the gap between adolescence and adulthood, and in some cases, between childhood and adolescence. Sex and violence become rites of passage and initiation which, like the new religious practices, produce a historicity of dissidence and dissent.

When it comes to the local youth in South Africa, research has indicated that young people experience considerable emotional distress [10]. The causes of distress amongst young people in South Africa can be attributed to many factors, most visibly those social and economic conditions which constrain their life-chances. These include forms adversity such as poverty, unemployment, dysfunctional families [11]. These challenges are prevalent amongst young people in the Eastern Cape Province, where our study is based, which is estimated as being the poorest province out of the nine provinces in the country [12].

This research is conducted amongst the youth of Grahamstown, South Africa. Grahamstown is located in the Eastern Cape Province and falls within the Makana Local Municipality. It is a fairly isolated provincial town, with the closest major urban cities being Port Elizabeth and East London, 120 and 140 km away respectively. The total population of greater Grahamstown, which is inclusive of the black communities that lie on the outskirts of the city, is roughly 125,000 people. Of the total population, 78 percent are black, 12 percent are colored, 10 percent are white, and less than 1 percent are Indian. Forty-five percent of the population is between the ages of 20 and 49 years of age, while 39 percent are younger than 20 years of age.

My specific local area of interest is Joza location of Grahamstown. This location contrasts markedly with the city center, with its white suburbs and businesses. It is a small township, situated in SA's poorest province, and like many of its metropolitan cousins, its inhabitants struggle with the lack of provision of basic services, such as water and sanitation. In addition, many of its residents are unemployed: in 2010, the local unemployment rate was estimated to be 32.9 per cent, higher than the national average of 24 per cent [13].

South Africa Broadly; Youth within this Context

South Africa, like many other developing countries, has a youthful (15-34 of age) population consisting of 70% of the national population. In 2010, the country had an unemployment national average rate of 24 per cent [13], which had increased to 36.1% in 2014 [12]. The majority of young people from poor South African townships still live in dire conditions, in contrast to their white counter parts [5,12]. It is important to note that because of poverty and other structural factors, young people continue to live on the margins of political and socio-economic participation, unable to make meaningful contributions to decisions that affect their lives. This is mostly the case with young people in Grahamstown who, because of being situated in a rural area, often feel excluded from the nation building project of the country.

The inequality that characterises Grahamstown mirrors that of South Africa, which is one of the most unequal societies in the world with the richest 20% earning nearly 70% of the country's income. Due to these challenges, many young people are faced with prospects of dropping out of school at an early stage. These challenges and the high rate of unemployment in the area mean that the majority young people from poor households are more likely to be without jobs. In 2007, unemployment among black South African youth 25–34 (years of age) stood at 42% [14].

To try and deal with this issue of unemployment amongst young people, the South African government has implemented the Community Work Programme (CWP) in order to create employment for young people. This programme is also available in Grahamstown but has been criticized by many, with the view that it does not address the issues of poverty as it offers low wages. Men between the ages of 15 to 34 are more likely to find jobs in the formal sector than women, but young men from poor households are finding it increasingly difficult to enter the job market.

In South Africa's broken and violent society, youth who are socially excluded are particularly at risk of turning to drugs, crime, and violence. This results in the image of regarding black youth as problematic, a notion Seekings [15] terms the "youth problem". Both the "youth" and the supposed "youth problem" were socially constructed ideas [15]. Seekings further argues that, the "youth problem" notion was traced to the revolts that took place in South African townships and rural areas during the 1980's. at the height of political transformation, young people were often referred to "shocked troops" or "foot soldiers" to indicate the kind activism and participation they had in fighting the apartheid regime [15].

Young people during this time boycotted school classes, demonstrated and fought in the streets against security forces [15]. The "comrades", as they came to be known, rendered whole areas ungovernable and helped build the structures of people's power [15]. The way young people in the 1990s were viewed by those who opposed the apartheid government was somehow different to how young people are views in this day and age. In the 1980's, young people were referred to as the "Young Lions", which is contradictory to today's view of regarding the youth as "problematic" and "troubled" [15].

The Approaches to Studying the Text/ Audience Relationship

In response to the negative reactions to the processes of industrialization, urbanization and the emergence of contemporary forms of mass media, theorists have been concerned with the relationship between the text and the audience and with the effects of the media on their moral, political and economic lives [16].

Theorists looking at the competing approaches between those that stress the power of the media and those arguing for the autonomous power of the audience have two propositions to studying the social life [16]. The first position is represented by the 'effects' tradition that draws on a hypodermic model of media influence [17]. Strelitz suggests that; even though theorists within this tradition may differ in their political perspective and their focus on short-term behavioral changes and or long-term cultural and ideological changes, what they do share is the view that the media, as powerful social institutions, are able to 'inject' their audiences with their messages and thus affect their behavior [17].

Opposing the 'hypodermic' model of the media and social life is an approach that stresses audience autonomy instead of textual determination [17]. On the latter approach, there are differences in terms of the underlying political philosophy. Whether it is 'uses-and-gratifications' research or the 'two-step flow' approach, mainstream theories rooted in liberal pluralist philosophy have emphasized individual, psychological meanings rather than social ones [18].

Strelitz [17] argues about the different approaches to studying the social life by describing those theorists who were concerned with 'culture industries' as ideological apparatuses that seek to serve the interests of dominant groups. He compares it with 'mainstream' American approaches that see the media as a reflector of the value consensus that is deeply embedded in society [17].

According to theorists using the American approach to study social life, the media have short term and restricted influence [19], while for the Frankfurt School theorists, the media act as a powerful instrument that aid the maintenance of class oppression. Media in the mainstream American approach are seen as relatively weak, but important, instruments in the circulation and reinforcement of shared values [20]. The limitations of such a perspective is that the differences of response or interpretation are attributed solely to individual differences or personality [21]. In contrast, cultural studies theorists who support relative audience autonomy attempt to uncover clusters of readings that correspond to significant axes of power within particular social contexts [22].

To look at the meanings made in a particular social context, a Cultural Studies approach that look at the relationship between the media and its audiences is employed. Where the audiences being examined are not viewed as passive television viewers but rather as active [22,23]. For a long time audiences of media message have been viewed a passive receivers, however, research confirms that audiences choose to engage with the medium and its content in a variety of active ways, including managing their attention to it, making meanings out of its messages, analysing and criticising, and selectively remembering it [23].

The approach thus views audiences as active participants in the process of receiving and making meaning of these media messages [1]. The active audience approach also maintains that even if individuals may have relatively little control over the content of the symbolic materials "made available to them, they can use these materials, rework and elaborate them in ways that are quite alien to the aims and intentions of the producers in order to interpret and make sense of their own lives" within a specific lived context [1].

Making sense of media texts is a habitual part of our everyday existence. Making sense of media texts requires an active process of interpretation in which meaning is actively decoded [24]. This act of decoding takes place within a complex social structure in which the message is not isolated from relations of power [25].

Media texts are interpreted and manipulated by audiences in ways in which they make sense of them. It is important therefore that the "consumption of media messages should be seen as an activity: not as something passive, but as a kind of practice in which individuals take hold of and work over the symbolic materials they encounter" [1].

Qualitative Research

Since its inception, research in the communication and media industry has been concerned with the issue of impact or effects. The claim of communication research to disciplinary status and as well as to a wider political relevance, "comes from the concern of researcher trying to explain how the mass media make a difference in social life" [26]. This is the case in the study we are conducting as we will looking at the meanings that our research subjects make from watching the Idols show and how does this show shape the way the view themselves and their social life within their lived context.

This study employs a qualitative method into studying the meanings made by the research subjects from watching the Idols show. Qualitative research is a method that involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that as a qualitative researcher one is required to study things in their natural settings, with the attempt to make to make sense of and interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them [17].

A qualitative approach differs from quantitative in significant ways. The latter can establish regularities in social life, while on the other hand qualitative evidence can allow the process which links the variables to be revealed [27]. Qualitative research is regarded as messy and at times tends to involve false trails isnd blind alleys to a much greater degree than the idealization implies [27]. Bryman further explains:

The problem that much quantitative research is relatively unconcerned with theory implies that it is a weak account of how concepts come into being and also how they come to be

subject to a measurement process. In fact, concepts provide a central focus for much social science research but they are loosely or tangentially related theoretical considerations.

The role of a researcher using a qualitative approach is to "seek to preserve the form and content of human behavior and to analyze its qualities, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations" [28].

Six focus group discussions were conducted and interviews were held when necessary in order for the respondents to expand further on what had emerged on the discussions. Furthermore, in order to get the respondents' independent inner views, we gave respondents questionnaires so that they can answer freely without being influenced by other participants in the focus groups. To protect the true identities of the respondents, they will referred to as "R" which stands for respondent.

Reception Analysis

Due to the fact that our research focuses on the social production of meaning, this study is a reception analysis which is predicated upon a qualitative approach to research that includes both text and the socially situated audience [29,30]. It is therefore important in this research that we focus on the audience (reception) and their social conditions (social context), because the meanings that they make from watching this show (Idols) are preceded by experiences which have occurred in their lived context. The reception analysis tradition emphasizes the idea that human "subjects are engaged in the process of making sense of their own lives and that they continuously interpret, create and give meanings to their own actions" [31].

This approach is useful as it suggests that the everyday constructions and interpretations people make about their lives should be taken into consideration in any conception of social science research [31]. The main central aim of ethnographic reception analysis is therefore to understand the live experiences of the audience. Thus, it then has to engage with the situational contexts in which the media are used and interpreted [22].

The Viewing Context

As discussed in our literature review that cultural studies proposes that the main aim of reception ethnography is to understand the lived experiences of the consumers. Thus it is important that this approach engages with the situational context of the everyday lives in which the media are used and understood [22]. The respondents had this to say when asked about how the view the show:

R: I like watching the show with my family.

Respondent was more specific when responding.

R: I watch the show with my sister, my mom and dad. My dad is the huge fan of the show.

Other respondents also agreed that they watch the show with family members of their friends.

I then further ask the respondent's why the enjoy watching the show with family and friends. It turns out that on Sundays at 5pm everyone is ready to watch Idols. As we would know that the viewing context is a rule-based context in which power relations play significant roles. It is therefore important that we pay significant attention to the viewing context because we need to consider the issues of power that translate into this context like negotiations like around programme choice [17]. The respondents have this to say:

R: I watch the show with my sister so that I can be comfortable and not be disturbed.

R: I watch the show with my family and friends because I like the comfort of being in my own space and I enjoy the heated conversations we have over the show and about the contestants.

Other contestants also stated that stated that they like watching the show with their family and friends because the conversations and the debate that they engage in with the people they watch the show with. The viewing of television in this case is not disruptive of the social relations that exists between the family members and friend, but rather enhances the view experience into something that they enjoy. It is Strelitz [17] that suggests that taking into consideration the household context in which the viewing takes place, enable us to move beyond the idea that looks at television as disruptive of family. Strelitz [17] explains that the focus should be on the way in which television can be used in order construct occasions which enable various types of interactions to be pursued.

Socio-economic Conditions

As it has pointed in chapter two that the socio-economic conditions of Grahamstown represent those that prevail in the broader society in South Africa. What is interesting enough in the case of this study is the way in which the viewing experience of the show is negotiated by the fans of the show in this location? Due to high unemployment rates many households do not have DTV connection because they cannot afford the monthly subscriptions. But this does not stop the minority group of fan from watching the show. What happens is that these fans gather together at a friend's house who has a connection and they watch from there. Those who are fortunate enough to have connections are in any case always willing to invite and welcome those who do not have connection to watch the show every Sunday. In this way, new social relations are created and new ways of interacting are pursued as Strelitz [17] suggests.

This is evident in this study. Majority of the respondents mentioned that, as they watch the show with friend and family members, there people who do not have Dstv connection who usually come and watch they show with them. Through this interaction and watching the show with other, new social

relations that would have not been formed if it were not for the interest in the show, are formed.

During the preliminary interviews, one of the respondents also suggested that they sometimes hosts a couple of friends on Sundays when they are watching the show. One of the friends they usually invite is someone who her parent did not know, but through these constant visits, a new bond was created by these constants visits on Sundays.

The respondent explained that she has a friend that is a fan of Idols. However, because he (the friend) does not have access to Dstv, she then invited him over at her parents' house to come and watch the show. From then on, the parents were introduced to the friend who has now become a regular visitor on Sundays in order to watch the show.

Celebrity as a Field for Competition

In an interview of season eleven's top ten contestants, they shared their views about being in the show and the answer that they all came up with is that being on the show is very competitive. One of the contestants attested mentioning that the only competition on the show is he, while others mentioned the names of the contestants which they thought were the strongest. Turner [32] argues that the formats of reality television like Idols are all set out to produce what is deemed "the best" for their contestants. This way some sort of competitiveness is set out to be the most important factor in the competition.

On the case of Idol SA judge Randall Abrahams warned the contestants during the live performance shows by stating that: "At this stage of the competition, we expect nothing less from you but the best". Not only does this put pressure on the contestants, but it also makes them highly competitive with one another.

This indicates that being of the show is the survival of the fittest. Another contestant said that every single person taking part in the competition is versatile. By saying this, the contestant is means that even though they are in a competition, there is something different that each contestant has which is different from what others have. He further stated that each contestant has an upper hand over the other, but no one really has leverage on anyone.

Also in the case of contestants being interviewed. When one assesses the clothes they wear, the background of where the interviews are done is different as compared before they got to Sun City. In Sun City, everything is clear, the cameras and the lighting is done as if a well-known celebrity is going to perform. By doing so, the producers are setting the scene for both the viewers and the contestant. Bu so doing they inventing in the viewer's mind and idea of what life can be once one becomes famous, which is totally different from the life the contestants lived before coming to the show. This is supported by Turner [32] when he eludes that, the extent of control and convincing that the producers have to portray is important for the construction of desire and identity in the viewer's mind. What Turner suggests here, is the idea that

producers will do almost anything in order to sell the notion or lifestyle of celebrity and glamorous and something that the viewers should desire and aspire to.

Face, Identity and Im/politeness

"Face" is defined as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact". Further argued that face can be seen as closely connected to/with one's emotions, rather than belonging to the individual, he claims that face is located in the flow of events in the encounter and becomes manifest only when only when these events are read and interpreted for the appraisals expressed in them. Subsequent application of face to the theory of politeness was made by Brown and Levinson by presenting face as a cognitive and an individualistic that was influenced by a rational, rather than model person (1978/1987). The importance and usefulness of Brown and Levinson's conception is that it separated the conception of identity for face, making it easier to differentiate between the two. Furthermore this separation made it easy for researchers to examine the interconnections between identity con-construction and impoliteness in a media genre like talent shows such as Idol. The discursive/post-modern approach to politeness came with a renewed interest in conceptualizations of face. Other constructivist theories have argued that relational work should form part of the work on identity and further explained that face should be viewed as closely related to, and embedded, in identity [33].

This approach suggests that it is identities rather than the individuals who carry out social practices. By so doing, this approach made it easier to understand that it is identities that have face. These constructivists further asserted that the assessments of im/politeness can be connected to the notion of identity including the notion of face. Blitvich, argues that "impoliteness may ensue when identities and positioning that speakers are trying to construct are not verified their interlocutors".

Judges, Viewers and their Role(S) on the Show

The judges occupy an important role in the show. Their roles are often described as an interactional one as they lead by asking questions and summoning the contestants to sing while they are making their assessments. The contestants are required to sing in front of the judges while after judgment they have to argue their chance in the show. As Blitvich argues that, one of the genre specific features of Idol is that contestants have the opportunity to respond to the judges' assessment of their performance. Though the judges' roles in the in show are to give expert opinions, this role is interestingly challenged during the live shows. During this phase of the show, the viewers have the ultimate say on which contestants make it to the next round. Therefore, a contestant actually wins the contest against the expert judgment. The relation between the audience, contestants and the show

remains an interesting field of research amongst some ranchers.

To put this into context, the respondents for this study have indicated that the judgment that the judges make in some case is not always a fair. Hence the intervention of the viewers is also needed at some stage in the show. Here are some of the responses about the way that judges assess the contestants.

R: I don't think that the way of judging in the show is fair. It is not a good thing that the future and the fate of the contestants must lie in the hands of four people. It is a good thing that at some stage in the show, the audiences is asked to intervene.

While the above response above praises the intervention of the audience's decision making power in the process of creating celebrities. Some respondent felt a different way.

R: I honestly think that the judging in the show is fair because the judges show no favoritism.

Another respondent agreed and had this to say.

R: The way the judges assess the contestants is fair. The show is the image of how aggressive the music industry is, so the judges are okay for being tough on them.

These responses are an indication that the respondents themselves feel different about how the judges conduct their assessments of the contestants. While other feel like their harsh criticism is much needed others are vying the viewers' power in the process of decision making. Hence then it is not a surprising issue that the contestant- judge and viewer judge interaction is often found to be very confrontational at times, making this section of the show a crucial locus for identity negotiation and impoliteness.

The expert (the judge) in the show relates to the entertainment aspect of the show in two, sometimes overlapping, styles: "through harmonious, non-confrontational relations, as in some lifestyle shows: or through verbal conflict and confrontation, as in courtroom shows". With this being said, it is important to note that, in Idol the "generic rhetorical strategies of the judges are related to their expert identity and crucially involve the rating of contestants' artistic talent. In addition, different Idol judges relate can and do relate to the entertainment dimension of the show in different ways, an area which needs further research on its own.

To sum up, it would be useful to use Blitvich's views when he states that with a huge number of contestants claiming star quality and a panel of judges, alongside the viewers, voting in and out the contestants until the winner is selected, the show has turned the talent search into an entertainment battle that often includes. Where impoliteness is genre-sanctioned as in the case of Idol, there have been a debates amongst researchers in that field whether or not the confrontainment within which impoliteness is recognized emerges and develops can still be considered impolite. To answer this, recent global explosion of confrontainment-based reality television genres signals the view that is recognized as such, even if it is genre-sanctioned and that it is used as an important attention-grabbing mechanism.

In the interview, the contestants also said that the part of the show they enjoy the most is the live show. They pointed out that they like the debate and the clashes that ensue between the contestants and the judges. In other cases the judges are in conflict with each other's assessments of the contestants, and this makes the show very interesting to the viewers.

Fame and Authenticity

When the contestants get to the live shows they are carefully styled and the viewers are shown clips of the contestants selecting their new outfits to complement their newly found status. From this phase of the competition, it is evident that there is a shift from the visual codes of the of reality television to the aesthetic and technological form of light entertainment. Some of the noticeable changes are that the camera starts to capture the performance through swift panning aerial shots. The contestants in their performances now directly address their acts to the viewer rather than the judges.

Giving a take on the UK version of the show, Raven argues that Pop Idol has shattered our cultural illusions of stardom in that its narrativised emphasis on the process of manufacturing militates against the investment of fantasy, desire and adoration. For pop to work, reality and fantasy must merge. In many cases in the competition, contestants and viewers are given the sense that, when the experts (the judges), are done working on the contestants they will become stars. This reiterates the idea that, the judges together with the producers of the show are the manufactures of stars, proving the fact that they are manufactured identities presented to the viewers as real and authentic.

Results

This study was built as results of the researcher's interest in celebrities as influencers of young people. It was also fuelled by the researcher's passion for watching the South African Idols shows. To make sense of the meanings that the viewer's male from watching the show, a Cultural Studies approached was employed as a means to guides the study. Audience and reception were used on order to make sense of the way in which audiences make meanings of reality television shows such as Idol.

The research recognizes the fact the young people are always trying to find themselves. By this we refer to the fact that young people are living in a society whereby they are encountered by issues of unemployment inability to access institution of higher learning. As a result, majority of them resort to committing crime but others do try to build a better life for themselves by finding casual employment and finding other opportunities to better themselves.

The South Africa Idol show has become one of the opportunities and platforms that young people can use in

order to better themselves. The winner is guaranteed a chance at stardom and in the entertainment industry and is sold the dream that their life will never be the same again. Many young people across the country gather each season with hopes that their lives will be changed. This research has therefore proved two things in this regard. Firstly, this research had indicated that the viewer's view the show as an opportunity to achieve upward mobility in life. The viewers watch the show with idea that the show promises the winner an exit from poverty into a better life. Secondly, this research has indicated that these young people have a sense of admiration and envy that develops from watching the show. These young people admire the promised dream that the idol will be living after the show. The prize money is and sponsorships that they winner gets, are amongst some of the things that make the viewer's wish they were the actual winners.

The study also indicated that the show has offered an opportunity for new social relation to develop. In most cases the viewers do not have DSTV subscriptions, but this does not stop them from watching the show. This rather causes the viewers with no subscriptions to navigate their way of watching the programme which they do by asking neighbors or by gathering at a certain venue in order for them to watch the show.

It has also been proven in this study that the viewers are attracted to the show due to its entertainment factor. But this is not the only thing that they are watching the show for. In the interviews many participants have agreed that the other interesting thing about the show is the clashes amongst the contestants. The competitive nature of the show makes it a worth-while for the contestants. Many of whom believe that the reality of the world we are living in requires a person to be able to fight for what they want. These research participants also feel like the judges are not being unfair to the contestants when they are being harsh to them but rather they are treating them the very same way they will be treated in the entertainment industry. As a result, these participants express that the contestants should be grateful for being on the show, as this is a platform to practice for what is yet to come in their lives as celebrities.

The study has also showed that the show showcases a glamorized idea and construction of being a celebrity. If does not foreground the fact that celebrities are also ordinary people contestants are always shown performing on stage wearing new clothes every time during the live shows. This is also done through means of glamorizing the stage that they are performing on. This construction of celebrity is somehow misleading the viewers as it present the celebrity as an individual who is living a life free of stress. The downfalls, though they happen, are not made to be the point of focus in the show because they will distort the kind of celebrity construction that the show is selling to the viewers and the contestants.

In addition to these findings, the study found out that the idea of stardom is represented by a physical place which is Sun City. In Sun City the contestants are required to perform all kinds of challenges which will see them getting to the next stage of the competition. While this is the case, contestant s who fails to make it to the next stage prides them for having reached this point of the competition. Though they fell short, it is a big thing for them to reach the Sun City phase. Also for those who pass the challenges set out for them in Sun City, this becomes and achievement for them, having made it through to the next round despite the odds. This has proven that reaching this stage the contestants feel a sense of accomplishment and that this place of stardom, will hold memories of sentimental value for them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the meanings of celebrity made by young adults of Joza from watching the Idol show is centered around three connotations. First of all to be a celebrity means that you are worthy of attention. These participants view celebrities as people who are worthy of being watched and desired. As evident in the case of Idol, contestants perform every Sunday on television in order to be pleased and bring pleasure to the viewers. In actual fact, this means that there the Idol contestants cannot be stars without spectators (and being watched). Secondly, the viewer's locate being a celebrity or being a star closely to being successful. This means that a person cannot be a star or a celebrity without having any claim to fame, something that they have done and earned them their claim to fame and success. In the case of the show this would mean being the winner of the show's season. Thirdly and lastly, the competitive nature of celebrity proves to be an interesting factor the participants deemed important in the constructions of celebrities. In this case, this means that in order for one to become a celebrity they must fight with all they have in order to occupy their spot in the entertainment industry. This is also evident in the show by the amount of competition that is visible amongst the contestants. Each contestant is willing to do anything in order to be ahead of others. As the judges would normally put it in the show when they are addressing the contestants, that the contestant who has more chances of winning the title and be crowned an idol is the contestant that is willing to do everything in their power in order to stand out of the rest of the crowd.

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