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Media Production as an Option for Enhancing Cultural (Heritage) Literacy

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ABSTRACT

The present study provides an interdisciplinary perspective on enhancing the cultural (heritage) literacy of young recipients through media production. The aim of the article is to present a comprehensive perspective on a media product that is seen as a means of education that supports implicit learning about culture and cultural heritage. In this context, media products are presented as an effective option for enhancing cultural (heritage) literacy. By presenting a single-case study, the article highlights the importance of the preparation of university-educated professionals for the field of media and culture. These professionals are capable of interpreting, creating and using media products for the process of enhancing the cultural heritage literacy of society. The secondary aim of the article is to contribute to theoretical insights on the topic that is presented, and also to stimulate further, broader discussion on its application in practice, which has been relatively overlooked in current scholarship.

KEY WORDS

Cultural (Heritage) Literacy. Culture. Education. Media Product. Value.

1 Introduction

Since the advent of the media, their representatives have mapped and archived all the key events that have affected the development of society. Their role was not only to inform the public but also to preserve historical records, and thus they have become a type of chronicle of the development of society. Through newspapers, television, radio, and in later stages through the Internet and new media, they have documented political, economic, cultural and social changes. At present, these records provide valuable insights about the past, and they help in better understanding the present. In this way, the media contribute to the maintenance of a nation's collective memory while shaping our perception of history and our cultural identity.

In the present article, we point out to the role of media production in the formation of cultural (heritage) literacy and the cultural identity of selected population groups. Within the dominant link to the presentation of cultural heritage, we deal with the idea of a complex value (i.e. not only the economic value) of the media product in relation to the presentation of cultural heritage. There are various aspects that still threaten this value – e.g., disasters, wars, vandalism, redundant commodification, etc. The negligence of this topic in the media environment is also related to this issue. In recent years, there has been an increase in (this interest has been in certain cases false) interest in the subject of cultural heritage, not only on the part of the public (often conditioned by so-called “heritage marketing”), but also in scientific and educational communities in various fields of interest, as well as in the media environment. There is an increasing number of professional and scientific events as well as initiatives and calls for European research and education grant schemes. The topic of cultural heritage is also a political topic (e.g., the European Parliament declared the year 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage) and a topic for politicians (also in the context of political marketing and the use of cultural heritage as propaganda). The general increase in interest in the topic of cultural heritage has been reflected in various ways and to different degrees by the media, and consequently by their recipients.

The controversies about the scope and methods of media coverage of the topic of cultural heritage (in various media formats and genres) have contributed to an increased interest in the scholarly debate on this topic. The outcome of these debates should contribute to raising public awareness not only about the protection of, but also about the modern and authentic presentation of cultural heritage and the support of cultural identity.

Media products are of various quality. Their complex value also lies in their benefits for the users (e.g., new information, entertainment and relaxation, enhancement of skills, etc.) and support of prudence and critical thinking (Kačínová & Vrabec, 2022). In addition to linguistic, social or motor skills, implicit learning through media products with cultural value can contribute to increasing cognitive knowledge about cultural heritage (culture in general) and at the same time, it contributes to strengthening cultural identity (e.g., national, regional, European, global, religious, ethnic, linguistic identity, etc.). The purpose of the article is to present a view of the media product as a means of enabling the mass consumer to learn about cultural heritage of global and domestic origin in a relevant and accessible manner, through available technologies. There is also a presentation of a perspective on the media product as a means of unintentional, implicit learning, in which the individual learns spontaneously, without intentions to learn. This is performed through indirect forms of information transfer, such as reading books/newspapers, magazines, comics; listening to radio broadcasts, podcasts; watching films and various TV programmes; playing offline and online (computer) games, etc. Despite the fact that this type of learning takes place outside traditional educational contexts and despite the fact that an individual enters the learning process without the intention to learn, the process can be very effective, and the outcome can be positive because it takes place naturally and without a conscious effort. In this process, universities and institutions training university-educated professionals capable of exploiting the positive potential of media production for the benefit of increasing the cultural (heritage) literacy of society should play an important role.

The present study is built on three basic constituents – cultural (heritage) literacy as an essential component of university education, the media product as a potential carrier of information with a certain cultural value, and particular examples of selected media products presenting the topic under study in an interesting way. For these reasons, in this article we also present partial parts of our own theory of the value model of media product (Pitoňáková, 2023), and the results of partial research that focuses on the perception of the topic of cultural heritage in media products by university students (Pitoňáková, 2022). Finally, we present selected media products with an emphasis on this area.

2 Methods

Due to a lack of sources of literature directly related to the topic, the study presents an exploratory nature of research – it focuses on the basic form of familiarity with the topic and its context. This approach enables the presentation of particular aspects of the issue in a contextual and interdisciplinary way, emphasizing the interconnection between cultural (heritage) literacy, media production and university education. The result is an outline of approaches that can be further explored and analysed, in addition to a framework overview of the topic. The research also includes a single-case study aimed at tracing a unique example of university education within an interdisciplinarily-oriented original study programme that combines media studies, cultural heritage and digital humanities.

In the section of the paper that is focused on the media product, we follow our conceptual research focused on the model of media product value (Pitoňáková, 2023). In the descriptive parts of the paper, we attempt to grasp the phenomenon under study in particular associations and to capture their relationships (Sedláková, 2014). This aspect is particularly important when describing the interdisciplinary linking of topics – in this case, media production and cultural heritage. In the part of the paper that is aimed at identifying the topic of cultural heritage among a group of university students, the questionnaire as a method of research was applied.

As regards the theoretical aspects of the paper, these are based on available sources from the field of cultural (heritage) literacy and media theory, with a link to partial areas of cultural heritage. At the same time, cultural heritage is neither described nor analysed and we perceive it as a constitutive element that forms a certain measure of cultural value of the media product. We frame such a view with findings from the field of education of future media practitioners. A few authors address this perspective with a more comprehensive view, and in most cases, only in partial parts of their research.

Ultimately, the aim is to establish a shared context in order to provide a summative yet concise view on the interdisciplinary topic of the interconnection between media production, the presentation of cultural heritage in creative industries and educational contexts.

3 Results

Cultural literacy is a complex concept that encompasses several areas – the knowledge of history, literature, art and also the ability to understand and to obtain a form of familiarity with various cultural environments. According to Segal, cultural literacy is “part of the general movement of interdisciplinarity within humanities and between humanities and other disciplines, but it is a distinctive activity within that larger movement” (2015, p. 71). The issues of *cultural literacy* and *cultural heritage literacy* are too complex, given the need to survey them in a comprehensive way. The issues of cultural literacy can be viewed from multiple perspectives and their implementation in society depends on an interdisciplinary perspective. While the term cultural literacy is understood as the individual's ability to know and to understand what

people in a particular society consider standard and shared (the above-mentioned includes e.g., knowledge of historical events, language, historical figures, important works of art and this knowledge allows them to interpret messages, symbols, concepts, etc.), it is also an important aspect of cultural heritage literacy. cultural heritage literacy focuses on knowledge, understanding and preservation of cultural heritage – language, traditions, folklore, historical and artistic monuments that are heritage for a particular community or nation (it is also the ability to interpret symbols and messages associated with cultural heritage and also understanding the importance of preserving these non-material values for the next generation).

The perception of the concept of cultural literacy evolved over time, and following Hirsch's well-known concept, more studies that focused on this area were published. García Ochoa et al. consider cultural literacy as

a threshold concept, following Meyer and Land's understanding of the term. According to Meyer, Land, and Baillie, the experience of learning a threshold concept is similar to 'passing through a portal, from which a new perspective opens up, allowing things formerly not perceived to come into view'. (García Ochoa et al., 2016, p. 548)

Öztemiz emphasizes the fact that "in the 21st century, some factors, such as the awareness of multiculturalism, the preservation of local culture and the recognition of national cultural heritage, have led to the need for a new literacy skill called cultural heritage literacy" (2020, p. 818).

In order to obtain a better overview of the evolution of the interest of academics in this field, we conducted a survey of the number of publications focusing on cultural (heritage) literacy. We chose the Web of Science Core Collection (Clarivate, 2024; hereafter referred to as WoS) as our reference database, which includes a relevant number of relevant articles, conference papers, and other scholarly texts. The database allows searching for articles according to a defined topic (it considers the title, abstract and keywords of each document relevant for the assessment of a match) and then allows the creation of summaries of these articles. The following figure (Figure 1) presents the development of the number of articles in the WoS database focusing on cultural literacy a year-by-year basis. The year 1984 was chosen as the first year after the publication of the study of the same title by Hirsch (1983).

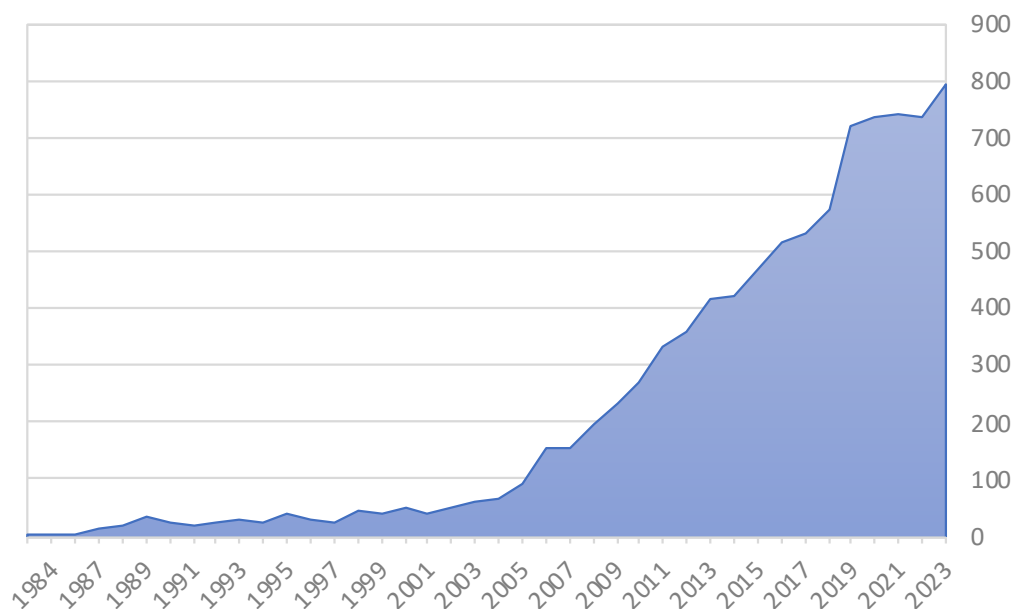


FIGURE 1: The number of articles in the WoS database focusing on cultural literacy a year-by-year basis

Source: Clarivate (2024)

In order to compare the development of interest of academics in this field, we also present the development of the number of articles in the WoS database focusing on cultural heritage literacy on a year-by-year basis (there was a minimal number of studies focusing on this topic before 1996).

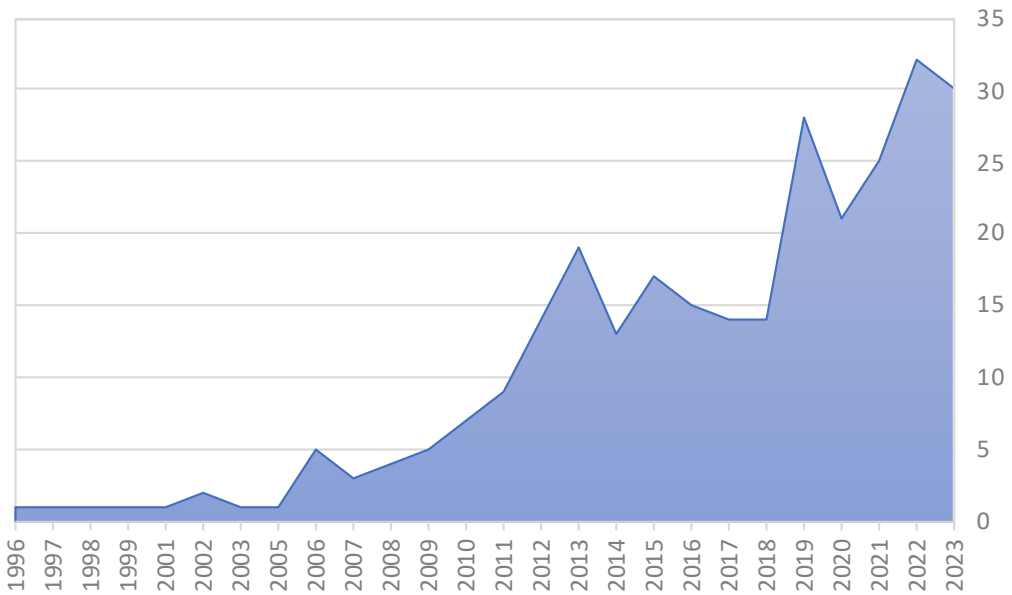


FIGURE 2: The development of the number of articles in the WoS database focusing on Cultural Heritage

Source: Clarivate (2024)

Cultural (heritage) literacy resonates in academia; however, the data on its implementation in practice is scarce. There are also very few statistics directly focused on this topic and indicators that can indirectly indicate the level of cultural (heritage) literacy (access to education, education in the humanities and social sciences, access to and participation in cultural activities, etc.) provide only a partial picture of the reflection of this topic in education and in society in general. As an example, we present the current data on the global level of general literacy. Based on data from the Statista database, it can be stated that “in the past five decades, the global literacy rate among youths aged 15 to 24 years has grown from 77 percent in 1975 to 92.7 percent in 2022” (O’Neill, 2024, para. 1).

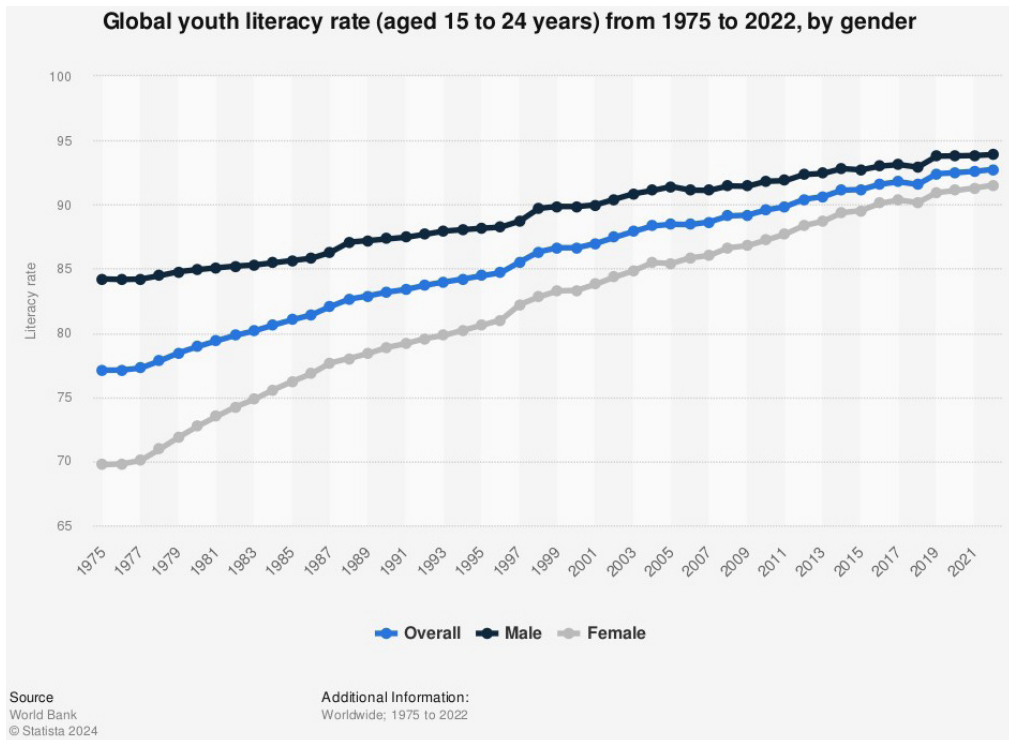


FIGURE 3: Global youth literacy rate 1975-2022, by gender.

Source: O'Neill (2024)

In the process of conducting a survey of academic outputs as well as outputs from the Statista database, we can find statistics related to diverse areas of social life as well as various literacies; however, we have not managed to identify statistics directly related to cultural (heritage) literacy. These findings reflect the observation that

there is a growing body of work on the field of what is now known as ‘cultural literacy’, but little has been written about its application, and even less on how to teach it in the context of higher education. (García Ochoa & McDonald, 2019, p. 351)

Within academia, we have noticed an increase in scholarly work that is focused on various aspects of education and research in this area. However, as the analysis indicates, the vast majority of articles (9,698) are based on the category “Education, educational research”, while only a small fraction of articles (402) is classified in the category of “Communication”. This situation highlights the need to pay more attention to the study of the area of media and communication, which is heavily involved in shaping contemporary social discourse. The task of university institutions that are active in the field of media and communication studies is to ensure the training of socially responsible professionals with sufficient cultural insights and with the ability to transform their knowledge and experience into practical life.

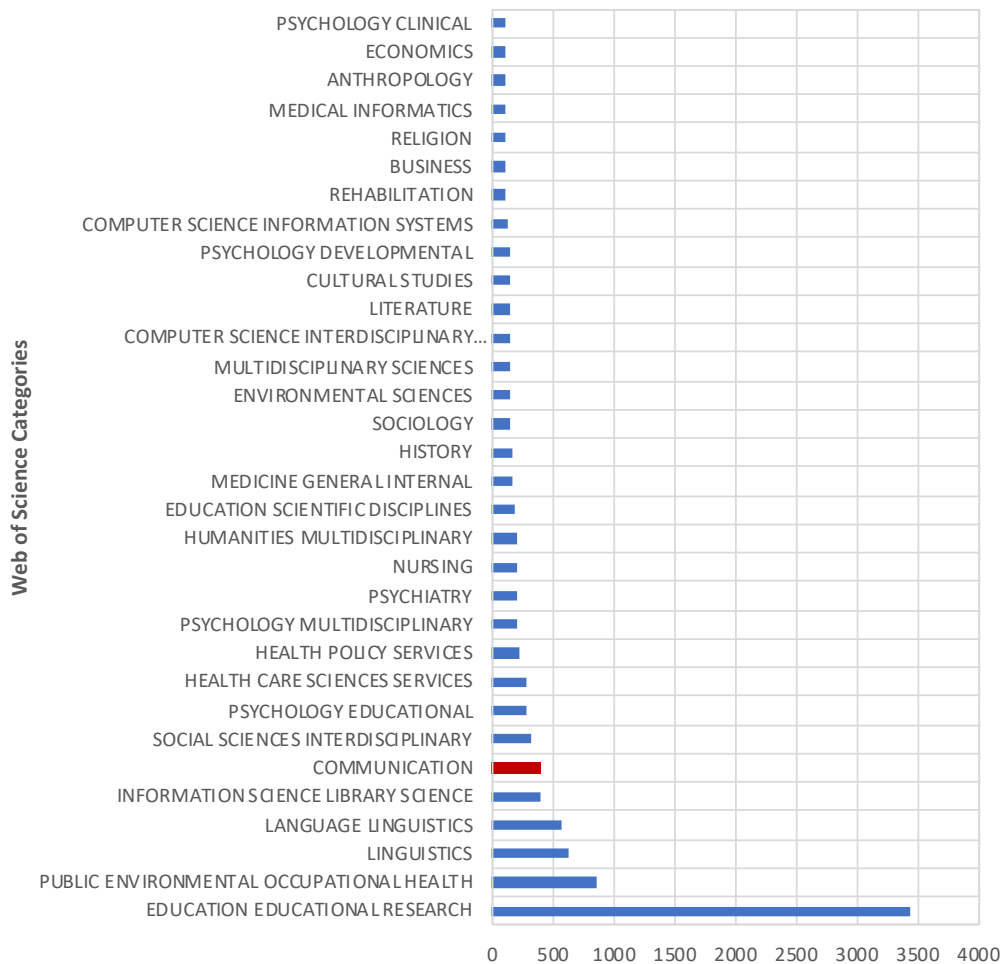


FIGURE 4: The vast majority of articles are based on the category "Education, educational research"

Source: Clarivate (2024)

Cultural Industry, cultural heritage literacy and education – the cultural industry plays the key role in shaping literacy by providing media products that inform and implicitly educate the public. Education in the area of cultural heritage literacy enables better understanding and critical evaluation of the content that cultural industries produce. Integrating cultural heritage literacy (Choquette, 2009) into educational programmes promotes not only personal development of people but also their active participation in the cultural life of society or participation in creative industries that are extremely important for the intellectual growth of society and which have enormous economic potential.

According to the study *The Economy of Culture* (KEA European Affairs, 2006), the entire cultural industry is divided into cultural and creative sectors. The cultural industry covers a wide range of areas including cultural heritage, film, media, etc. Its fundamental base is formed by economic value that is created through an individual creative input or through an artistic talent. Therefore, it is related to the economic increase in the value of the intellectual property within diverse fields of various creative activities. Our study draws attention to the commercial potential of cultural heritage, which is increasingly used at present as a major source of economic income. However, according to Bitušíková (2017), too much commercialisation of heritage may result in a counterproductive consequence: in certain cases, it is difficult to recognise what is real, authentic cultural heritage in a particular locality (region) or in a country and what is a

mere “fake” – an imitation or a fabrication made for tourists and profit. Lowenthal (1998) even discusses the era of the cult of heritage, when heritage cannot be questioned or refused.

While cultural heritage is an important source of economic revenue and growth for the creative industries, economic interest cannot outweigh (and consequently cannot threaten) its intrinsic value. Thus, decision-makers in developed countries should not only emphasize the overall promotion and the development of creative industries, but they should also promote education in order to support the growth of cultural (heritage) literacy among the population, more specifically, the growth of cultural (heritage) literacy among experts who work in the media and cultural spheres as

Higher Education institutions face specific challenges preparing graduates to live and work in transdisciplinary and transcultural environments. It is imperative for these institutions to provide their students with the skill sets that will give them the mobility and flexibility to be able to operate efficiently in different cultural and professional contexts. (García Ochoa et al., 2016, p. 546)

On this basis, the link between cultural industries and cultural (heritage) literacy can be seen as essential for the sustainable development of the contemporary cultural sector and also for society as a whole. The aforementioned cultural (heritage) literacy represents an individual's ability to understand, interpret and appreciate these cultural products and practices, which ultimately contributes to economic growth of society, but also to a better understanding of cultural aspects of society. University programmes, courses and workshops focused on education in media and communication studies are also important tools for enhancing cultural heritage literacy and for preparing future professionals in cultural (i.e. also media) industries, especially if we expect them to be the producers and disseminators of information of high cultural value in practical life.

Öztemiz observes that “by considering cultural heritage literacy skills, professionals of cultural heritage institutions can develop new information services for cultural-heritage literate people” (2020, p. 818). García Ochoa et al. even consider cultural literacy in university education “a modus operandi and a threshold concept, following Meyer and Land's understanding of the term” (2016, p. 546). There are several approaches to university education in the field of cultural (heritage) literacy. According to García Ochoa et al., an interesting teaching strategy lies in the so-called destabilization

that propitiates both a conceptual shift in students, and a more instinctive, ‘visceral’ form of unrest that is aimed at unsettling their views on culture, identity, and the world at large. The purpose of destabilisation is for students to understand how they approach, both conceptually and empirically, what they do not know. How do they react to uncertainty and the instability of new situations? The aim is to destabilise students' perceptions around certain topics in order to prompt introspection at a very fundamental level. (García Ochoa et al., 2016, p. 550)

García Ochoa et al. (2016) also propose *Destabilisation* and *Reflection* as two strategies for teaching cultural literacy. Other approaches are related to education through attractive lecture activities and workshops in various cultural and memory institutions. Another option is experiential learning with the direct involvement of students in the creation and implementation of various events, taking into account the aspect of cultural (heritage) literacy. There is also another option that is related to exploiting the potential of media products in enhancing cultural (heritage) literacy.

In the introduction to the paper, so-called implicit education was mentioned, which is closely linked to the field of various media products (with a different cultural value) in modern society. As we are exposed to media content through the media, we acquire new knowledge without conscious effort and subsequently, this knowledge shapes our opinions and attitudes. Media

production thus plays the key role in the dissemination of cultural values and information and by reflecting and disseminating dominant cultural narratives, it shapes our cultural (heritage) literacy and our understanding of the world in an implicit way. For this reason, it is important to address the complex (not just economic) value of media products that mass audiences often adopt.

According to our theory (Pitoňáková, 2023), the value of a media product can be viewed from different perspectives and traditionally; however, the evaluation of media products has been associated with the perspective of their consumers and producers. It is also important to create a form of space for issues related to the value and cultural level of the media product (unrelated to ratings or economic benefits). These are values related to culture, in the narrower sense of cultural identity. In certain cases, media products can be seen as information messages about the history, culture, and cultural heritage of nations. Since partial possibilities of calculating the value of media products mostly reflect only the economic value of the product, our aim was to develop a theoretical model describing the value of a media product comprehensively as a synergy of economic, content, social, cultural and other factors.

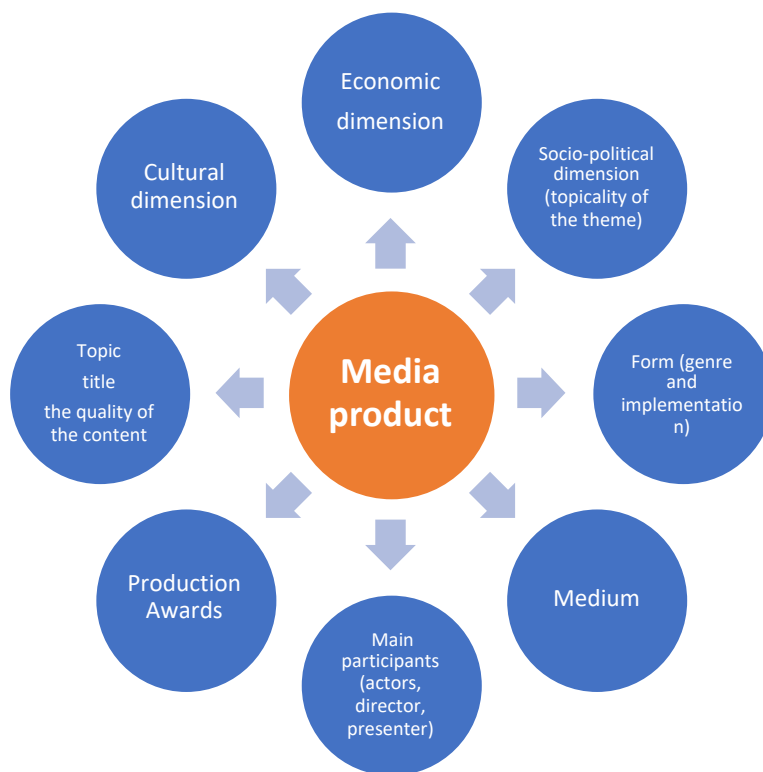


FIGURE 5: *The model of value of a media product*

Source: own processing, 2023

This perspective on media products enables their effective use in implicit education and also in the training of university-educated professionals. The activities can be implemented within the framework of various courses of the educational curriculum, and can be carried out in the conditions of a traditional seminar session when students analyse selected media products (in order to identify their cultural dimension, references to art, culture, cultural heritage), they parody diverse media products (in order to draw attention to the underused cultural potential of media products in a humorous way) and create media products (with the aim of creating media products with cultural value that are elaborated in a modern way, taking into account the requirements of the target audience and respecting the cultural values of the given society).

Although cultural heritage is an important source of economic revenue and of growth for creative industries, economic interest cannot outweigh (and therefore it cannot consequently threaten) its real value. Thus, decision-makers in developed countries should not only emphasize the overall promotion and development of creative industries, but they should also promote education in order to support the growth of cultural heritage literacy among the population, as the over-commodification of cultural heritage calls into question its true value and authenticity. On this basis, the link between the cultural industries and cultural heritage literacy can be seen as not only essential for the sustainable development of the cultural sector, but also of society as a whole.

University programmes, courses and workshops on cultural heritage education are also important tools for increasing cultural heritage literacy, and are also important for the preparation of future professionals in the field of cultural industry. As an example, the study programme *Mediamatics and Cultural Heritage* that is offered at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Žilina links, in an interdisciplinary way, the study of media, cultural heritage and digital humanities. Cultural literacy is understood as the basis for developing skills within the cultural industry but also as a skill that is needed to create, analyse and critically evaluate the media and cultural products. When these skills are developed, “students can formulate their own standpoints and therefore, they are not passive consumers of the information that is presented” (HAMPL, 2022, p. 59).

In interviews, students (e.g., in a survey conducted at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Žilina (Pitoňáková, 2022)) often state that they encounter the concept of cultural heritage literacy for the first time at the university. This finding suggests that the topic of cultural heritage literacy is not sufficiently covered in primary and secondary education and at the same time, it is not sufficiently saturated in the media space either. Consequently, students often have limited knowledge about the meaning and importance of culture and cultural heritage.

The interviews with students suggest that for some students, this new horizon of knowledge is a benefit and an opportunity to engage in activities aimed at preserving and promoting cultural heritage. Education in this area is very important, as “cultural capital is derived from education, because this determines who has which cultural needs, values and tastes” (Pravdová et al., 2023, p. 218).

Properly and purposefully delivered courses within university education (not just in non-technical educational settings) can play a key role in increasing cultural heritage literacy among young people. A positive attitude towards cultural heritage should be an important part of the educational process that shapes the cultural identity and civic awareness of all individuals in the society. At the same time, emphasis should be placed on training educated professionals for work in the cultural sector and the cultural industry, professionals with knowledge and cumulative skills in the fields of history, cultural heritage, the functioning of media processes, marketing communication in connection with state-of-the-art technologies and the digital society.

Well-prepared professionals should be able and also willing to be engaged in this topic – they should be engaged in scientific research, motivated to further explore the issue and able to present selected elements of tangible and intangible cultural heritage to selected target groups.

University students themselves recognize the importance of cultural heritage literacy. In interviews, the students often proclaim that they encounter the concept for the first time at university. A pilot survey in the form of an oral interview was carried out on a sample of fifty university students of the study programme *Mediamatics and Cultural Heritage*, offered at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Žilina. The survey yielded useful information that indicated a low level of familiarity with the concept itself, but also partly with the experience and expectations of the following generation of professionals. These professionals are aware of e.g., the extent of globalisation trends in the media space (but not only there), but also of the need to reinforce the regional/local principle within the framework of the aforementioned aspects.

The contexts of the preparation of future professionals working in the media and cultural sector or working within the media sphere were subsequently investigated using the questionnaire method (the online questionnaire contained a set of 15 questions and was designed from three groups of questions: open-ended questions (the respondents had the opportunity to freely, without any restrictions, formulate their opinion or attitude, respectively), closed-ended questions and a question that allowed expressing an attitude, satisfaction or experience on the so-called Likert scale of responses.

Students were asked the following:

- What study field they studied (either Media and Communication Studies or Teaching and Pedagogical Sciences)?
- How they perceived the term “cultural heritage”?
- From what sources they most often obtained information about social and cultural life of the society?
- In which media products they noticed a topic related to cultural heritage (students could provide a specific example)?
- How often and in which Slovak television they watched the news; whether they recalled a specific news topic related to cultural heritage (they were asked to specify the topic)?
- Whether and why they considered the presentation of cultural heritage in the media environment important?
- Whether in their opinion the media devoted a sufficient coverage to the topic of cultural heritage”?
- Whether they would be interested in engaging in activities aimed at the presentation of cultural heritage in the media environment?

The students were also allowed to provide specific suggestions. We tested the clarity of the questions, and the time required to complete the test on a small sample (more specifically – five students) of randomly selected students and then distributed it via e-mail with an accompanying text that explained the intention to all students of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Žilina. These students were able to respond to it anonymously and the total number of respondents was 419. This is the generational cohort referred to as Generation Z, which, according to the study “Family News Talks: Deliberative Communication in Families” (Čábyová et al., 2023), receives most media content via mobile devices or computers (especially at school and in the evenings). The computer often replaces the television screen or vice versa. The TV screen serves only as a large display through which they watch movies and TV shows.

We investigated the nature of ideas that the students imagine within the term cultural heritage – whether students can capture this concept in a complex way or whether they can describe it in a more sophisticated way.

In both groups of students, we observe that they are able to assign correct associations to the concept. However, many of the students focus their attention only on selected elements connected with the topic of cultural heritage – within the students’ statements, we noted the words such as “roots”, “tradition”, “Slovak”, “heritage”, “nation”, i.e. associative links to cultural identity that cultural heritage presents.

Students find this identity in “customs, traditions, buildings, folk costumes, music, food” and they feel the need to protect and preserve cultural heritage for future generations. With regard to the topic, future teachers also use the word ‘teaching’ about cultural heritage that corresponds to our suggestions about the need for raising public awareness in this regard.

When describing cultural heritage itself, students most often used the following associations – “protected”, “must be preserved”, “wealth of the nation”, “cultural roots”, “history”, “monuments”, “must be popularized”, “nation”, “folk costumes”, “folk songs and music”, “traditions and customs”, “traditional folk recipes”, “spiritual objects”, “ancestors”, “transmission from generation to generation”, “heritage and culture of our ancestors”, “we must

protect”, etc. Only some of the answers – mostly from the students of the study programme Media and Cultural Heritage – reflected a more comprehensive knowledge of the topic. More than half of respondents in both groups assume that the topic of cultural heritage is not sufficiently covered in the media and at the same time, more than 50 percent of the surveyed university students consider the presentation of cultural heritage in the media important. They also express a great willingness to be helpful in the media presentation of cultural heritage. It was rather surprising to find that a part of the respondents “did not care” and a large part (almost half) did not express this willingness in the media presentation of cultural heritage. As these are groups of respondents, one of whom will be working directly in media/ marketing and the other in education (as a future teacher), we consider it particularly important to raise awareness of this topic in appropriate ways, which partly emerged in the respondents’ suggestions – appropriate, attractive and modern adaptation of topics (e.g., YouTube channel, experiential presentations, drone footage, etc.). It is not only for this reason that we consider it appropriate to approach this topic from the perspective of a more intensive use of the potential of media production.

4 Discussion

Considering the above-mentioned contexts, as well as the emphasis on an increased interest in cultural heritage, it can be suggested that media products with an implemented (directly or symbolically) reference to cultural heritage can be distinguished as a separate subgroup of media products with regard to their high social value. In our theory, they are referred to as “heritage media products” (in comparison with other media products, they have added value through which they communicate the values of cultural heritage and cultural identity). From global productions, successful films/ TV series that do not refer to history or cultural heritage in a direct way can be included – e.g., *The Da Vinci Code*, *The Witcher*, *The Crown*. A particularly interesting cinematic achievement is a lesser-known movie *Vitaj doma, brate!*. It is a prime example of the communication of cultural identity of (Lower Land) Slovaks via the medium of film. The storyline is fully tied to the Serbian town of Báčsky Petrovec and the community of Slovaks based in Lower Land (note: they were Slovaks living in the parts of former Hungary, Serbia and Romania inhabited by the Slovaks, which they colonised during the 18th-19th centuries) and the town of Báčsky Petrovec. The latter contributed with great commitment (e.g., financial and material support, personal involvement, featuring in the film, etc.) to the fact that Slovaks in the Upper Lands (i.e. the Slovaks living in the territory of the Slovak Republic) stopped saying that they did not even know that we existed. We sprouted from the same roots. It is time for us to start to learn about each other’s branch (Častvenová, 2022).

Recently, there has been a significant increase in the share of video games containing topics and references to cultural heritage. There exists a controversy in relation to their accuracy in relation to history, and given the almost non-existent dialogue between video game developers, gamers, and cultural heritage professionals, there is little data about the accuracy in video games with implied cultural heritage, nor on whether this accuracy matters in video games (see also, Copplestone, 2016).

Media products that are cultural heritage *eo ipso* (in themselves) can be described as unique; in our theory, they are referred to as total heritage media products – e.g., selected parts of film production (Pitoňáková, 2023). Although audiovisual works (e.g., film) are not usually considered intangible cultural heritage, they are usually considered comprehensible and powerful media that are of great importance in mapping, documenting and preserving the traditions and histories of individuals and nations. Film cultural heritage can be included in this category, as it is distinctly different from other types of traditional art in its interconnectedness with technology and available technologies, and is distinctly different from other media products in its moral value and quality (however, this is not always the case).

For example, Slovakia, as a member of UNESCO, has also added Karol Plicka's important film work from the 1933 film *Zem spieva* (*The Earth Sings*) to the Register of Important National Films. This film poem (as the work is often referred to) depicts Slovak folk customs as an embedded record of folk traditions, games, ceremonies, dances and festivities from early spring to late autumn in Slovakia in the 1930s (ČSFD, 2022). In 2017, Radio and Television Slovakia brought attention to this film-poem, and it broadcast several series of the original and highly followed show with the identical title.

Young people in particular show a growing interest in social networks and in the Internet media. According to our survey, the Internet media and social networks are the most frequent source of information about the political, social and cultural life of society for university students (18 – 25 years of age). Young people pay much less attention to watching traditional media (such as print media, radio or television). They notice the topics of cultural heritage in various media genres (e.g., TV series, film, news, journalism, entertainment, music production, etc.) and formats including video games (*Tomb Raider*, *Field of Glory: Empires*, *Assassin's Creed*, etc.).

The concept of historical detective fiction (e.g., *The Da Vinci Code*) is particularly popular. This genre that combines elements of the detective story with a rich cultural context provides a unique opportunity not only to solve mysteries, but also to offer a deeper insight into the traditions, history and cultural issues of different societies at various stages of the historical development of society.

The problem remains that recipients often note the topic of cultural heritage, but especially in the case of news coverage, they do not recall a specific event/issue that was presented in the media product. In rare cases, they recall a story because it illustrated a “problem” – e.g., theft, fire, vandalism, etc. Therefore, it is necessary to consider recommendations not only towards a simple increase in the number of stories on this topic, but also the way of their processing that could be closer to respondents' expectations, but at the same time, to approach the topic in a way that prevents the loss of value.

In our research, we have identified the fact that respondents also notice the topic of cultural heritage in music production (e.g., musical groups/singers who exclusively or occasionally focus on historical themes). Some students associate the topic with video games (it corresponds to an increasing trend of interest in video gaming and also to an increasing number of history-oriented video games (in the context of a more detailed investigation, it would be necessary to examine whether the topic of cultural heritage is or is not confused by some respondents with the topic of history – including fictional (e.g., fantasy films)). Certain students associate the topic with its presentation through advertising spots and influencers, which could play an important role in the process of promoting cultural heritage due to their influence on the target groups. The topic of cultural heritage is present to a various degree and in various forms in media products of different genres – from news or film genres to advertising.

In this context, it is important to note that reflection on this topic depends on a recipient's possession of a number of skills, including the so-called “recognising advertising – this skill is related to distinguishing advertising from unpaid contents in other media products, such as television programmes, editorial content or web content” (Krajčovič et al., 2023, p. 124). At the same time, professional, planned and targeted handling of media products in line with audience expectations should be emphasized, as “overreliance on media logic and negligence of audience needs thwarts the effectiveness of media literacy policies, ultimately hindering their capacity to fulfil their intended objectives” (Rožukalne et al., 2023, p. 101).

5 Conclusion

In conclusion to the study on media production as a means for increasing cultural literacy and knowledge of cultural heritage, the following findings need to be highlighted in relation to the improvement of practice. The selected media production has a potential to contribute to the growth of the creative industries. At the same time, it has also potential to increase cultural heritage literacy by providing access to diverse cultural content and by presenting various perspectives as well. Media products can act as a bridge between the past and the present and certain products can disseminate the information that is related to cultural identity and cultural heritage. Technological advances and digital media create new opportunities for sharing cultural heritage. Virtual reality, interactive applications and multimedia projects allow users to experience history and cultural heritage in an authentic way.

The collaboration between cultural institutions, educational organisations and media companies can lead to innovative solutions for increasing Cultural Heritage Literacy. Study programmes that combine traditional educational methods with modern media can create synergies and can contribute to increasing cultural heritage literacy, leading to a better process of preparation of professionals for cultural practice and finally, they can contribute to the overall support for creative industries.

The study also highlights the need for a critical approach to media production in the contexts of commodified cultural heritage. The commodification of cultural heritage runs the risk of reducing its value to a commercial product, which may lose its original meaning and authenticity. A critical reflection on this process is essential in order to preserve integrity and respect for history and traditions. Cultural heritage literacy plays a key role in the recognition and appreciation of authentic cultural expressions. It enables people to better understand and appreciate the diversity of cultural heritage without a superficial approach. Promoting cultural heritage literacy contributes to the sustainability and proper preservation of cultural values for future generations.

It can be said that media production is an effective, accessible and if it is properly set up, valuable tool for promoting cultural heritage literacy and knowledge of cultural heritage. However, success in this area depends on the cooperation of various actors (e.g., educational institutions, the media, media producers, educational institutions, cultural and tourism marketers) as well as on the quality of content produced and the cultural (and media) literacy of the recipients. From our perspective, it is essential to focus on training professionals working in the media and cultural sector as their level of cultural (heritage) literacy significantly influences their approaches and strategies for presenting cultural (or noncultural, respectively) values in practice.

The present study presents a basic conceptual setting for further, more detailed research that should focus on identifying the most effective approaches and strategies of the use of media production in order to support the objectives of cultural (heritage) literacy through media production.

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