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Saudi Cinema in Flux: Preliminary Insights into Professional Practices in the Film Industry

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Abstract

Studying the film industry in the Saudi context is fundamental to understanding how the cultural industries have changed in the era of digital globalisation. This paper discusses the initial results of an exploratory qualitative study on the evolution of the Saudi film industry in line with Saudi Vision 2030. The study is based on the fieldwork from an ongoing doctoral project, consisting of four in-depth interviews with a director, producer, screenwriter, and journalist. In addition, key results include market power dominated by multinational SVOD platforms that impose standardised templates. The data indicate a gap between the desire for global visibility and the need to maintain ‘universal authenticity’. This initial thematic identification is presented in the paper. Their effect on the overall study approach is being examined as the rest of the 16 interviews are analysed. This paper delivers an initial understanding of the emerging Saudi film landscape, offering a guide to the understanding of the professionalisation of creative industries in emerging markets during rapid socio-cultural transitions.

Keywords: Saudi Cinema, Saudi Vision 2030, Professionalisation, SVOD Platforms, Universal Authenticity, Standardised Templates