

Self-Production through the Banal and the Fictive: Self and the Relationship with the Screen

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ABSTRACT

The self is performed through the banal of the everyday on social media. The banality of the everyday constitutes an integral part of our communication on digital platforms. Taking this as part of our performative lives in the digital economy, the paper looks at ways in which we co-produce the self through the banality of the everyday as well as a wider imagination and engagement with the world. These wider engagements are termed as ‘fictive’ not because they are unreal but through a conceptual notion of how the self is performed and imagined through wider world events in digital platforms and screen cultures where convergence of technologies allow us to be constantly consumed through the screen as we live out our daily lives. The narration of our lives through the banal and the fictive constantly co-produces the self through a situated domesticity of the everyday and equally through the eventful. In the process it reveals our ongoing relationship with the screen as an orifice for the production of self and the construction of a social reality beyond our immediate domesticity.

KEYWORDS

Banality, Digital Economy, Self-Production, Social Media, Social Reality

INTRODUCTION

The notions of identity and the performative are tightly entwined in our digital lives. Our daily interactions and engagements online contribute to identity creation. The banal and the perfunctory as they migrate to online spaces of communication, everyday life becomes performed online and these mediated rituals of communicating the mundane and ritualistic can be therapeutic while enabling the self to be consumed by others. Both the ways in which we perceive ourselves through our daily rituals and the ways in which others consume us are important to the notion of presence in digital culture. The communication of the daily rituals also inscribes a sense of space demarcating certain spaces with a sense of familiarity and resonance online. As such the self is constantly produced and renewed through the everyday. The diarisation of our lives and equally the exhibitionistic qualities along with the performative means the self is produced and consumed contemporarily in online spaces as we go about our daily

routines in our physical environments. Beyond the routine and perfunctory of the everyday, self-production online entails interaction with a wider world. These wider worlds of conversations, political events, popular imagination and fantasy equally conjoin with the everyday. The self is then co-produced through the banal and the fictive as we conceive them in our everyday imagination.

This paper explores the notion of self-production online through the categories of the banal representing the everyday and the notion of entwining the self with the wider world events which I term as the 'fictive'. The fictive of the wider world is an important part of inserting the self into a social reality beyond personal lived experiences and the routines of the everyday life, where the political and aesthetic self emerges and interacts with a world imagined, experienced and performed through digital platforms and experienced through the screen.

THE BANAL AND THE FICTIVE

The project of self-construction online has entailed the sharing of our intimate and private moments with a perceived sense of audience eager to consume the self, crafted through its everyday experiences. We have as such made the representation of the everyday a vital content for consumption in online spaces (Ibrahim 2015). The banal and routine is experienced both in the material world and equally experienced through its projection, narration and exhibition online. Engagement and consumption through the screen has experiential properties as the screen offers us a means to produce our disembodied selves which we can equally consume in real time while living out our daily lives. This duality is part of digital living where the corporeal experiences and lived experiences become conjoined. As bodies become domesticated through mobile technologies, life experiences become conjoined through the screen with the convergence of technologies and our ability to produce ourselves as content on the move. The production of the self through the everyday is a necessary part of our sense of sociality and engagement with a community. But importantly it asserts the sense of presence in the digital environment by enacting the familiar and the perfunctory through the routines of the everyday. The digital age and our obsession with the self is also seen as a 'narcissistic turn' where we can produce and curate ourselves online (See Ibrahim 2009).

The projection of the everyday onto the screen for sharing affords a resonance with fellow human beings. While much has been written about the domestication of technology in our domestic environments, we need to reconsider how we have inscribed domesticity onto the screen as a means to communicate our presence on the screen and to equally live through the screen. Screen living has domesticated the banal and perfunctory as a form of resonant code of communication that engenders familiarity and solidarity with fellow humans. It forms the basis of not just presence but an essential element of sharing and sociality online. The sociality of the everyday by showcasing the intimate happenings of domesticity and the banal produces highly personal moments online and is part of our semantics of bonding with others in our

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