

Animation and YouTube as Alternative and Counterhegemonic Digital Public Sphere in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Zimbabwe has over the years experienced a surge in internet usage for political discourse. This has disrupted the governments' monopolistic hold on public sphere discourses. The increase in the use of social media for political communication has necessitated the need for critical reflections on the use of new media. This paper investigates the emergence of an alternative digital public sphere (DPS) in Zimbabwe, which has subsequently proven to be counterhegemonic. It analyses how democratic forces conspire and contest official state propaganda and assert themselves as viable counter publics. The study examines animation texts, its form and its use of covert and overt aesthetics as tools that helped critique and navigate a chaotic terrain during the 'crisis period' in which the state censored critical or oppositional art and elite interests hijacked other forms of critical art and alternative media. The study argues that the DPS has promoted alternative discourses to those of the official public sphere. While the Subaltern counter publics have used alternative digital public spaces to question the official consensus, they have instead emerged as undemocratic platforms promoting and perpetuating the same hate and binary narratives that it accuses the state of proliferating.

Keywords

Animation, Digital, Cartoon, Propaganda, Democracy, Media