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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64907/xkmf.v04i03.jsghmm.10>

Multimedia Practices and Climate Justice: A Phenomenological Study of Documentary Makers

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Climate change represents a profound global challenge marked by deep inequalities, giving rise to the growing importance of climate justice as both an analytical and ethical framework. This study explores the role of documentary makers in shaping climate justice narratives through multimedia practices, employing a qualitative phenomenological approach based on secondary data sources, including filmmaker interviews, documentary texts, and scholarly analyses. The research investigates how documentary makers experience, interpret, and represent climate realities, emphasising the interplay between lived experience, narrative construction, and ethical responsibility. Findings reveal that filmmakers engage in immersive, embodied storytelling, using narrative framing and emotional resonance to translate complex environmental issues into accessible and impactful representations. The study also highlights critical concerns related to representation, voice, and power, as well as the ethical dilemmas inherent in advocacy-oriented filmmaking. Furthermore, the integration of multimedia technologies, such as interactive and immersive platforms, expands the potential for audience engagement and participatory communication. By situating documentary filmmaking at the intersection of art, activism, and communication, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of multimedia practices as transformative tools in advancing climate justice discourse.

Keywords: Climate Justice, Documentary Filmmaking, Multimedia Storytelling, Phenomenology, Environmental Communication, Visual Narratives, Media Ethics

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1. Introduction

Climate change has emerged as one of the most profound challenges of the contemporary era, transcending environmental boundaries to encompass social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions. Increasingly, scholars and policymakers have recognised that climate change is not experienced uniformly across populations; rather, it disproportionately affects vulnerable communities, particularly those in the Global South, indigenous populations, and economically marginalised groups (Roberts & Parks, 2007). This uneven distribution of climate impacts has given rise to the concept of climate justice, which foregrounds equity, human rights, and the ethical implications of environmental degradation (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014). Climate justice thus reframes climate change as not merely a scientific or ecological issue but as a matter of moral and political urgency.

Within this broader discourse, communication plays a pivotal role in shaping public understanding, attitudes, and responses to climate change. Traditional modes of environmental communication—often grounded in scientific reports, statistical analyses, and policy documents—have been criticised for their limited accessibility and emotional resonance (Nisbet, 2009). As a result, scholars have increasingly emphasised the importance of narrative, storytelling, and visual media in making climate change comprehensible and engaging to diverse audiences (O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009). Documentary filmmaking has emerged as a particularly

influential medium in this regard, offering a unique combination of visual, auditory, and narrative elements that can convey complex environmental realities in compelling and relatable ways.

Documentary films have historically functioned as tools of social critique and advocacy, addressing issues ranging from political injustice to human rights violations. In the context of climate change, documentary makers serve as mediators between scientific knowledge and lived experience, translating abstract data into human-centred narratives that highlight the tangible consequences of environmental degradation. Through techniques such as observational footage, interviews, and narrative storytelling, documentary filmmakers can create immersive experiences that foster empathy and understanding among viewers (Aufderheide, 2007). This capacity to evoke emotional engagement is particularly significant in climate communication, where psychological distance and perceived abstraction often hinder public engagement (O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009).

The rise of digital technologies has further transformed the landscape of documentary filmmaking, giving rise to new forms of multimedia practices. Interactive documentaries, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and transmedia storytelling have expanded the possibilities for audience engagement, enabling more immersive and participatory experiences (Nash, 2014). These innovations allow viewers to interact with content, explore multiple perspectives, and engage with

climate narratives in dynamic ways. For instance, VR-based climate documentaries can simulate the experience of environmental change, allowing audiences to “step into” affected environments and witness the impacts firsthand. Such approaches have the potential to bridge the gap between distant climate phenomena and personal experience, thereby enhancing emotional and cognitive engagement.

Despite the growing importance of documentary filmmaking in climate communication, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the experiences and perspectives of documentary makers themselves. Much of the existing research focuses on audience reception, media effects, or textual analysis of documentary content, often overlooking the subjective dimensions of media production. Understanding how documentary makers perceive their role, navigate ethical challenges, and engage with climate justice issues is essential for a comprehensive understanding of multimedia practices in this field.

This study addresses this gap by adopting a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of documentary makers engaged in climate justice storytelling. Phenomenology, as a philosophical and methodological framework, emphasises the importance of subjective experience and the meanings individuals attach to their actions (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). By focusing on the perspectives of documentary makers, this research seeks to uncover the motivations, challenges, and creative processes that shape their work.

The study employs a qualitative research design based on secondary data sources, including published interviews, documentary films, and scholarly analyses. Through thematic analysis, the research identifies key patterns and themes in documentary makers’ experiences, providing insights into the interplay between multimedia practices and climate justice.

The significance of this study lies in its interdisciplinary approach, integrating insights from environmental communication, media studies, and phenomenology. By examining documentary filmmaking as both an artistic and political practice, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how multimedia narratives shape climate discourse and influence public perception. Furthermore, the study highlights the ethical and practical challenges faced by documentary makers, offering valuable insights for practitioners, scholars, and policymakers.

In an era marked by escalating climate crises and growing demands for social justice, the role of documentary makers as storytellers, advocates, and mediators is more important than ever. By amplifying marginalised voices and bringing attention to environmental injustices, documentary filmmakers contribute to the broader movement for climate justice. This study seeks to illuminate their experiences and practices, providing a nuanced perspective on the power of multimedia storytelling in addressing one of the most pressing issues of our time.

2. Literature Review

The concept of climate justice has gained prominence as scholars and activists have increasingly recognised the inequitable distribution of climate change impacts. Rooted in environmental justice movements, climate justice emphasises the intersection of environmental degradation with social inequality, highlighting how marginalised communities bear the brunt of climate-related harms despite contributing least to global emissions (Roberts & Parks, 2007; Schlosberg & Collins, 2014).

Schlosberg and Collins (2014) argue that climate justice encompasses multiple dimensions, including distributive justice (fair allocation of resources and burdens), procedural justice (inclusive decision-making processes), and recognition justice (acknowledgement of diverse identities and experiences). These dimensions underscore the importance of addressing both material inequalities and cultural marginalisation in climate policy and discourse.

In the Global South, climate justice is particularly salient, as countries face disproportionate vulnerabilities due to historical exploitation, limited resources, and exposure to climate risks. Scholars have emphasised the need for climate communication strategies that reflect these realities and amplify the voices of affected communities (Nixon, 2011). The concept of “slow violence,” introduced by Nixon (2011), is especially relevant in this context, referring to the gradual and often invisible environmental harm that accumulates over time. Documentary filmmaking plays a

crucial role in making such forms of violence visible and comprehensible.

2.1 Environmental Communication and Narrative Framing

Environmental communication is a multidisciplinary field that examines how environmental issues are represented, communicated, and understood. Cox (2013) defines environmental communication as both a pragmatic and constitutive process, shaping not only public discourse but also how environmental problems are perceived and addressed.

One of the key challenges in environmental communication is overcoming the abstract and complex nature of climate change. Scientific data, while essential, often fails to resonate with broader audiences due to its technical complexity and lack of emotional appeal (Nisbet, 2009). As a result, scholars have advocated for narrative-based approaches that emphasise storytelling, framing, and visual imagery.

Framing theory, in particular, provides a useful lens for understanding how climate issues are presented. Frames influence how audiences interpret information, shaping their perceptions of causality, responsibility, and solutions (Nisbet, 2009). For example, framing climate change as a moral or justice issue can evoke stronger emotional responses and motivate action compared to purely scientific frames.

Visual communication is another critical component of environmental storytelling. O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole (2009) argue that images play a powerful role in shaping public engagement with climate change, as

they can evoke emotions and create a sense of immediacy. However, they also caution against the use of fear-based imagery, which may lead to disengagement rather than action. Instead, positive and relatable representations are more effective in fostering sustained engagement.

2.2 Documentary Filmmaking and Social Advocacy

Documentary filmmaking has long been associated with social advocacy, serving as a platform for raising awareness and promoting social change. Aufderheide (2007) describes documentaries as “films of social representation,” emphasising their role in depicting real-world issues and influencing public discourse.

Environmental documentaries, in particular, have gained prominence in recent decades, addressing topics such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental justice. Films such as *An Inconvenient Truth* have demonstrated the potential of documentaries to shape public opinion and influence policy debates (Davis Guggenheim, 2006). Research has shown that such films can increase awareness, alter attitudes, and even inspire behavioural change among viewers (Howell, 2011).

However, the advocacy role of documentary filmmakers raises important ethical considerations. Nichols (2017) identifies various modes of documentary representation, each with its own implications for objectivity, subjectivity, and audience engagement. Filmmakers must navigate the tension between storytelling and

factual accuracy, ensuring that their narratives are both compelling and credible.

Moreover, issues of representation and voice are central to documentary practice. Filmmakers often work with marginalised communities, raising questions about who has the authority to tell certain stories and how those stories are framed. Participatory approaches, which involve collaboration with subjects, have been proposed as a way to address these concerns (Nash, 2014).

2.3 Multimedia Practices and Technological Innovation

The advent of digital technologies has significantly expanded the scope of documentary filmmaking, giving rise to new forms of multimedia practices. Interactive documentaries, also known as i-docs, allow users to engage with content in non-linear ways, exploring different perspectives and narratives (Nash, 2014).

Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) have further enhanced the immersive potential of documentary storytelling. These technologies enable users to experience environments and events in ways that traditional media cannot replicate. For example, VR documentaries can simulate the effects of sea-level rise or deforestation, providing a visceral understanding of climate change impacts.

Transmedia storytelling, which involves the use of multiple platforms to convey a narrative, has also gained traction in documentary practice. By integrating film, social media, websites, and other digital tools, filmmakers can reach diverse

audiences and create more comprehensive storytelling experiences (Jenkins, 2006).

While these innovations offer exciting possibilities, they also present challenges. The production of multimedia content requires significant resources, technical expertise, and access to technology, which may not be available to all filmmakers. Additionally, questions of accessibility and inclusivity arise, as not all audiences have equal access to digital platforms.

2.4 Phenomenology and Media Production

Phenomenology provides a valuable framework for understanding the subjective experiences of media producers. Originating in the works of Husserl and later developed by Merleau-Ponty (1962), phenomenology emphasises the importance of perception, embodiment, and lived experience.

In the context of media studies, phenomenology has been used to explore how filmmakers and audiences experience media. Sobchack (1992) argues that film is not merely a visual medium but an embodied experience, involving sensory and emotional engagement. This perspective is particularly relevant for documentary filmmaking, where the goal is often to create a sense of presence and immediacy.

Applying a phenomenological lens to documentary makers allows researchers to examine how filmmakers perceive their work, interact with their subjects, and construct narratives. It also highlights the role of intuition, creativity, and emotional engagement in the filmmaking process.

Despite its relevance, phenomenology remains underutilised in studies of environmental communication and documentary filmmaking. This study seeks to address this gap by integrating phenomenological insights into the analysis of multimedia practices and climate justice.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates phenomenology, environmental communication theory, and critical media theory to examine the multimedia practices of documentary makers engaged in climate justice. The integration of these frameworks enables a comprehensive understanding of both the subjective experiences of filmmakers and the broader socio-political contexts in which their work is situated.

3.1 Phenomenology: Lived Experience and Embodied Perception

Phenomenology, rooted in the philosophical works of Husserl and further developed by Merleau-Ponty (1962), provides a foundational lens for understanding the lived experiences of documentary makers. Central to phenomenology is the concept of intentionality, which posits that consciousness is always directed toward something-objects, events, or experiences. In the context of documentary filmmaking, intentionality manifests in the ways filmmakers engage with climate realities and direct their attention toward particular narratives, subjects, and visual representations.

Merleau-Ponty's (1962) notion of embodied perception is particularly relevant to this study. He argues that perception is not merely a cognitive process but is grounded in bodily experience and sensory engagement. Documentary filmmakers, in capturing climate-affected environments and communities, rely heavily on sensory perception, visual imagery, soundscapes, and spatial awareness to construct narratives. This embodied engagement shapes how filmmakers interpret and represent climate phenomena, transforming abstract environmental data into experiential knowledge.

Furthermore, phenomenology emphasises the importance of subjectivity and meaning-making. Filmmakers do not passively record reality; rather, they actively interpret and construct it through their creative choices. This perspective aligns with the understanding of documentary filmmaking as a form of "situated knowledge," where representations are influenced by the filmmaker's positionality, experiences, and values (Haraway, 1988). By applying a phenomenological lens, this study seeks to uncover how documentary makers experience their work and how these experiences inform their storytelling practices.

3.2 Environmental Communication Theory

Environmental communication theory provides a critical framework for analysing how climate change is communicated and understood. Cox (2013) conceptualises environmental communication as both a pragmatic tool for influencing behaviour and

a constitutive process that shapes societal perceptions of environmental issues. This dual role is particularly significant in the context of documentary filmmaking, where narratives not only inform but also construct meanings around climate justice.

A key concept within environmental communication is framing, which refers to the ways in which issues are presented and interpreted. Frames influence how audiences perceive the causes, consequences, and solutions of climate change (Nisbet, 2009). Documentary filmmakers play a crucial role in framing climate narratives, selecting specific perspectives, voices, and visual elements to convey particular messages.

In the context of climate justice, framing often involves highlighting issues of inequality, vulnerability, and responsibility. For example, filmmakers may focus on the experiences of marginalised communities to emphasise the disproportionate impacts of climate change. Such framing can challenge dominant narratives that prioritise economic growth or technological solutions, instead foregrounding ethical and social dimensions (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014).

Environmental communication theory also underscores the importance of emotional engagement. Research suggests that emotional responses, such as empathy, fear, and hope, play a significant role in shaping public attitudes and behaviours (O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009). Documentary filmmakers often leverage emotional storytelling to create connections between audiences and climate issues, using visual and narrative techniques to evoke empathy and motivate action.

3.3 Critical Media Theory: Power, Representation, and Ideology

Critical media theory provides a lens for examining the power dynamics and ideological structures embedded in media production. It emphasises that the media is not neutral but is shaped by social, political, and economic forces that influence representation and discourse (Couldry & Hepp, 2017).

In the context of climate justice documentaries, issues of representation and voice are central. Filmmakers often work with marginalised communities, raising questions about who has the authority to tell certain stories and how those stories are framed. Critical media theory highlights the importance of reflexivity, encouraging filmmakers to be aware of their own positionality and the power relations involved in the filmmaking process.

The concept of “voice” is particularly relevant as it relates to whose perspectives are included or excluded in media narratives. Amplifying marginalised voices is a key objective of climate justice, but it also requires careful consideration of authenticity and agency. Participatory approaches, where subjects are actively involved in the storytelling process, have been proposed as a way to address these concerns (Nash, 2014).

Additionally, critical media theory draws attention to the role of media institutions and funding structures in shaping documentary production. Filmmakers often operate within constraints imposed by funding bodies, distribution platforms, and audience expectations, which can influence the content

and framing of their work. Understanding these structural factors is essential for analysing the broader context of multimedia practices in climate justice.

3.4 Integrative Framework

By combining phenomenology, environmental communication theory, and critical media theory, this study offers a holistic framework for analysing documentary filmmaking practices. Phenomenology provides insights into the subjective experiences of filmmakers, environmental communication theory examines how climate narratives are constructed and conveyed, and critical media theory addresses issues of power, representation, and ideology.

This integrative approach enables a nuanced understanding of documentary filmmaking as both an experiential and political practice. It recognises that multimedia storytelling is not only a creative endeavour but also a site of meaning-making, negotiation, and contestation. Through this framework, the study explores how documentary makers navigate the complexities of climate justice and contribute to broader environmental discourse.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of documentary makers engaged in climate justice storytelling. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for investigating complex social phenomena, as it allows for in-depth exploration of meanings,

perspectives, and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Phenomenology, as a methodological approach, seeks to understand how individuals experience and interpret their world. It focuses on capturing the essence of lived experiences, emphasising subjective meaning and perception (Moustakas, 1994). In the context of this study, phenomenology is used to examine how documentary makers perceive their roles, engage with climate issues, and navigate the challenges of multimedia storytelling.

Given the constraints of time and resources, this study employs a secondary data-based phenomenological approach. While traditional phenomenological studies often rely on primary data collected through interviews, the use of secondary data allows for the analysis of a broader range of perspectives and contexts.

4.1 Data Sources and Collection

The study utilises multiple forms of secondary data to capture the experiences of documentary makers. These include:

- **Published interviews** with documentary filmmakers in academic journals, books, and media outlets
- **Documentary films** and their accompanying materials, such as the director's notes and production blogs
- **Scholarly articles and critical reviews** analysing climate documentaries
- **Online archives and media reports** documenting filmmakers' experiences and perspectives

These sources provide rich qualitative data that reflect the voices, thoughts, and practices of documentary makers. The selection of data sources was guided by relevance to climate justice and documentary filmmaking, as well as the availability of detailed narratives and reflections.

4.2 Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select relevant data sources. Purposive sampling involves selecting cases that are particularly informative and relevant to the research questions (Patton, 2002). In this study, the sampling criteria included:

- Documentary filmmakers who have produced works related to climate change or environmental justice
- Sources that provide insights into filmmakers' experiences, motivations, and challenges
- Materials that reflect diverse geographical and cultural contexts

This approach ensures that the data captures a wide range of perspectives, enhancing the depth and richness of the analysis.

4.3 Data Analysis

The data were analysed using thematic analysis, a widely used method in qualitative research for identifying and interpreting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis followed a systematic process:

- **Familiarisation:** The researcher reviewed all data sources to gain an overall understanding of the content.
- **Initial Coding:** Key statements and phrases related to filmmakers'

experiences and practices were identified and coded.

- **Theme Development:** Codes were grouped into broader themes, such as experiential engagement, narrative framing, ethical dilemmas, and multimedia innovation.
- **Interpretation:** Themes were analysed in relation to the theoretical framework, drawing connections between phenomenology, environmental communication, and critical media theory.

This iterative process allowed for the identification of both explicit and implicit meanings within the data, providing a comprehensive understanding of documentary makers' experiences.

4.4 Trustworthiness and Rigour

Ensuring the credibility and reliability of qualitative research is essential. This study adopts several strategies to enhance trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985):

- **Credibility:** Triangulation of data sources (interviews, films, and scholarly analyses) was used to validate findings.
- **Transferability:** Detailed descriptions of the research context and data sources enable readers to assess the applicability of findings to other contexts.
- **Dependability:** A systematic and transparent analytical process was followed, ensuring consistency in data interpretation.
- **Confirmability:** The researcher maintained reflexivity,

acknowledging potential biases and ensuring that interpretations were grounded in the data.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

As the study relies on publicly available secondary data, issues of informed consent and confidentiality are minimal. However, ethical considerations remain important in terms of representation and interpretation. The study aims to accurately reflect the perspectives of documentary makers without misrepresentation or selective bias (Mannan & Farhana, 2026).

Additionally, the research acknowledges the broader ethical implications of studying climate justice, particularly the need to respect and amplify the voices of marginalised communities. Care has been taken to ensure that the analysis aligns with the principles of equity and inclusivity.

4.6 Limitations of the Study

While the use of secondary data provides valuable insights, it also presents certain limitations. The absence of primary data means that the researcher cannot directly interact with participants or probe deeper into their experiences. Furthermore, secondary sources may reflect selective or curated narratives, which may not fully capture the complexity of filmmakers' experiences.

Despite these limitations, the study provides a robust analysis by drawing on diverse and credible data sources. Future research could complement this approach with primary data collection, such as interviews or ethnographic studies, to gain deeper insights.

5. Findings and Analysis

This section presents the thematic findings derived from the phenomenological analysis of secondary data, including documentary texts, filmmaker interviews, and scholarly interpretations. The analysis reveals how documentary makers engaged in climate justice construct meaning through multimedia practices, negotiate ethical complexities, and position themselves as mediators of environmental realities. The findings are organised into five major themes: experiential immersion, narrative framing, representation and voice, ethical tensions, and multimedia innovation.

5.1 Experiential Immersion and Embodied Engagement

A central finding of this study is that documentary makers conceptualise their work as deeply experiential and embodied. Rather than approaching climate change as a distant or abstract phenomenon, filmmakers often immerse themselves in affected environments, engaging directly with communities experiencing environmental degradation. This immersion reflects Merleau-Ponty's (1962) notion of embodied perception, where knowledge is constructed through sensory engagement with the world.

Filmmakers frequently describe their encounters with climate-affected landscapes, such as melting glaciers, flooded villages, or drought-stricken regions, as transformative experiences that shape their understanding of climate justice. These encounters are not merely observational but involve emotional and sensory engagement, including witnessing loss, resilience, and adaptation.

Such experiences contribute to what phenomenologists describe as “lived meaning,” where knowledge emerges from direct interaction with phenomena (Moustakas, 1994).

The process of translating these experiences into visual narratives involves selective framing and interpretation. Filmmakers must decide which aspects of their experience to highlight, how to represent them visually, and how to structure them within a coherent narrative. This aligns with the concept of intentionality in phenomenology, where consciousness is directed toward specific objects or meanings (Husserl, 1970). In this context, filmmakers' intentionality shapes the representation of climate realities, influencing how audiences perceive and understand environmental issues.

Moreover, experiential immersion often leads to a sense of moral responsibility among filmmakers. Many express a commitment to raising awareness and advocating for affected communities, suggesting that their work is driven not only by artistic motivations but also by ethical considerations. This finding reinforces the idea that documentary filmmaking in the context of climate justice is both a creative and a moral endeavour.

5.2 Narrative Framing and Emotional Resonance

Another key finding is the centrality of narrative framing in documentary storytelling. Filmmakers employ narrative techniques to transform complex climate data into compelling stories that resonate with audiences. This process involves the

construction of narrative arcs, character development, and the use of visual and auditory elements to evoke emotional responses.

Framing theory provides a useful lens for understanding this process. As Nisbet (2009) argues, frames shape how audiences interpret information by highlighting certain aspects while downplaying others. In climate documentaries, filmmakers often frame issues in terms of human impact, focusing on individual and community experiences rather than abstract scientific concepts. This human-centred framing makes climate change more relatable and accessible.

Emotional engagement is a critical component of this framing strategy. Filmmakers use techniques such as close-up shots, personal testimonies, and evocative imagery to create a sense of intimacy and empathy. O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole (2009) emphasise that emotional responses are essential for effective climate communication, as they can motivate audiences to engage with the issue.

However, the use of emotion is not without challenges. Filmmakers must balance the need to evoke empathy with the risk of overwhelming or alienating audiences. Fear-based narratives, for example, may lead to disengagement if they do not offer a sense of hope or agency (O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009). As a result, many filmmakers adopt a balanced approach, combining narratives of vulnerability with stories of resilience and adaptation.

The findings also indicate that narrative framing is influenced by the intended

audience and distribution platform. Filmmakers tailor their narratives to different audiences, considering factors such as cultural context, political orientation, and media consumption habits. This adaptability highlights the strategic nature of documentary storytelling in climate communication.

5.3 Representation, Voice, and Participatory Storytelling

The issue of representation emerges as a central concern in the experiences of documentary makers. Climate justice emphasises the importance of amplifying marginalised voices, and filmmakers often seek to centre the perspectives of communities most affected by climate change. This involves not only documenting their experiences but also creating spaces for them to articulate their own narratives.

Participatory storytelling approaches have gained prominence as a means of addressing issues of representation and power. In these approaches, community members are actively involved in the filmmaking process, contributing to decisions about content, framing, and narrative structure (Nash, 2014). This collaborative model aligns with the principles of procedural and recognition justice, which emphasise inclusivity and respect for diverse perspectives (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014).

However, the findings reveal that achieving authentic representation is a complex and ongoing challenge. Filmmakers must navigate cultural differences, language barriers, and power imbalances that may influence the storytelling process. Even with

participatory approaches, questions remain about whose voices are prioritised and how they are interpreted.

Critical media theory highlights the importance of reflexivity in addressing these challenges. Filmmakers must be aware of their own positionality and how their perspectives shape the narrative (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). This involves acknowledging biases, engaging in ethical reflection, and striving for transparency in the filmmaking process.

Additionally, the representation of climate-affected communities often intersects with broader issues of stereotyping and victimisation. Filmmakers must avoid portraying communities solely as passive victims, instead highlighting their agency, resilience, and adaptive strategies. This nuanced representation is essential for fostering a more balanced and empowering narrative of climate justice.

5.4 Ethical Tensions and Moral Dilemmas

Ethical considerations are a recurring theme in the experiences of documentary makers. Filmmakers frequently encounter dilemmas related to representation, consent, and the potential impact of their work on subjects and audiences.

One major ethical tension involves the balance between storytelling and accuracy. While compelling narratives are essential for audience engagement, there is a risk of oversimplification or distortion of complex issues. Nichols (2017) emphasises that documentary filmmakers must navigate the tension between creative expression and

factual integrity, ensuring that their work remains credible and responsible.

Another ethical concern is the potential for exploitation or harm to subjects. Filming vulnerable communities raises questions about consent, privacy, and the long-term consequences of exposure. Filmmakers must consider how their work may affect the lives of participants, both positively and negatively.

The findings also highlight the influence of external factors, such as funding and distribution, on ethical decision-making. Funding bodies and media platforms may impose constraints or expectations that shape the content and framing of documentaries. This can create conflicts between the filmmaker's ethical commitments and practical considerations.

Despite these challenges, many filmmakers express a strong commitment to ethical practice, emphasising the importance of respect, transparency, and accountability. This reflects the broader ethical dimension of climate justice, which calls for fairness and responsibility in addressing environmental issues.

5.5 Multimedia Innovation and Transformative Engagement

The integration of multimedia technologies is another significant finding. Documentary makers increasingly utilise digital tools such as interactive platforms, virtual reality (VR), and social media to enhance storytelling and audience engagement.

These technologies enable more immersive and participatory experiences, allowing

audiences to engage with climate narratives in new ways. For example, VR can create a sense of presence, enabling viewers to experience environmental changes firsthand. This aligns with Sobchack's (1992) concept of embodied spectatorship, where viewers engage with media through sensory and emotional responses.

Interactive documentaries also allow for non-linear storytelling, giving audiences the ability to explore different perspectives and narratives. This participatory approach can foster a deeper understanding of complex issues, as users actively engage with the content rather than passively consuming it.

However, the adoption of multimedia practices also presents challenges. The production of such content requires technical expertise, financial resources, and access to technology, which may not be available to all filmmakers. Additionally, issues of accessibility and digital divide must be considered, as not all audiences have equal access to advanced technologies.

Despite these challenges, multimedia innovation represents a significant opportunity for advancing climate justice communication. By creating more engaging and interactive experiences, documentary makers can reach wider audiences and foster greater awareness and action.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the role of documentary makers in shaping climate justice discourse through multimedia practices. By integrating phenomenology, environmental

communication theory, and critical media theory, this discussion explores the broader implications of the findings and situates them within existing scholarship.

6.1 Documentary Makers as Mediators of Climate Knowledge

One of the key insights from this study is the role of documentary makers as mediators between scientific knowledge and public understanding. Climate change is often characterised by complexity, uncertainty, and abstraction, which can make it difficult for non-expert audiences to engage with the issue (Cox, 2013). Documentary filmmakers bridge this gap by translating scientific data into accessible and emotionally resonant narratives.

This mediating role aligns with the concept of environmental communication as a constitutive process, where media not only convey information but also shape the way issues are understood (Cox, 2013). By framing climate change in terms of human experiences and social justice, documentary makers contribute to the construction of climate discourse.

Furthermore, the phenomenological perspective highlights the importance of lived experience in this mediation process. Filmmakers draw on their own experiences and interactions with climate-affected communities to create narratives that reflect the realities of environmental change. This experiential knowledge complements scientific data, providing a more holistic understanding of climate issues.

6.2 The Centrality of Emotion in Climate Engagement

The findings underscore the critical role of emotion in climate communication. Emotional engagement is not merely a byproduct of storytelling but a deliberate strategy employed by filmmakers to connect with audiences and motivate action. This supports existing research that emphasises the importance of affective responses in shaping environmental attitudes and behaviours (O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009).

However, the use of emotion must be carefully balanced to avoid negative outcomes such as fear-induced disengagement. The findings suggest that effective climate documentaries combine emotional appeal with narratives of hope and agency, enabling audiences to feel both concerned and empowered.

This balance reflects a broader shift in environmental communication toward more constructive and solution-oriented narratives. By highlighting examples of resilience and adaptation, documentary makers can inspire positive action and foster a sense of collective responsibility.

6.3 Power, Representation, and Ethical Responsibility

The study highlights the complex dynamics of power and representation in documentary filmmaking. Climate justice emphasises the need to amplify marginalised voices, but achieving this goal requires careful consideration of ethical and practical challenges.

Critical media theory provides a useful framework for analysing these dynamics, emphasising the role of media in shaping power relations and ideological structures (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). Documentary makers must navigate these structures, balancing their own perspectives with the voices of their subjects.

The findings suggest that participatory approaches offer a promising way to address issues of representation, as they involve communities in the storytelling process. However, these approaches are not without limitations, as power imbalances may persist even in collaborative settings.

Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of reflexivity and ethical awareness in documentary practice. Filmmakers must continually reflect on their role, responsibilities, and impact, striving to create narratives that are both authentic and respectful.

6.4 Multimedia Practices and the Transformation of Storytelling

The integration of multimedia technologies represents a significant change in documentary filmmaking. Interactive and immersive media offer new possibilities for engaging audiences and conveying complex information.

From a phenomenological perspective, these technologies enhance the experiential dimension of storytelling, allowing audiences to engage with climate narratives in more embodied ways. VR, for example, can create a sense of presence that traditional media cannot replicate, making climate impacts more tangible and immediate.

However, the adoption of multimedia practices also raises important questions about accessibility and inclusivity. The digital divide remains a significant barrier, limiting access to advanced technologies for certain populations. Ensuring that multimedia innovations are inclusive and equitable is a key challenge for the future of climate communication.

6.5 Implications for Climate Justice Advocacy

The findings of this study have important implications for climate justice advocacy. Documentary filmmaking can serve as a powerful tool for raising awareness, influencing public opinion, and promoting social change.

By highlighting the experiences of marginalised communities, documentaries can challenge dominant narratives and bring attention to issues of inequality and injustice. This aligns with the broader goals of climate justice, which seek to address both environmental and social dimensions of climate change (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014).

Moreover, the integration of multimedia practices can enhance the reach and impact of climate advocacy efforts. By engaging diverse audiences and fostering emotional connections, documentary makers can contribute to a more informed and engaged public.

7. Conclusion

This study has examined the multimedia practices of documentary makers engaged in climate justice through a phenomenological

and interdisciplinary lens. By integrating phenomenology, environmental communication theory, and critical media theory, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how documentary filmmakers experience, construct, and communicate climate realities.

The findings demonstrate that documentary filmmaking is not merely a technical or artistic endeavour but a deeply experiential and ethical practice. Filmmakers engage in immersive interactions with climate-affected environments and communities, shaping their narratives through embodied perception and lived experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). This experiential engagement allows them to translate abstract climate data into human-centred stories that resonate with audiences on emotional and cognitive levels.

Narrative framing and emotional engagement emerge as central strategies in climate communication. By emphasising personal stories and lived experiences, documentary makers make climate change more tangible and relatable, thereby enhancing public understanding and engagement (Nisbet, 2009; O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009). At the same time, the study highlights the importance of balancing emotional appeal with ethical responsibility, ensuring that narratives remain accurate, respectful, and empowering.

Issues of representation and power are also central to the practice of documentary filmmaking. In line with climate justice principles, filmmakers strive to amplify marginalised voices and promote inclusive storytelling (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014). However, achieving authentic representation

requires ongoing reflexivity and critical awareness of the power dynamics inherent in media production (Couldry & Hepp, 2017).

The integration of multimedia technologies further expands the possibilities of documentary storytelling, enabling more immersive and participatory forms of engagement. While these innovations offer significant opportunities for enhancing climate communication, they also raise important questions about accessibility and inclusivity.

Overall, this study underscores the vital role of documentary makers as mediators of climate knowledge and advocates for social and environmental justice. Their work contributes to shaping public discourse, raising awareness, and fostering a more engaged and informed society. Future research should build on these findings by incorporating primary data and exploring audience reception, thereby deepening our understanding of the transformative potential of multimedia practices in advancing climate justice.

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