

Analysis on the Influence of Cultural Platformization on the Korean Local Screen Industry Empowered by Streaming Media

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Abstract. Netflix Reorganises the Korean local-content production industry by using a platform model. It is believed that the industrial logic of Korean screen production has been altered by platformisation, and consequently, the arrangement of commissioning, distribution, visibility, etc. has changed. Netflix expands globally and produces original content, but at the same time, it has consolidated data, recommendations and bargaining power. Based on the Korean case, the paper indicates that streaming media has the following dual effects: on the one hand, it helps local screen industries to expand overseas; on the other hand, it increases their dependence on platform infrastructure. Based on verified academic resources and official industry data, this paper analyzes changes in culture production and labour organization due to platformisation.

Keywords: Netflix; Platformization; Korean screen industry; Streaming media; Cultural production; Datafication.

1. Introduction

Netflix is now a leading institution of global screen culture due to its combined features of subscription distribution, algorithmic recommendation, datafication and original content production. It has also had an impact on the local screen industry in South Korea, and now it operates under the conditions of both domestic creative competition and global platform logic. The Korean case is typical of this situation; it shows that the power of a platform does not reduce the development of the whole country's film and television industry to this extent. Korea had set up production bases, developed genres and gathered export experience before Netflix significantly expanded the production of local content. That is to say, the platform did not create Korean screen culture from scratch but joined an already successful industrial ecology and changed the criteria for success.

There are the following three problems. First, how is Netflix supporting the development of the Korean local-picture industry? Second, what structural changes are introduced in production and distribution by platformisation? Third, what will be the long-term impact of too great a dependence on the global platform? Based on the above reasons, this paper will study the phenomenon of platform economy in the Korean film and television industry as an example. Netflix will be selected as the representative case study because it offers an explicit scenario of expanding local visibility under a single platform with centralised management. The paper does not believe that the Korean case is either a typical case of success or failure. It is no longer an external dependence case. Korean producers can reach a wider audience around the world, but platforms' systems determine which content is considered popular.

The Korean case also involves other places. It can be seen that platformisation is a change in technology and also a change in governance. Now that the platform is the primary connection between creators and viewers, it will be affected by changes in the stories that are supported, the styles that are visible, and the kind of success that is celebrated. Therefore, the Korean screen industry is an excellent case study for the phenomenon of cultural platformisation. The same logic can be seen in other screen markets, but the Korean case is particularly typical because this industry is already known around the world and, as such, more exposed to changes in power dynamics at home. A typical case of platform dependence can be found even in the case of a flourishing national industry.

Therefore, there is a contradiction that is responsible for the Korean screen industry's current difficulty.

The paper is also concerned with the problem of industry. As streaming has become the main way for people to consume culture, many local screen industries around the world face a similar problem: they require global exposure for survival but also need to maintain local characteristics. Therefore, the Korean case can be used to study how scale and dependence are both increasing within a platform environment.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Platformization and Cultural Power

Platformisation refers to the trend of digital platforms serving as the main support for cultural access, distribution and dissemination and mediation [2, 4, 5]. At the same time, the platform will also serve as an expression channel. It is now the foundation for providing visual information and data that support decision-making. Platformisation research shows that cultural production is now bound by platform systems, so producers need to adapt to platform standards to be seen and supported by them [1, 4, 9].

Therefore, for the screen industry, success can no longer be judged solely by artistic merit, domestic ratings and box-office revenue. It is gradually being shaped by algorithmic mediation, audience analytics and platform-governed circulation. Although a title may be technically available everywhere, if it is not presented in the user interface of the platform, it will remain culturally obscure. Therefore, cultural power has moved to those who control access to information, data and recommendations [1, 2].

2.2. Streaming Media as Industrial Infrastructure

Streaming media should be viewed as industrial infrastructure rather than merely a way to deliver content [3, 6]. Netflix is a typical case because it is a distributor, commissioner and market gatekeeper simultaneously. Content finance, release strategies and user data are all available in the system. Tryon has pointed out that, in turn, on-demand culture has rearranged the whole system of media distribution [6].

Research shows that most people making online live-streaming content are relatively independent workers. Han has studied how Netflix Korea has turned creativity into a corporate asset and created a distinct streaming space by using the Korean production environment [5]. That is to say, creativity has not vanished; instead, it has shifted its direction under the platform model, and value is now related to visibility, intellectual property and labour discipline.

2.3. Korean Local Screen Industry

The Korean screen industry is a relatively ideal case for empirical research because it is already well-known abroad and export-oriented. South Korean content has been one of the main reasons for the increase in Netflix's non-US audience, and Netflix has officially released the amount of its investment in Korean content [11, 12]. Therefore, the industry has been successful around the world and is structurally exposed. It is abroad now, but the motivating forces behind this change do not align with those in China; therefore, it remains an external force.

Theoretical research on Netflix and Korean media also suggests that platformisation is not a neutral technological change. Altering labour conditions and content norms for the author [5, 10]. This way, there will be more funds for Korean creators in practice and a more even distribution of these funds; however, it will also result in a tighter schedule, higher pressure to achieve good performance, and greater pressure to produce content that meets the demands of the platform and global audiences.

Table 1. Main platformization mechanisms in the Korean screen industry

Mechanism	Netflix operation	Industrial effect
Data governance	Tracks viewing and completion behaviour	Centralizes audience intelligence and improves targeting
Commissioning power	Funds originals and co-productions	Expands budgets but shifts bargaining power
Algorithmic visibility	Ranks and recommends titles	Shapes discoverability and taste formation

3. Netflix and the Korean Screen Industry

3.1. Production Reorganization

Netflix has changed Korean production by promoting globally appealing genres, high-concept narratives and data-driven investment [5, 11]. The platform's Korean slates have released large-scale dramas, thrillers and genre hybrids that can go global while still being recognizably Korean [12]. Although the number of projects eligible for funding has been expanded, so too have the demands from platforms in recent years. Production organisation can be seen in the development of scripts, casting and episode organisation. Teams are focusing on completion rates, binge-worthiness and cross-market appeal more and more.

The creative process will be less creative, but it will be more strategic. Producers and writers need to make the local elements more accessible to a worldwide streaming audience in a shorter amount of time. That translation work is in fact a type of industrialisation. It can alter the finished goods and change the production-before-decision circumstances. Thus, platformisation moves the location of creation away from an artistic space and into a mixed-use zone for culture and business strategy.

3.2. Distribution and Visibility

Netflix has been able to present Korean works around the world since the 21st century [3, 7]. This is one of the most typical ways in which the platform helps the Korean local screen industry. At the same time, a title can be released in several countries to form a large-scale international fan club and use Netflix's worldwide brand power [12]. At the same time, Netflix's recommendation logic, thumbnails and ranking systems still control the visibility of the content; thus, access does not guarantee attention [2, 4].

As a result, the distribution is more widely spread. Distribution in older broadcast systems referred to placing a work in a market. Distribution in the streaming environment also refers to making the work algorithmically accessible. Therefore, Korean screen products are now considered both cultural works and data objects that are also influenced by platform design. Therefore, the idea of discoverability has recently begun to draw some attention.

3.3. Labour and Creative Autonomy

Netflix Korea has also adjusted its labour relations and creative autonomy [5, 9, 10]. Although the platform has good financing and overseas distribution, it is also subject to performance requirements, a high-speed delivery model, and stronger emphasis on metrics and marketability. Creators can still use their art freely, but they need to fit the efficiency and genre-readability requirements of the platform system for recognition.

Labour is also a case; platformisation reduces risks and centralises control at the top. Production teams feel the pressure to create good content; at the same time, the platform gathers rich data and covers a wide range of people. The Asymmetry Modifies the Concept of Creative Autonomy. The question is no longer whether creators are free in an abstract sense; rather, it is how much practical control they can exert over the budget, time, author rights and final dissemination of the work.

Therefore, the Korean screen industry is not solely the result of platform support. It is also a location for testing, modification and standardisation of the platform logic. Therefore, labour analysis needs to be conducted in serious studies of Netflix Korea to determine whether the expanded visibility will be sustainable industrial development or merely a short-lived trend under external influence.

4. Cultural and Economic Effects

Netflix's empowerment of the Korean screen industry should be regarded as both a chance and a constraint. On the one hand, platform investment supports original Korean content and promotes the spread of Korean screen production around the world [8, 11, 12]. At the same time, the industry will be more sensitive to changes in platform policies and user behaviour [8-9]. The platform will help promote the export of these products, but it may also increase the degree to which local institutions are controlled from outside the country.

The Culture also has many aspects. Korean screen content has gained global attention, and platform normalisation will promote the development of universalised narratives over time [4, 6]. Thus, there is a conflict between the world's legibility and cultural particularity. If the industry focuses only on platform success, it may lose some of the local colour that made Korean content special in the first place. The result is not a cultural loss in a straightforward manner, but rather an adjusted list of what kind of local identity is suitable for export.

It will also be economically viable. Netflix will increase its investment and use data and recommendations to obtain strategic advantages for the users at the same time. Therefore, although the local industry will have increased revenue, it will still lack equal control over audience knowledge and long-term market structure. In other words, platformisation can expand the size of the pie and reduce the proportion of the local industry in the governance of that pie.

There is also the brand effect. When a global streaming platform is used as the main channel for reaching an international audience, the brand of the platform may overshadow the industrial identity of local producers, studios and broadcasters. Korean titles may spread more widely, but the symbolic visibility of the local production ecosystem will likely be less prominent than that of the distributing platform. In other words, cultural flourishing and economic independence are not the same.

The Third Type is Market Signals. If Netflix thinks a Korean drama is good, then more people around the world will be interested in watching it. That secondary signal effect will be very useful for the local industry. At the same time, there will be little improvement in raising the quality threshold for platform endorsements. If the above model should be implemented as the norm, then the ultimate goal of promoting the creation of many works across the industry will shift to securing the agreement of the platform.

5. Discussion

The Korean case shows that streaming media have not damaged the local screen industry, but have created a platform-dependent ecosystem for it. Netflix is a gatekeeper, investor and visibility engine at the same time [1, 3, 5, 7-10]. This gives Korean producers a large scale but also ties their success to platform metrics and platform-defined conditions for visibility. Therefore, the industrial deal is not suitable; local creation will only be rewarded if it meets the requirements of the global platform.

The unfair bargain does not mean that Korean screen industries are merely passive. On the other hand, Korean producers have shown that they can use Netflix to enhance the quality of their content and expand overseas marketing and reach a wider audience [11, 12]. Agency in platform-based markets is a relationship-based concept. Korean producers can still make some choices, but they are within a system that is already strong and difficult to change, such as platform rules.

The problem from a policy perspective is not whether to ban the platforms, but rather how to help local industries maintain bargaining power, access to data and cultural uniqueness, and other

advantages in the platform economy [2, 4, 5, 7, 9]. Strengthen domestic financing, support various production models in Korea, and build regulatory capacity to protect creative autonomy. A good screen ecosystem should be able to use Netflix to improve, not lose its own competitiveness because of it.

Another indication is that platformisation should be regarded as a problem of governance and a market at the same time [1, 2, 4, 5, 7]. A platform controls recommendations and visibility of customer data, thus influencing demand rather than responding to it. Therefore, the asymmetrism is likely to drive growth in both streaming and dependency. Although the platform presents the users' preferences, it has also created and arranged these preferences itself.

The Korean case can also be used to draw other lessons for national screen industries that have joined the streaming era. Platformisation rarely produces only winners and losers. It fails to distribute financing, distribution, labour and visibility fairly as a result. The first group of companies to achieve this will be able to build a strategy of promoting local autonomy and at the same time use the platform for all-round global development. Therefore, Netflix Korea is a typical case in China that can be used as a reference for other comparisons of the media industry. Therefore, local industries need to strengthen their own institutional capabilities and are no longer dependent on the platforms. The above are the functions of contract knowledge, various funds, improved data management and a clear cultural policy system. Without the above support, global visibility will be at a high cost of strategic dependence.

6. Conclusion

Netflix and the Korean local screen industry are selected as the research subjects in this paper to explore cultural platformisation as a new form of the screen economy. Streaming media is promoting local production by increasing the scope of distribution and funding; thus, it offers more public attention and investment. Thus, the Korean case shows that the core logic of platformisation is the co-development of growth and dependence. The problem of the Korean local screen industry is not a lack of platformisation; rather, it is that a system has not been established to protect creative diversity, strengthen the industrial bargaining power, and ensure long-term autonomy. Netflix is thus both a driver of expansion and a symbol that increased global reach comes at a structural cost.

Therefore, the case can serve as an example for other national screen industries in the streaming era. Local industries will be supported by the world's platforms, but only if they also build institutions to promote their own creative capacities, protect data rights and interests, and keep many market channels. The Korean case indicates that streaming expansion is more advantageous when it strengthens the local industrial foundation rather than replacing it.

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