

DİJİTAL ÇAĞDA TANINMA İLETİŞİMİ AÇISINDAN ÜRETİLEN EŞİTSİZLİKLERİN BÜYÜMESİ

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Özet

Dünyada, ödül ya da armağan sunan kuruluşlar bir dizi yeni iletişim biçimleri geliştirmekte ve bunların çoğu da dijital alanda olmaktadır. Bu tanınma iletişimi, ki genellikle halkla ilişkiler ekipleri ya da kurumiçi medya üretim gurupları tarafından yaratılmaktadır, kazananların dikkatini çekecek ve başarılarını vurgulamak üzere tasarlanmaktadır. Bunların pek çoğu eğitim amaçlı kullanılmaktadır.

Bununla birlikte bu çalışma, bu web tabanlı tanınma iletişimlerinin genellikle eşitsizlikleri sürdürdürebileceğini iddia etmektedir. Özellikle de bunlar övgüye değer olan kazananlarla, olmayanlar arasındaki ayrımları güçlendirmektedir. Bu özellikle ödülü kazanan yarışmacı (lar) tarafından ona yakından bağlantılı olan ikinciliğe hak kazanan yarışmacı (lar) tarafından tanınmayı kaçırdığında sorundur.

Çalışma bu iddiayı doğrulamak için birçok örnek verirken, en sonunda vaka incelemesi olarak Nobel Ödülü kuruluşlarının dijital iletişim çalışmalarını ele almaktadır. Özellikle çalışma nitel bir içerik analizi yoluyla, Nobel Barış Ödülü'nü 2016'da son olarak kazanan Juan Manuel Santos'a verilen ödülü dijital tanınma iletişim biçimlerinde eşitsizlikleri nasıl sürdürdürebileceğini vurgulaması açısından incelemektedir.

Bu bildiri metni, iletişim alanı ve özellikle uluslararası iletişim alanı için yeni bir içgörü sunmaktadır. Çalışmada doğrudan konferans konusu üzerine söz söylenmekte, uluslararası iletişimde yeni bir trend incelenmekte ve dijital teknolojilerin halkla ilişkiler veya medya üretim uygulamaları alanındaki etkileri tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Dijital İletişim, Tanınma, Nobel Ödülleri

THE GROWING INEQUALITIES PRODUCED BY RECOGNITIONAL COMMUNICATIONS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Abstract

Around the world, organisations that present awards and prizes are developing a variety of new communications, the majority of them digital. These recognitional communications, which are usually created by public relations teams or in-house media production groups, are designed to spotlight winners and highlight their achievements. Many of them are also used for educational purposes.

However, this paper argues that these web-based recognitional communications can often perpetuate inequalities. Specifically, they can reinforce divisions between those who win accolades and those who do not. This is particularly problematic when deserving runners-up who are closely tied to the winner(s) miss out on the recognition received by the winner(s).

While the paper draws on a number of examples to substantiate its argument, it ultimately uses the Nobel Prize organisations' digital communications as its case study. Specifically, it examines, through a qualitative content analysis, the most recent awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize (in 2016) to Juan Manuel Santos to highlight the way in which digital recognitional communications can perpetrate inequalities.

This paper offers new insights for the field of communication, and especially for international communication. It speaks directly to the conference theme, in examining a new trend in international communication, and in discussing the impacts of digital technologies on an area of public relations or media production practice.

Key words: *Digital Communications, Recognition, Nobel Prizes*

1. Introduction

Awards and prizes have been flourishing around the world over the past few decades. As English (2005: 2) notes, accolades of all kinds have increased in number tremendously since the turn of the 20th century, and have had a particularly “feverish proliferation” in the decades after the Second World War. Along with this growth of various forms of recognition has been a tremendous growth in associated communications, which are defined here, according to Williams’s (1962: 9) classic definition, as the “institutions and forms in which ideas, information, and attitudes are transmitted and received”. These recognitional communications range from the simple to the complex. They include, on the one hand, straightforward texts like pamphlets and posters and, on the other hand, more elaborate resources, such as documentaries and museums. The communications are typically developed for ‘public communication’ purposes: for transmitting information from a sponsor to a public or publics (Holley & Mitcham, 2016). Primarily, they are intended to promote the winners and their achievements. They are also often developed for other reasons; in particular, they can be used as educational or training tools that provide insights into achieving excellence in particular domains (Swiatek, 2016).

In recent years, this phenomenon has become more complex as a result of a new trend: the development of extensive and varied digital recognitional communications. Organisations that present awards and prizes have begun to develop digital forms through which recognition is communicated online. These forms also range from the simple to the complex, from modest images to sophisticated online games. They appear on the organisations’ own websites, or on partner websites, such as *YouTube and Facebook*.

Examples of organisations producing these sorts of digital communications include: the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which oversees the Oscars; the World Food Prize Foundation, which is responsible for the eponymous accolade; and the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, which awards the BAFTAs. These organisations’ communications – both their digital and non-digital types – receive substantial media attention each year, and the messages that they convey are consumed by audiences around the world. They also often inform public debates and influence policymaking.

This paper investigates this trend, critically examining the growth of digital recognitional communications around the world. It argues that these online recognitional communications can often perpetuate inequalities. Specifically, they reinforce divisions between those who win accolades and those who do not. This is particularly problematic when deserving runners-up who are closely tied to the winner(s) miss out on the recognition that the winner(s) receive. Although the communications can be beneficial in many ways – by being instructive, for example, and potentially even inspirational – they ultimately only reinforce the stature of winners, while marginalising or even ignoring the achievements of the runners-up.

While the paper draws on a number of examples to substantiate its argument, it ultimately uses the Nobel Prize organisations’ digital communications as its case study. These organisations are leaders in the development of recognitional communications of different kinds, making them most appropriate for analysis. Specifically, the paper exam-

ines, through a conventional qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), the most recent awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize (in 2016) to Juan Manuel Santos to highlight the way in which digital recognitional communications can increase inequalities. This method was chosen because it was deemed to be the most suitable for understanding how the communications exacerbate inequalities, as it allowed for a broad-ranging, general analysis of a variety of representative communications developed by the Nobel organisations.

This paper offers new insights for the field of communication, and especially for international communication, in light of the fact that recognitional communications reach audiences around the world, and the fact that many awarding organisations operate across the borders. The paper adds to our knowledge of these communications, which have largely been neglected in scholarship to date. In particular, there has been a relative “failure” (English, 2005: 1) to come to terms with the worldwide proliferation of recognitional communications, which are now estimated to be worth at least US\$40 billion dollars (Tise, 2014) and, as such, warrant close, critical scrutiny. The paper also adds specifically to our knowledge of the Nobel Prizes and their communications. The Nobel organisations’ communications have increased and diversified substantially in recent years; their digital communications, especially, reach audiences of millions now and contain messages that influence social and political agendas. For this reason, they also warrant more sustained analysis.

The paper is divided into four parts, corresponding to the four key areas of growth relating to recognitional communications. First, the trend of growing recognitional communications is outlined. Second, the growth of the digital forms of these communications is discussed. Third, the growth in the Nobel organisations’ communications is canvassed. Fourth, the growing inequalities caused by these communications is explored. The paper finishes with the case study analysis of the 2016 awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Juan Manuel Santos.

2. Growing Recognitional Communications

Traditionally, organisations that present awards and prizes have engaged in a limited set of activities: namely, selecting winners, announcing their names, and presenting those winners with their accolades. These have been the activities of organisations such as the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), which administers the Oscars (or Academy Awards). For many years, the communications relating to the Oscars mainly comprised the announcement and presentation ceremony; indeed, the first ceremony, in 1929, lasted only 15 minutes and was the only one not to have been broadcast in some way (Chilton, 2016).

These days, organisations that present awards and prizes engage in a range of activities; the recognitional communications that they develop are undoubtedly the most prominent of these. The tasks of such organisations now range from holding educational seminars to administering scholarship programs. For example, AMPAS is currently building a museum in Los Angeles, to be opened in 2019, that will “explore the history and magic of what happens on screen as well as behind” (AMPAS, 2015a). The Academy’s Nicholl Fellowships in Screenwriting – labelled by the organisation as one of its “greatest initiatives to foster creativity in the film industry” (AMPAS, 2015b) – aim to identify new screenwriting talent. Even the Oscars red carpet pre-show, which airs before the main Oscars telecast, is more than just a fashion parade; the show features reflections and comments from filmmaking professionals about various aspects of their craft (Swiatek, 2014). For years, too, AMPAS has been holding educational events, such as Academy

Conversations, that unite Oscar-winning and nominated film professionals, together with members of publics-at-large, to share insights into the art and craft of filmmaking. These events are recorded and published on the organisation's website, along with other videos, such as the Creative Spark series (AMPAS, 2015c). Without doubt, though, it is the annual Oscars telecast that draws the greatest audiences from around the world; in 2016, the televised ceremony was estimated to have been watched by at least 65 million people worldwide (Szalai & Roxborough, 2016).

Other awarding organisations not in the fields of media or the creative arts are also developing such varied activities and recognitional communications. For instance, the World Food Prize Foundation's primary task is to select, announce and honour individuals with the eponymous prize. The announcement takes place at a special ceremony each spring, presided over by the Secretary of State, at the U.S. State Department in Washington DC; the presentation ceremony is then held on or around UN World Food Day (October 16) at an august ceremony in the Iowa State Capitol in Des Moines (World Food Prize Foundation, 2017a). For the last few years, the ceremony has been broadcast by the Iowa Public Television network; the video of the broadcast has also been made available later on **YouTube** (see, for example, IPT, 2015; IPT, 2016). In addition to these key communication activities, other initiatives have been developed over the years, including the Borlaug Dialogue International Symposium, the Global Youth Institute (for high school students), and the Iowa Hunger Summit (World Food Prize Foundation, 2017a). The Foundation also opened a museum and function centre, the World Food Prize Hall of Laureates, in 2011 that features a variety of educational, interactive exhibitions about topics such as the World Food Prize laureates, food, water, nutrition and health (World Food Prize Foundation, 2017b).

3. Growing Digital Recognitional Communications

In addition to these expanding and diversifying hardware-based recognitional communications, awarding organisations are producing more and more software-based digital recognitional communications. This trend has emerged in step with the development of more sophisticated online platforms – such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter – that are able to store and display digital communications of various kinds. It also comes with the worldwide growth of in-house public relations or in-house media production groups: one of the largest and fastest-growing areas in production employment (Musburger & Kindem, 2009). A key advantage to developing content through an in-house media group is the fact that it can be supervised and tailored more easily to meet the organisation's demands than if it were being developed by an external agency (DiZazzo, 2013).

More broadly, the growth of such digital communications is being fuelled by the rise of 'mass self-communication' and 'narrowcasting'. The development of content using new media, and sites such as **YouTube** and **Facebook**, reflects the phenomenon of 'mass self-communication', whereby various types of communication (such as videos and images) are produced by one person or group and distributed to many (Castells, 2009). It also reflects the growing trend of organisations, including large-scale media institutions, adopting the narrowcasting approach to the creation and delivery of their content; according to this approach, information is delivered to a specific, narrowly defined group, often at a particular time and/or place (Andrejevic, 2003). Producers may be well aware that only a limited number of individuals, or a specific demographic group, will be interested in the content, making its creation and dissemination more focussed (Massey, 2004). As a result of these trends, awarding organisations can increasingly produce digital content that not only achieves their primary aim – namely, showcasing winners and

their achievements – but also satisfies secondary aims, such as educating audiences, inspiring them, or stimulating public discussion and debate.

The British Academy of Film and Television Arts' (BAFTA's) *Guru* program is a prime example of such primary and secondary aims being achieved through digital recognitional communications. *Guru*, a mainly-online initiative, provides “the wider community the opportunity to learn about the creative process from the very best craft practitioners” (BAFTA, 2015: 10). More specifically, the program aims to help and inspire individuals who are interested, or have begun to work, in media industries by hearing from established workers in those industries. The *Guru* website features numerous articles, video clips, images and audio recordings about multiple crafts, including special and visual effects, sound and music, animation, documentary production, factual production, and short film-making. The *Guru* website also provides a listing of various “opportunities”, including live *Guru* events, scholarships, and competitions open for entries (BAFTA, 2017a). The digital and non-digital communications alike feature award-winning individuals, especially (unsurprisingly) ones who have won a BAFTA. The organisation's central communications – its award ceremonies – are also documented in a variety of ways, including photographs and video clips on the BAFTA website (BAFTA 2017b).

3.1. The Nobel Organisations' Growing Digital Recognitional Communications

Of all of the awarding organisations around the world producing recognitional communications – both digital and non-digital – it is undoubtedly the Nobel organisations that are the leaders in this area. Not only have the Nobel Prizes themselves served as set of models for other accolades (English, 2005), but the communications connected to them have also been replicated by other awarding organisations. For instance, the World Food Prize's ceremony and museum are directly inspired by their Nobel counterparts (Ruan III in World Food Prize Foundation, 2001; World Food Prize Foundation, 2013). Also, the Kyoto Prize program is patterned on the Nobel Prizes (Inamori in Rutledge, 2005) and the Kyoto's award ceremonies are “virtually identical” to the Nobels' (Tokyo Business Today, 1992: 52).

The family or network of Nobel organisations consists of institutions in Sweden and Norway that are united under the aegis of the Nobel Foundation, which acts as the parent organisation for the other bodies. These include (in Sweden) Nobel Media, the Nobel Museum, and the forthcoming Nobel Centre, as well as (in Norway) the Nobel Peace Center, and Nobel Peace Prize Research & Information.

Each of these organisations develops communications that help it achieve its primary objective – namely, communicating information about the Nobel laureates, their achievements, and Alfred Nobel – as well as meet secondary objectives, such as educating audiences, promoting particular messages that the organisation deems important, and fostering public dialogues. The activities of Nobel Media are probably the most extensive; the organisation: manages the official website, *Nobelprize.org*, and develops a wealth of content for it, ranging from press releases to online games; distributes live broadcasts from the Nobel Prize Award Ceremony in Stockholm, the Nobel Banquet in Stockholm, and the Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony in Oslo; creates documentaries; arranges the Nobel Prize Concert in Stockholm; and develops content for online and social media, including *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Google+*, *YouTube*, and *Storify* (Nobel Media, 2017). The other Nobel organisations also develop significant communications of their own. For instance, Nobel Peace Prize Research & Information manages the annual *Nobel Peace Prize Concert*: a cosmopolitan arena concert featuring popular music that, it claims, reaches around 500 million viewers around the world each year (NPPC n.d.). The concert, like other Nobel

Prize-related broadcasts, is streamed live on the internet, and video clips are available afterwards for on-demand viewing.

Although the Nobel organisations have expanded all of their communications in recent years, it is their digital communications that have most significantly grown. One of the reasons for this is the organisations' desire to stay current and reach audiences through their preferred channels and platforms. As one former member of the organisations explained: "Visits to our webpage has [sic.] grown year after year, right up until last year we noticed a slight decline ... However, we were reaching an increasing number of people through social media, something we weren't really focusing on" (Melin in Grundberg, 2014). Since that statement was made, the Nobel Foundation has reported that it has made special efforts to increase its social media presence. Recently, for example, it recounted that:

"In 2015 a special effort was made on Facebook that led to very successful results. Visibility increased by 95 per cent on digital channels compared to 2014, and Facebook accounted for 63 per cent of total visibility. The number of followers on Facebook.com/NobelPrize increased from 200,000 to over 650,000. During the announcements of the 2015 Nobel Prizes, digital channels reached an average of 10 million people per day, including 8 million on Facebook". (Nobel Foundation, 2016: 8)

This digital content takes a range of forms, including videos, photographs, images, infographics, and text-based posts. Careful editorial choices must be made in order to ensure that the content can be accessed effectively in different ways. As the Nobel Foundation (2016: 9) explains: "Information and the way stories are told have been adjusted for specific digital platforms." Facebook was a key example of this, with the Foundation (2016: 8) commenting that:

"The majority of Facebook users access content on their mobile phones, which creates new requirements. Official posts in connection with the announcements with the names of the Laureates, the prize announcement and information about the prize were the most popular posts. These were supplemented with information graphics and interviews with the new Laureates. Videos illustrating each Laureate were produced specifically for Facebook users. They also had the opportunity to ask questions about this year's prize to committee members from the prize-awarding institutions".

While such digital recognitional communications offer many new opportunities for organisations to achieve their goals, they also pose particular problems.

3.2. The Growing Inequalities Produced By Recognitional Communications

The key problem created by recognitional communications – and especially digital recognitional communications – is the fact that they increase inequalities: specifically, between those who win accolades and those who do not. Forms of recognition, such as awards and prizes, are divisive by nature; they separate those who are recognised from those who are not (McBride, 2013). They elevate the status of some, but either diminish the status of others, or leave others' status unaltered. They do this by bestowing prestige or distinction on some, but not on others.

Recognition, also by its very nature, must be communicated. Otherwise, others will not know who has been marked with distinction or why. Hence, in serving as the instruments through which public knowledge about recognition becomes conveyed, the communications of awarding organisations end up reinforcing the divisions created by those forms of recognition themselves. That is, the communications connected to awards or prizes

end up perpetuating the divisions created by those awards or prizes. They represent both a “symbolic gain” (for the recipient) and a “symbolic loss” (for the runner-up or loser) (English, 2005: 41).

The particular problem created by digital recognitional communications is that they reinforce divisions between winners and runners-up, or even losers, on a much larger scale. This is due to the fact that these communications reach multiple audiences around the world in ways that were previously unimaginable. These days, the winners of accolades have their achievements trumpeted on the awarding organisation’s website(s), as well as connected websites, such as Twitter and YouTube. Thanks to digital communications, the winners’ achievements and ideas are also promoted to previously unreached, and especially younger, audiences, as the discussion in the previous section about the Nobel organisations showed. The runners-up and losers receive none of this special coverage and promotion. In short, digital recognitional communications reinforce inequalities on a much greater scale and on many more channels and platforms.

This situation becomes even more problematic when worthy runners-up are given little, if any, recognition through the communications. Runners-up who are closely tied to the winners often feel this inequality most acutely. They experience a double loss: missing out on the accolade, and then missing out on the additional communication of their achievements. The recognition that they would have had does not appear on digital communications; it is elided from sites such as *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *Twitter*, and the like. The runners-up are not featured in images, videos, podcasts, or info-graphics. In short, they are marginalised at best, and excluded altogether from recognition at worst. This phenomenon is a further threat to social equality, on top of the threat to it that is already caused by systems that recognise some individuals and groups, but not others (McBride, 2013).

4. The 2016 Awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize

The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016 to Juan Manuel Santos provides a robust case study that illustrates the ways in which recognitional communications, especially digital recognitional communications, reinforce inequalities. The accolade was awarded to Santos, the 32nd President of Colombia, for “his resolute efforts to bring the country’s more than 50-year-long civil war to an end” (Norwegian Nobel Committee, 2016). It was awarded to the political leader despite the fact that the majority of the Columbian people, by a slim margin, voted against the terms of the final agreement on the termination of the conflict.

Crucially, the prize was also only awarded to Santos, and not to any of the other individuals who participated in the peace process. Specifically, no members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People’s Army) were honoured with the prestigious recognition. As Lyons (2016) reported at the time, the FARC-EP leader, Rodrigo Londoño, was widely expected to have been a joint recipient if the prize were to be awarded to anyone involved with the ending of the conflict, as he was Santos’ main negotiating partner. After the announcement was made, many voices added to the surprise that only one winner had received the prize. For example, Ingrid Betancourt, the Colombian-French politician who was kidnapped by FARC in 2002 while campaigning for the Colombian presidency and held captive for six-and-a-half years, commented that FARC also deserved the prize (Martel, 2016). Additionally, six other Colombians, five of them being victims of the Colombian armed conflict, had also been nominated, but missed out on the recognition (The Citizen, 2016).

After the announcement, Santos and his achievements were substantially promoted through the various digital recognitional communications developed by the Nobel organisations. These included two videos from the announcement praising his work, the official press release (virtually a replica of the announcement), the video of the award ceremony, the transcript of the speech given by the awarding body at the ceremony, Santos's own speech at the ceremony, a video of the president receiving the prize, an audio interview with the laureate after the announcement, a photograph of the political leader offering his assistance to people after Hurricane Matthew, a web-link to the president's page at the Colombian Government website, and a short video-interview produced by the Nobel Peace Center, with all of these communications being available on the official Nobel Prize website (Nobel Media, 2016).

Other digital recognitional communications were developed, as well. They included a recording of the laureate's speech at the Nobel Peace Prize Concert, as well as video clips of musical items (also from the concert) performed by various artists in tribute to the laureate. All of these videos were posted to the concert web-page following the live streaming of the concert on YouTube (Nobel Peace Prize Concert, 2016). Also, the short video-interview produced by the Nobel Peace Center was re-posted on the Nobel Prize page, along with other content (such as images of the president accompanied by his quote "Allow me to tell you, from my own experience, that it is much harder to make peace than to wage war") (Nobel Prize, 2017). The recording of Santos's Nobel lecture, along with the video of the award ceremony and the announcement of the prize, were all re-posted to YouTube, as well (Nobel Prize n.d.).

562 These varying digital communications offered the laureate extended recognition that the losers – in this case, the FARC representative and the six other Colombians – did not receive. The content in its varying formats allowed multiple audiences, on multiple platforms and devices, to see, hear and read about the president's achievements. Additionally, the president himself was able to communicate (chiefly through his speeches) to those multiple audiences; the communications provided him with the opportunity to relay purposefully chosen messages around the world to numerous individuals: ones he would not have been able to reach were it not for the recognitional communications. However, as mentioned, the FARC representative and the six other Colombians did not have the same opportunity to receive praise and to share their views through the communications, illustrating precisely the way in which digital recognitional communications perpetuate inequalities.

Conclusion

Recognitional communications are flourishing around the world, bringing benefits to multiple audiences, as well as perpetuating disadvantages. This paper has examined this growing trend in international communication, focussing particularly on the growth in digital recognitional communications. The paper has argued that, although the communications have positive aspects – for instance, in being educational – they ultimately only reinforce the division between winners and runners-up or losers. As the case study of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016 to Juan Manuel Santos demonstrated, the runners-up or losers not only miss out on the opportunity to have multiple audiences around the world learn about their achievements; they also miss out on being able to share their views and personal stories through the recognitional communications.

This paper leaves many avenues for further research. Only one set of accolades – the Nobel Prizes – has been examined here in depth; other accolades could also be examined in detail to understand whether the findings are shared by those accolades, as well.

Audience analyses could be undertaken to understand how individuals have reacted to the recognitional communications. Also, this paper employed a broad conventional qualitative content analysis to illustrate its key ideas; other methods (such as in-depth textual analyses) could be used to determine more specifically how the communications were constructed in order to convey particular messages.

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