

Immersive Media to Remember Conflict: Use of 360° Video to Narrate Conflict Memory

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This article investigates the use, potentials, and challenges of immersive media, specifically 360° video, in narrating and reliving conflict memories. This novel approach builds on previous original research examining immersive journalism and its applications in war reporting, while addressing the distinct context of historical memory narration.

Immersive media has revolutionized our interaction with content, ushering in transformative storytelling formats and narrative styles. Its capacity to convey other's experiences and viewpoints in an experiential manner has prompted significant shifts in numerous fields, including communication, education, conflict resolution, and public policy making. It has found a place in journalism, birthing the subgenre of immersive journalism where 360° video has emerged as a pivotal practice.

Although the uses and impacts of immersive journalism are at a relatively early stage of exploration, specific research on immersive journalism related to conflict memory is not only scarce but seldom thoroughly analysed empirically. Recognizing this gap, the study emphasizes the importance of exploring the interface of recent technologies and memory narration in historical conflicts, particularly given the proposed empathy-evoking and peace-building potential of immersive technologies. The focus lies on the narrative of historical memory, shifting from real-time war reporting to reflective examination of past events.

The Colombian armed conflict serves as the primary case study, a choice driven by its international prominence post the 2016 peace agreement signing, and its unique portrayal in various journalistic formats. The research employs a mixed-method approach of content analysis and in-depth interviews with experts, drawing upon relevant studies on immersive journalism, peace journalism and conflict narrative.

Findings from our research revealed underutilization of 360° video by traditional Colombian media outlets, while production companies have harnessed the immersive storytelling format to depict peace-related events and post-conflict scenarios, reflecting a peace-oriented viewpoint. In narrating conflict memory, the application of immersive technologies exhibits potentials such as enabling empathy and understanding, offering holistic views of previously inaccessible locations, and capturing comprehensive evidence. Concurrently, it presents challenges including monetization, adaptability to historical events, and ethical implications.

Through this study, we aim to advance knowledge within immersive media and historical memory narration, develop a qualitative tool for analyzing 360° video and similar immersive media productions pertaining to conflict memory, and establish guidelines and best practices for media producers and journalists utilizing immersive media in Latin America and globally. This research represents an innovative approach towards narrating conflict memory, contributing to our understanding and experience of past conflict events through the innovative lens of immersive media.