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## New Journalism in Documentary Script Writing

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### Abstract

The authoring of documentary scripts is frequently overlooked when judging a documentary's quality. This could be because the documentary script is regarded as merely a tool that has little impact on the final output of the film. Documentaries in Malaysia are considered as sluggish, with a "soft culture" approach to documentary production, despite the fact that the world of documentary production has evolved to a "dramatic entertainment" approach. Researchers propose a literary device-based writing style called as New Journalism as a possible option for documentary writers across the country. In comparison to traditional types of writing, this style combines factual and fictional writing to produce literature that is more creative, new, and alive. It is intended that by using a new type of journalism to write documentary scripts, scriptwriters will modify their approach to producing works, resulting in documentaries that are more skilful, competitive, and relevant to the demands of today's audience.

**Keywords:** New Journalism, Documentary, Script Writing

### Introduction

A silent film made in 1922 became the foundation for documentary filmmaking today. Robert J. Flaherty successfully produced a docudrama titled *Nanook of The North*, which lasted 79 minutes. Réveillon Freres, a French firm, funded the publication and gave USD 50,000 for a 16-month Flaherty trip. The film was finally released in New York in 1922 after being rejected by five distributors. In its first week of distribution, the film grossed USD 40,000. J. Flaherty's next production, *Moana*, was inspired by the success of this docudrama (1926). *Moana* was shot on the island of Savai'i in Samoa, in the town of Safune. *Moana*, the primary male character's name, is Samoan for "deep water". In order to build on its prior success, Paramount Pictures dispatched Flaherty to Samoa as a director to document traditional Polynesian life. Flaherty shoots using both a standard film camera and a PrismaColor camera in the hopes of capturing colourful images.

*Moana* is credited with being the first picture to employ panchromatic black and white film rather than the orthochromatic film that was typical at the time in Hollywood. When Flaherty got in Samoa, he discovered that Christian missionaries had arrived earlier, and that the residents of the island had torn off their traditional clothing and were living in a Western

style. Despite their failure with *Moana*, J. Flaherty's docudrama works are given fresh interpretations. The narrative form used in *Nanook of The North* gave rise to documentary terminologies, which are still used today. Simultaneously, debates about documentary interpretation have continued to this day, based on J. Flaherty's narrative approach to the work. According to Ruby (1980), film academics are still debating the narrative form approach in the work. Some see the art as merely a show of life rather than a storey. It's merely a stage play's narrative job, not a documentary that deserves to have a tale.

The topic of documentary narratives is still being contested. Bondebjerg (2014) emphasises that, unlike most commercial fiction films, not all documentaries have a clear narrative framework. In many documentaries, however, narrative structure and character identification remain important elements. John Grierson was the first to use the term documentary in a storey published in the *New York Sun* on February 8, 1926. The documentary found a place in the hearts of the audience at that time. Aitken (1989) analyses how John Grierson's idealism influenced the audience's acceptance of the style documentary as a creative art form in filmmaking. Documentaries tackle the fundamentals of the written word. It is regarded as a visual depiction of a document. Documentaries must emerge as a creative sector that can be a reference in any case, based on that criteria. Documentaries, according to Nichols (2001), are a situation-changing arena.

Alternative tactics are constantly tested and abandoned in this quest. The word "documentary" is derived from the Latin root word "docere" which meaning "to instruct or direct". We ask someone to "document" his or her facts and statements, which is a more current and often heard expression (e.g., an essential document submitted in court (Juel, 2006)). The term "documentary" was first used in film history by John Grierson, who described Robert Flaherty's film *Moana* (1926) as having "documentary value". The expression "creative treatment of actuality" was coined by John Grierson, a pioneer of classic British documentary films. It gives a brief explanation of what documentaries are and what they mean. When comparing a documentary film to a feature film, the definition of documentary is frequently misunderstood. A documentary, like a feature film, tries to present facts about life through a range of approaches and storylines.

Non-fiction films are sometimes referred to as factual films or non-fiction fact-based films, and documentary films are sometimes referred to as factual films or non-fiction fact-based films by (Dick et al., 2005). According to Juel (2006), there are no specific criteria that might refute or deny the meaning of a work, whether it is a fiction or non-fiction film. For example, we frequently think that the presence of actors indicates that the film is a fictitious production rather than a true documentary (unless, of course, the film describes themselves). On the other hand, we can tolerate instances in which professional actors are utilised in "re-enactment" scenes to show how something occurs. Re-enacting a criminal scene against a real victim, such as a knife stabbing him, is impossible, but it does provide for a sharper and more realistic picture. A documentary is a presentation of facts with artistic elements infused to propel the tale forward.

As mentioned by Philips (2005) Facts will be interpreted by creativity, resulting in an entertaining plot to watch. Documentary films are made for four major purposes : to inform, entertain, critique, and explain to the public about a person's personality, items, or events.

Documentary is also a cinema genre that has proven to be quite robust in terms of its ability to portray reality in a dramatic and artistically pleasing manner, or to put it another way, documentary is one of the branches of film art. It is a powerful art form of communication as a cinema genre. If the artist's participation is channelled through painting, the film must be more beneficial than simply being a "copyist". The film must be able to mirror man's pulse and soul in order to achieve this (Steinberg, 1970). Plantinga (2005) challenges the spectator to reconsider what constitutes a documentary. This is due to the fact that the present form is already frozen.

According to Kilbon et al (1997), the obligation of documentary filmmakers, extends beyond just recording reality. They should take certain steps to urge the audience to see the event from a different perspective. Capdevila (2015) advocates for documentaries to be more impartial in their pursuit of realism and aesthetic value while maintaining the documentary's formalities. This research will aid in the refinement of literary device and aesthetic value in documentary script writing, and will ideally aid in the establishment of a new style of writing.

### **Documentary Script Writing Issues**

Documentaries are perceived as works that fail to hold the audience's attention when compared to feature films, which are more fascinating in terms of filming skills, editing techniques, and storytelling structure. Most countries, including Malaysia, have a gloomy perspective of documentary progress in many circumstances. Publishers' or scriptwriters' approaches to the concept of 'soft culture' publication are less appealing. The focus of the audience has shifted to "dramatic entertainment," which is evidently rising in any medium. Because the industry does not comprehend the format and style of writing that is tailored for such writing, documentary filmmakers are now under pressure to provide high-quality content. The National Filming Policy of 2005 clearly specifies six significant documentary issues.

The most serious issue is a scarcity of good documentary scripts. The biggest problem with documentaries in Malaysia is the lack of solid, high-quality scripts. The heart of a work, the script, fails to convey a well-structured plot thread. The technical procedure of a manufacturing is slowed by this failure. Scriptwriters, on the other hand, lack a deep comprehension of "content" and high-impact writing styles. The general definition of a script, is an idea that is developed into issues and questions or a set of interrelated and contributory occurrences. These issues and occurrences are methodically mixed with various artistic and technical aspects to achieve the goals of a single need that is generated, framed, and decided by an idea. A script, according to Berger (1990), is a blueprint or framework that translates the visual and auditory design in a story presentation.

Writing a script is a process. The activities that a scriptwriter must go through until a script is ready to be delivered or submitted to any party are referred to as the process. It is considered a process of finishing the writing as long as there is corrective work being done and the writing work has not been completed. Screenplay writing is more of a practise than a science, and that this process necessitates scientific attention and methodology. Writing a script is also more self-reflective. This is a technique used in a disciplined and well-informed manner. Writing will meet the goals and expectations of the reason for which it is done if it has a clear knowledge base. It might relate to a specific commercial need, a specific group, or

a specific aim, and it can have a variety of meanings. In reality, a director or producer needs instructions or scripts in the early stages of a publishing project that explain the material needed and the people engaged in the publishing process.

With a script, the writer may organise a tale in a more organised fashion, and the publisher, director, and production team can think about things like (i) camera angle, (ii) audio, (iii) special effects, and (iv) timing. As a result, when it comes to filming or editing, the publisher or director can continue to focus on the quality of the shots taken rather than worrying about the publication's details. According to Maras (2013), the purpose of this script is to regulate the relationship between production workers and to examine the conceptual and practical components of the publishing. The core idea, action plan, creativity management, narrative, and work control are all included in this idea-centric blue print. As mentioned by (Redvall, 2009). The process of coming up with an idea and then turning it into a script is time-consuming and collaborative. This approach entails conducting research, conversing with creative collaborators, and improvising. It's also a learning experience.

In addition, the screenplay enables for a more regulated and orderly production. The notion, is a plot line. It's a method for defining a story. It usually consists of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. It is apparent that the storytelling framework is critical in ensuring that the script generated is not cluttered. This is because a well-written and properly worded script may communicate with both the writer and the audience. The script should also give the reader plenty of room to imagine all of the possible outcomes. When we discuss a work, whether it is fiction or non-fiction, we are inadvertently focusing our attention on the script writing process.

Script writing requires a structured format with a variety of approaches, as Daud et al (2015) recognise. Despite the current pressure on the publisher/scriptwriter, this should happen. In this regard, a fresh method is required that can result in good changes in the production of documentary scripts. There is undoubtedly a smart method to study and master at a time when consumers are comfortable watching outdoor documentaries on new media channels. One of them, which the author will introduce, is a new type of journalism.

### **New Style of Journalism**

The new style of journalism is a writing strategy that encourages journalists or writers to incorporate elements of literature, art, and beauty into their writing and thinking. This is a presentation style that uses a blend of fact and fiction writing approaches to create news broadcasts that are more imaginative, original, and alive than traditional reporting. The new journalism offers a more engaging and emotional writing style that goes beyond the usual who, where, when, why, and how inquiries that are typically utilised in professional writing. This writing is a style of writing and thinking that incorporates elements of literature, art, and beauty. The new face of the documentary has been shaped by this aesthetic. From the nature of "documenting reality," it grows into a work of high-value factual content. According to Hampton (2004), Matthew Arnold coined the term "new journalism" in 1887 to describe the entire discipline of journalistic history.

Journalists in Europe have been writing in this new type of journalism since the 1880s. Despite this, no clear and extensive explanation of the technical traits and properties that

should be included in the writing of such a style has ever been provided. This style emerged when editors and newspaper and magazine publishing corporations gained a better knowledge of it. Tom Wolfe's piece *The Feature Game: The Birth Of 'The New Journalism'*; *Eyewitness Report* by Tom Wolfe, published in 1972, was the first to explain the details of this technique. With the publication of *The New Journalism*, Tom Wolfe further refined his style. The book was first published in the United Kingdom in 1973. It is divided into two sections. The first section contains three Tom Wolfe articles: *The Feature Game*, *Like a Novel*, and *Seizing The Power*. The book's second section contains 24 articles written in the New Journalism style. Tom Wolfe and E. W. Johnson collaborated on the editing of the second part in 1973.

This book serves as the foundation for evaluating and comprehending new journalism. Tom Wolfe has presented explanations as well as dramatic illustrations of the conflicts that exist between journalists, fiction writers, and readers. This contradiction encourages the usage of a more consistent style, which has a stronger impression on the reader. The elements that should be included in new journalism are reiterated in the 1974 edition of *Journalism Monographs*. The journal's editors, James Murphy and Bruce H. Westley, additionally added and clarified the technical character that should be present in producing a new type of journalism. A new style of journalism is a writing strategy that encourages journalists or writers to incorporate elements of literature, art, and beauty into their writing style and philosophy. This is a presentation style that uses a blend of fact and fiction writing approaches to create news broadcasts that are more imaginative, original, and alive than traditional reporting.

New journalism, according to Handley & Chapman (2010), is a more engaging and emotional form of writing that goes beyond the usual who, what, where, when, why, and how inquiries. The strength of this style is a harmonic combination that has a great impact on the audience's emotions and intellect. This style of writing, according to Wolfe (1975), uses literary instruments in a brief space to delight the reader intellectually and emotionally. This research proposes a method for documentarists to employ a new kind of journalism in the creation of their work. It is able to open up a space for innovation and bring documentarists into a new era of competitiveness as a result of its adoption. Since 1940, Pauly (2014) has documented the emergence of new interpretations of journalism, all of which are linked to the desire to transition from the present style of writing to one that is more binding to the reader/audience. The details provided by Wolfe are regarded complete and thorough.

According to Papacharissi (2015), new journalism contributes to the development of storytelling and writing literacy. This research will clearly go into further information about the screenplay writing process and will aid in the development of storytelling, which is a big challenge in script development. The concept of "factual turn," which has become synonymous with New Journalism, has altered the framework of screenplay writing and affected public perceptions of documentarists' possibilities. Researchers believe that if this approach can help writers in other nations, it can also aid writers in Malaysia. In the 1960s and 1970s, New Journalism was taken seriously. Tom Wolfe, Truman Capote, and Gay Talese were among the first writers to employ this new style of journalism. *In Cold Blood* was Truman Capote's most famous masterpiece.

After Vincent Bugliosi's *Helter Skelter*, the novel based on the true account of the murder became the second best-selling novel. His work is credited with coining the term "pornoviolence." Tom Wolfe used the word in a lengthy piece published in *Esquire* magazine in July 1976. Later editions of the work were published in a number of genres. Gay Talese is remembered for his efforts to define 'Literary Journalism' or 'Creative Non Fiction' in its entirety. He was also instrumental in supporting Tom Wolfe in giving New Journalism significance. Gay Talese was soon active in the development of 'New Journalism' as well. Around the 1960s, the new style of journalism became popular in Europe. Nonetheless, these items are rarely published in the daily press. It is frequently exclusively published in magazines. *Esquire*, *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, *Coevolution Quarterly*, *Rolling Stone*, and the *New York Herald Tribune* were among the newspapers and publications that published articles in this style in the 1960s, and *Scanlan's Monthly* in the 1970s.

The *New York Herald Tribune* is the most visible proponent of this writing style. In the field of newspaper writing, however, this type of writing is not new. It was first used in the year 1880. The *New York Herald Tribune* has received the Pulitzer Prize multiple times since its inception in 1924. The term "newspaperman's newspaper" is used to describe this publication. The newspaper had the biggest circulation at the time, and a stellar roster of writers including Dorothy Thompson, Red Smith, Judith Crist, and Tom Wolfe contributed to it. From 1924 through 1958, the Reid family held the property. It was sold to John Hay Whitney as a result of the financial crisis. The newspaper proceeded on a plan and action to adopt the New Journalism style under his guidance. Tom Wolfe, the author of this newspaper, made efforts to establish this new type of journalism in a systematic manner. Joseph Pulitzer was a major character who influenced many writers to use this technique.

The New Journalism was regularly presented, practised, and taught by Joseph Pulitzer. He was also recognised for his differing viewpoints on the problem of 'Yellow Journalism' from one of the most well-known media professionals of the period, William Randolph of the *New York Journal*. Yellow journalism, sometimes known as "yellow press," is a type of journalism that focuses on exaggerating an issue in order to increase newspaper sales. The author focuses on themes that society needs addressed, such as corruption, sex scandals, and other such topics. Joseph Pulitzer challenged William Randolph Hearst's introduction of this style in the *New York Journal*. This conflict lasted from 1895 to 1898. The terms 'Yellow Journalism' and 'New Journalism' helped Joseph Pulitzer's newspaper *New York World* become more well-known. In 1912, his grasp of these two challenges led to the establishment of the Columbia School of Journalism.

Pulitzer should be congratulated, according to Roggenkamp (2005), for its unsupported efforts to promote approaches and practises that were later imitated by editors all over the world. Joseph Pulitzer conceived of the Columbia School of Journalism in 1892. He had set aside monies to establish a world-class journalism institution. The organisation opened its doors in 1912, a year after its founder, Joseph Pulitzer, died. In Europe, New Journalism has altered the pattern of news report writing. It gave periodicals and news organisations a fresh appearance at a time when they were facing a readership problem. This technique also has the ability to sway the reader's opinion on current events. The success of New Journalism in giving the world of newspaper and magazine production a fresh perspective is undeniable. It has a large following in Europe. Nonetheless, consolidation efforts are ongoing, with a

particular focus on bringing readers to the same place for the same information in every discussion of issues. Writers and editors are always on the lookout for the best ingredients in order to produce better work.

### **The Technical Nature of New Journalism**

According to Murphy (1974), new journalism has its own particular technical character. He must be imaginative and artistic. Both of these characteristics are almost like pre-requisites for becoming a media practitioner who works directly with the public. Tom Wolfe defined the term "creativity" several times as a prerequisite for writing in that style. It should also be capable of being supplied by completing three characteristics: literary dramatic approaches, intensive reports, and generally certified subject reports. The monograph explains it by stating that new journalism should be technical in character, i.e. artistic and creative. Literary reporting has three essential elements at the same time: dramatic reporting approach, intense reporting, and reporting on publicly known subjects. Subjectivity is one of the unique zones in the assessment of the technical character of new journalism. Permission for the writer's opinions, ideas, and involvement to co-exist in a manufactured story or report is referred to as this.

This zone is frequently chastised since it provides a large amount of room for writers to individually explore and argue each issue. It involves crucial government concerns that are clandestine in nature, in addition to ethical issues. The importance of the writer as the people's voice cannot be overstated. However, the author's involvement in the argument is the author's support for anything of importance. New journalism, according to Stein (1972), is a type of participatory reporting. This is developing at the same time as participatory politics. In New Journalism, fact and fiction writing are presented in a balanced manner. This style, according to Tom Wolfe, permits writers to utilise any device, including formal or literary forms. It's a completely free and limitless shape. According to Wolfe (1973), modern journalistic writing allows writers to employ any literary method, ranging from classic essay dialogues to the flow of familiarity, and to do so simultaneously or in a limited amount of time.

There is no longer a traditional strategy that highlights the essential questions of who, what, where, when, why, and how with this style. The goal of this approach is obvious. It should arouse the reader both academically and emotionally at the same time. The new journalism style ushered in significant changes. By including climactic and dramatic aspects, vivid scenes, and vivid conversation, practitioners of this style shift the basic pattern of news and article writing to a more independent story structure. Automatically, this approach is rejecting the traditional form of fact-based journalism that served as the foundation for European newspaper writing. This traditional method required the writer to conduct extensive study, conduct interviews, and make observations. After that, the materials are organised into a structured writing manner.

Wolfe (1973) identified four key characteristics of the new journalistic style: incident-by-incident representation, comprehensive dialogue, presentation of events through the eyes of a specific observer, and a complete recording process. The following are the specifics of four new journalistic writing techniques:

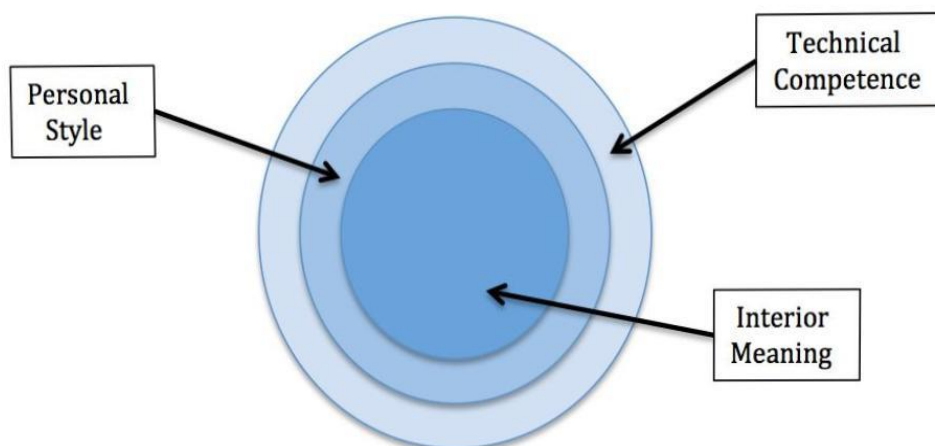


- Event-by-event representation is the first feature that focuses on the portrayal of specific events. This means that each scenario is built on an event-by-event basis with a historical narrative thrown in for good measure. This implies that the plot will be driven by flashbacks and face scans. According to Wolfe (1973), reporting is done by establishing scene after scene, telling a story, and progressing from incident to incident utilising historical narrative.
- Presentation via the eyes of a specific witness - It immerses the reader in the scene and allows them to experience real-life emotions. The technique of presenting each scene to the reader through the eyes of a specific character, giving the reader the sense of being in the character's head and experiencing the emotional realism of the scenario as he or she perceives it, as defined by Tom Wolfe. Traditional journalism writers lay a greater focus on the utilisation of a first person point of view. This is what obstructs the emotional development process.
- Complete recording - the reporter should record whatever he intends to tell. According to Tom Wolfe, this technique describes all of an event's gestures, habits, etiquette, furnishings, dress, decoration, travel style, eating, behaviour, views, gait, and symbolic aspects. This means that the reporter must document the reporter's attitude, temperament, attire, style, household appliances, and anything else that occurs during a certain event. This is a reference to one's current living situation. The reader will be influenced by the subject's current living situation.

### **Auteur Theory**

Auteur's theory will serve as the study's major theoretical framework for understanding a writer's influence on the documentary screenplay he writes. The word "auteur" comes from the French word "auteur," which meaning "author." This notion is commonly applied in the film and publishing industries. It highlights that the author's creative work is a reflection of three aspects of the author's self: technical knowledge, personal style, and a reflection of the author's inner consciousness when generating a creative work. The researchers discovered that this Auteur hypothesis may be used based on these three elements. These three components can be seen in the diagram below.

*Picture 1: Auteur Theory Model (Sarris, 1962)*



In order to apply the Auteur theory to the study, the researcher connected the three aspects that make up the Auteur theory's premise to the documentary script's quality. Because the author is the individual responsible for choosing the direction of a work, which is dependent on three premises in the author's self, the publisher's self-factor is significant in influencing the quality of a published plan, as previously discussed. In delivering material in a publication, authors have creative authority. Furthermore, in the realm of directing, auteur refers to a circumstance in which a writer infuses a point of view into his work. The premise of this idea states that the outcome of production is a mirror of a publisher's internal consciousness of the vision. The auteur theory is represented by three concentric circles: the outer circle represents a technique, the middle circle represents a personal style, and the inner circle represents the inner meaning.

In a nutshell, the publisher serves as a technician, (modelling) stylist, and auteur in every publication (Cohen, 2004). These three components can be seen in the diagram below. The researcher acted to tie the three factors into the premise inspired by Sarris (2004) in the auteur theory on the influence of screenplay writing in order to adapt this auteur theory to the study. As previously said, the author's self-factor has a big impact on the quality of a published plan since the publisher is the person in charge of deciding the direction of a work, which is based on three premises in the author's self. Sarris (2004) established three premises in his auteur theory paradigm, which are as follows :

1. The first premise in the circle's outermost layer concerns the author's technical knowledge and creativity in determining the direction of a production.
2. The author's style in working on the story and translating all the elements of creativity into creative work is the second premise, which is the second layer.
3. The most important element in evaluating a publication is the third premise, which is the circle in the middle. It is the meaning and knowledge of "internal" that is the thinking that exists in an author who has a relationship with his entire translation to the work generated.

But it's even more intriguing when Sarris (1962) claims that an author's "inner value" is the foundation for the creation of a work. Kolker (2002) believe that the third postulate of this theory influences the quality of a product. According to Simpson et al (2004), besides involving the publisher's personality style, the work is an expression of the publisher's thoughts through his knowledge, principles, life views, and vision, rather than relying solely on technical equipment. Kolker (2002) supports the idea that inner meaning can be gained from the publisher's philosophy and distinctive way of thinking about the world and life.

### **New Journalism Applications in Scriptwriting**

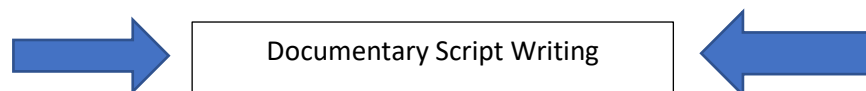
The researcher established an overall conceptual framework of the study for the researcher to see the study holistically, using novel journalistic approaches and components from Auteur's theory. The study's conceptual structure is as follows:

**New Journalism  
(Wolfe, 1972)**

1. Characterization of Genesis
2. The Full Dialogue Described The Event
3. Point of View
4. Full Observation

**Auteur Theory Premise  
(Sarris, 1962)**

1. Technical Knowledge
2. Personal Style
3. Internal Value



Picture 2: Conceptual Framework of the Study

According to the conceptual framework diagram above, the new form of journalism proposed by Tom Wolfe (1972) and the theory of auteur proposed by Sarris (1962) may aid in the creation of stronger and skilful documentary screenplays and, as a result, a high-quality documentary.

**Conclusion**

No inducer claims that integrating all of the technical qualities of new journalism will result in a superior work of factual information. A variety of different materials and tools contribute to the creation of high-quality documentaries. It is feasible to produce a work from a different point of view as well as a more original and different tale blend just by departing from the traditional writing style. The process of creating artistic or factual works has changed dramatically. Industry practitioners must stay up with these changes in order to advance their job. As the documentary industry continues to evolve with new technologies and platforms, it is important for filmmakers to explore new approaches to script writing while also staying true to the factual integrity of their work. Ultimately, by embracing new journalism techniques and combining them with other tools and materials, documentary writers can create works that are both original and informative, and that resonate with audiences in today's constantly evolving media landscape.

All of this can be translated into the following table

Key Points	Theoretical Research	Contextual Research
The best factual information does not necessarily emerge from including all the technical aspects of new journalism.	The creation and consumption of documentaries have altered as a result of the use of new platforms and technology.	The employment of new technology and formats does not always result in higher ratings or more favourable critical reception, according to a survey of documentaries that received significant awards.
A more creative and distinctive tale blending can be achieved by departing from conventional writing approaches.	A new viewpoint can be offered and the nuances of real-life situations can be captured with the aid of new journalism approaches.	Award-winning documentaries were examined, and it was discovered that many of them made use of unconventional storytelling techniques, such as numerous narrators or non-linear tales.
It's crucial for documentary filmmakers to experiment with new scriptwriting techniques while upholding the veracity of their sources.	While still maintaining factual accuracy, innovative storytelling techniques can increase the emotional effect of documentaries.	In a study of documentaries that were found to have factual errors, it was found that the errors were often due to poor fact-checking and research.

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