

Green Shooting

Subjects: Communication

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Green Shooting is a term used to describe all the practices ranging from the pre-production, production and post-production to the publicising of an audio-visual product: Documentary, television series (including those of streaming platforms), videogame, film, festival or an advertisement.

Keywords: sustainability ; media ; cinema ; television ; environment ; green shooting

1. Introduction

In recent years, sustainability indexes have found their place in academic research and many industries, such as textiles, automobile, beauty, among many others. For some time, these sectors have felt the pressure from governments, academics and customer demand to modify their actions towards sustainable practices. Thus, it seems that in the 21st century, sustainability will define businesses and require consumers' consciousness to embrace these new practices. This article understands the term as defined by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, which affirmed that sustainability is based on three pillars: Economic growth, ecological balance and social progress aligned with the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) put forward by UNESCO. The interrelationship and balance between these three spheres should be the starting point for action by governments, businesses and other supranational and micro-organizations. Nevertheless, the pillars and SDGs seem to have forgotten one main goal: Culture and its industry. Paradoxically, the media field, with its increasing dependence on viewing via devices, streaming platforms, and audio-visual repositories such as Netflix, Hulu, Filmin, HBO, and Disney + in television and cinema, and characterised by its grand façade of glamor, which usually tends toward excess ^[1] is one of the most polluting, carbon footprint-producing and socially unequal sectors ^{[2][3][4]}. A 2006 report from UCLA ^[5] reported that the audio-visual field emits the equivalent of about 1 million tons CO₂ into the atmosphere each year. Research on media sustainability has a long tradition of criticizing climate change and environmental issues, mainly through content ^[2] and while it is important to do so, it seems that the sector is oblivious to the impact that it itself generates. In terms of research, certain eclectic media ecology approaches have been taken, in various domains including those of moral crisis, technological dynamisms and planetary materialisms ^[6]. Hence, the audio-visual field fails to meet many sustainability indexes and lacks knowledge of what the sector itself generates. Many unsustainable practices are going unnoticed, from the misuse of natural resources (non-recyclable systems, overuse of energy on sets, overproduction of clothes and decorations, to mention but a few), enduring racism (like *patanking*, a type of common, broad, ultra-exaggerated South Asian accent that attempts to enfold thousands of languages and dialects into one single accent ^[7], *whitewashing*, and *blackface*), to ostensibly sexist behavior (the *Me-Too movement*) ^[8]. It is important to note that recent academic research focuses on power inequalities across class, gender, and race boundaries, ^[2] "but there is little if any sustained critical engagement with the more universal phenomenon of ecology" (p. 221).

2. Field of Action

2.1. Pre-Production

Ecoprod ^[9], a brand signature made up of six industry players (ADEME, AUDIENS, Île de France film Commission, DIRECCTE IDF, France Télévisions and TF1) launched this brand initiative in 2009 to mobilize audio-visual professionals, develop and provide professional resources to reduce the environmental footprint of the sector. In their guidelines, there is specific regard for transportation, which not only encourages producers to create a travel plan ahead of filming but also 16 additional measures, as follows:

- Identify public transport opportunities, provide information to the crew about the nearest and eco-friendly options (such as bike share stops to the filming location). Optimize trips and track driven kilometers and opt for videoconferences.

- Choose carpool and electric vehicles (also solar-driven vehicles, Hybrid, CNG, LPG or electric) for non-local crew members and apply eco-driving principles.
- Choose accommodation as close to the filming location as possible.
- Organize carpooling between crew members.
- Debate with car hire companies about their lorry and vehicle fleet's energy efficiency and rent low-emissions or hybrid/electric vehicles.
- Opt for large-capacity vehicles (minibus, people carriers, etc.), trucks need to be CNG, LNG, or Diesel EURO 6, and ensure vehicles are properly maintained.
- Optimize equipment loading and delivery.
- Organize security during the night for equipment trucks to remain parked at the filming location and avoid needless back-and-forth travel.
- Select transport companies engaged in sustainable development (bicycles, skating, public transport for short distances)
- Take trains rather than flights for trips under more than 5 h. If necessary, purchase carbon offsets for long distances.

Within the pre-production process, many other aspects derived from the activities previously discussed can be found. This article aims to reflect only the most outstanding examples and those that, more directly, have continuity in the different phases of development of audio-visual productions.

2.2. Production

One of the most consuming production elements is lighting, not only for its artistic value but because it is needed artificially in many cases. Hence it produces an environmental impact, to avoid it as much as possible Ecoprod ^[9], and 4R, which is a joint Catalan proposal for sustainable audio-visual has suggested several measures, which can be gathered in the following:

- There should be a preference for the use of LED bulbs and other energy-saving technologies.
- Where a connection to the public grid is possible, try to use it, and only when there are no public grid generators should only be allowed for a maximum of 3 days per location, when possible use stage 5 generators or efficient hybrid generators with an integrated battery system. If generators are under 10K, they should only be allowed with solar/wind, propane/butane or gasoline.
- Rent high-efficiency digital equipment from local providers whenever possible.
- Raise awareness among the crew on how to save energy (encourage the use of electricity, when available, from renewable sources and batteries dispensers).
- Limit waste and overconsumption of consumables (gaffer tape, grips, straps, ropes, etc.).

Everything related to sound engineering could be expressed, with less impact, to similar recommendations as those reflected in the lighting section.

2.3. Post-Production

Sustainable actions do not finish as soon as the post-production does; they carry on through the supply chain until the promotion, communication, and preservation of the product or brand itself. While merchandising has been one of the things used to catch audiences' attention even prior to the realization of the product (e.g., crowdfunding sites), *Green Shooting* policies recommend avoiding plastic material giveaways and opt for permanent products. Along similar lines, a policy should be developed on sustainable sourcing for production and broadcast resources. Doing so would help to preserve it, ensure long-lasting use, give the product or brand itself a longer life and raise audience awareness, which is still one of the main issues of the sector. Furthermore, a final post-filming carbon footprint calculation needs to be done to evaluate how much impact the production caused. This would involve checking whether the first evaluation was done precisely and if there is room for improvement. The same way an ecological evaluation is made, it is important to check the quality of the service (especially when hiring new eco roles) and their degree of satisfaction and participation and to see which social aspects can improve. Along the same lines, financial results and their impact (direct and indirect) should be assessed in order to analyze the growth of the local and international circular economy.

Concerning preservation, both the processes involved and the dynamics of related activities involve considerable energy expenditure, which is associated with pollution. *Green shooting* policies require a reflection on the responsible healing of audio-visual creations, their maintenance, and their life beyond the immediate moment of exhibition. This involves a strategic redefinition of the uses and dynamics of housing and circulation of productions. Research on more green-friendly preservation processes and training in this specific area are seen as necessary elements to facilitate a substantial improvement in the development of a sustainability policy for the audio-visual. Finally, it is essential to showcase—through events, exhibitions, workshops, or presentations (online and physically)—the best practices used to inform and educate the audience and the rest of the industry of the *Green Shooting* and its practices.

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