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# Introductory Chapter: Narrative Transmedia as a New Social and Cultural Phenomenon

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## 1. Introduction

Narrative is a genre that is incorporated into the cognitive form of the man who understands his own identity through the stories he keeps in his memory. Narrative is also part of how man is grouped socially. It also ends up giving an interpretation of historical memory about the events that identify it as a group. Narrative is a primordial way of ethical and aesthetic learning. Narrative is one of the ways in which man tries to understand the world and survive individually and in groups. That is why the ways in which the narrative appears change, but the attraction for it is constant.

The transmedia narrative is the product of the evolution of the narrative with the possibilities offered by new technologies. It is also favored by the mentality of the receiver that is more participatory and feels more protagonist in this century.

## 2. Narrative transmedia a polyhedral product

For years, we have studied the transmedia relationship of literature adapted to film as is the case of the film production Steven Spielberg [1–4].

From the literary theory, authors as Garrido Dominguez [5] work to analyze the different and numerous phenomena and schools that arise in the narrative environment.

We agree with Frontera's [6] assertions in her book *The Narrative Transmedia: Interactive Proposals to Work in the Classroom* ([6], pp. 37–39) which highlights the benefits of transmedia narrative in an educational environment from a constructive and participatory model, meaningful learning, zone of proximal development, active methodology, learning by discovery, cooperative, dynamic and communicative learning, dialogue, and multiple intelligences, as well as Frontera highlights that narrative transmedia contributes to media literacy too ([6], pp. 41–47).

Regarding business and communication, once upon a time a revolutionary stage in which communication lived constant changes derived from a new individual who had the necessary tools to exercise an active role in organizational and business communication processes, as well as in the design and development of brands, products, and services. Under their new roles as prosumers or adprosumers, individuals had become the key to business success because only those organizations that listened to them, conversed with them, and related to them could survive in that market.

We are faced with a market full of identical products and services from an objective point of view, which makes it very difficult to differentiate when it is more

necessary than ever. It is precisely seeking this differentiation that the world of business communication information and reason has been gradually displaced by stories and hearts. We need to create brands that thrill and brands with their own personality that consumers want to integrate into their day to day because they satisfy them beyond the mere fact of consuming them. For this, it is necessary to subordinate the traditional information and promotion objectives to the establishment of relationships and of emotional bonds from the experience of satisfactory, unique, and surprising experiences with the brands and/or with other people in relation to them.

In this context, a whole universe emerges around the transmedia narrative in response to these new needs of organizations.

The transmedia branding communicative model favors this connection or emotional bond by integrating the characteristics and values that define the personality of the brand in an own narrative that is born with the intention and the need to be developed and extended by the individuals while providing them with an experience only. It is precisely this possibility of participating and interacting that contributes to the development of the narration of the brand, the great difference of the transmedia narrative with respect to other forms of communication with which it is frequently confused. The transmedia narrative goes beyond cross-media, multimodal or multiplatform communication, and, consequently, the diffusion of the same message through different channels. Even when the channels are structured and complemented in such a way that each of them makes a particular contribution to the dissemination of the narrative, we are still far from an authentic transmedia narrative. In this, the traditional viewer becomes part of the story becoming a narrator more that contributes to its development and dissemination. Here lies the great value of transmedia narrative regarding the expectations of prosumers or adprosumers and the need for brands to make them experience satisfactory experiences as an essential key to the establishment of a long and beneficial relationship between them.

The current consumer demands unique and authentic experiences and permanent interaction with brands and other individuals in relation to these. Under these premises and the focus of the transmedia narrative, brands focus their efforts on stimulating and encouraging the experience of experiences, encouraging the participation of consumers in the development of their story and in its diffusion through multiple channels. In short, it is about brands, like people, having their own history, a story that highlights their most outstanding features and values and that, like any other story, is not written, but written day by day from the relationships and experiences lived. His narrative must act as a trigger for an experience that, when propagated, contributes to the development of one's own history. In this sense, the emergence of digital media has largely determined the rise and prominence that transmedia narrative is experiencing by multiplying its potential exponentially.

The web 2.0 model and, with this, the wide range of channels from which individuals, in their roles of prosumers and adprosumers, can participate and disseminate stories have opened up a world of possibilities for transmedia narrative understood as narration that is related through multiple means with the purpose of creating a unique and coordinated entertainment experience. However, we must not forget the advantages and benefits offered by the combination of these channels with traditional communication tools or techniques. Among all of us let us dedicate the following lines to one in particular: events, because of their affinity with the essence of transmedia narrative. An effective event starts from the narration of a story that acts as the axis around which each and every one of the elements thought and designed is integrated so that together they provide a unique experience to their assistants, an experience that they experience in the first person and that when it is satisfactory they feel the need to share. The events have always had a transmedia

character, and even before the arrival of the web 2.0 model, and with this one of the golden ages of the transmedia narrative, one of its objectives was that its assistants contributed to the extension and diffusion of the story and lived experience in the event through the channels and means available then: the traditional word of mouth and, in a few cases, conventional media. Obviously, the scope of this process has reached a new dimension after the arrival of the web 2.0 model under which any individual can click to share the experience lived with thousands, millions of people, contributing to the extension and development of the narrative and to the emergence of a transmedia event. Whether through an event or any other forms of communication, the transmedia narrative must take advantage of a reality in which relationships are generated and developed in collaborative spaces, virtual communities on the Internet in which individuals or users are not limited to receive information, but they process it, and re-disseminate it apprehended or reinterpreted, contributing its personal and professional baggage, its experiences, its knowledge, etc. And what is more important, it is not just that they can do it, but that they are desirous of it.

In the field of organizational communication, events, advertising, etc., conceived as unique entertainment, experiences can be the origin of a transmedia universe. Whatever the chosen technique or tool, only the true transmedia dimension will be reached when the audiences to which the communication is directed interact with and in relation to the brands through multiple channels from which they are offered different contents in relation to a story about which they are encouraged to deepen and participate in order to expand it. Based on the above and the possibilities opened by the digital context, the first of the great challenges presented by the transmedia narrative is to ensure that each medium or platform makes a valuable and exclusive contribution to the narrative universe, enhancing its experiential capacity and, in consequence, its advantages with respect to the construction or development of the brand. When the contents disseminated by the brands are mere replicas or adaptations to the characteristics of each medium, the active and collaborative construction of the transmedia universe, the main attraction element of the transmedia public, is hindered.

The second challenge focuses on the nature of communication that must evolve from unidirectionality to multidirectionality in order to fully exploit the possibilities offered by the web 2.0 model and the advantages of the synergy resulting from the convergence in the same space of content generated by the brands and by the users. Brands must pay attention to a new individual empowered by the web 2.0 model that claims not only to be heard (prosumer and adprosumer) but, above all, to be able to collaborate in the creation of the transmedia narrative universe that surrounds the brand and what the community has built as pointed out by Costa Sanchez and Piñeiro Otero ([7], p. 123): "Their role in the evolution of history must be increased in order to ensure that identification and involvement in history become an authentic immersion."

From the understanding and acceptance of the new consumer, we understand that the communication of the brand whatever the technique or chosen tool must be integrated into a strategy designed under the premises of the transmedia narrative in line with the expectations and demands of this new audience. Thus, transmedia communication must be developed from a narrative that serves as a guiding thread so that each and every one of the brand's messages contributes to the development of a unique, surprising history centered on those characteristics and values of the brand that are of greatest interest they awaken in the audience we are addressing.

This story branches out in each of the messages, and the diffusion supports in a surprising and unprecedented way and enhances the synergies between each and every one of them in favor of the story to be told. For this, it is crucial that each

medium make its own contribution to the narrative in such a way that it supposes an exclusive and valuable contribution and that it encourages the participation and collaboration of the public in the construction and development of this. It is ultimately about promoting unique experiences and multidirectional communication through multiple channels with the purpose of maximizing the scope of the experience through its dissemination in a coordinated manner.

It is likely that many think that the transmedia narrative is a passing fad that will be forgotten along with other models and communication techniques that, despite the triumphs harvested not so long ago, have been relegated by new formats resulting from a new individual and a new society with new possibilities and new demands. However, despite the inexorable evolution of both, there is a feature of the transmedia narrative that allows us to say that it will survive over time adapting and changing according to the circumstances of each era as it has been doing since ancient times. Quoting the great narrator Mario Vargas Llosa [8] (letraslibres.com):

*Inventing and telling stories is as old as talking, a task that should have been born and grow with language, when grunts, murmurs, gestures and grimaces, our ancestors, those primitive beings, no longer apes but not yet human, they began to exchange words and to understand each other according to an elementary code that over the years would be subtilized to great extremes of complexity.*

Likewise, we encourage you to continue building this story about the transmedia universe initiated by a group of teachers, researchers, and professionals in the field of education, communication, arts, etc., through their criticisms, contributions, comments, etc., because the transmedia narrative arises without doubt in response to the new needs of organizations but also drawing a new horizon full of opportunities, challenges, and stories to tell so that professionals, teachers, and researchers in the field of communication continue falling in love every day a little more than our profession.

As a conclusion, it is true that since its inception the human being has felt and feels the need to tell his story or simply stories with the same objective: to teach entertainment; what has changed are the forms, the possibilities, and the scope of the dissemination of the narrative. The participation or interaction of the receiver is an ingredient that enhances and consolidates narrative transmedia attraction socially and culturally even more.

This chapter, in which we have shown those polyhedric edges, conforms, as it could not be otherwise, a captivating narrative about the transmedia universe that we hope awakens and maintains its attention by providing an experience as extraordinary as the one we have lived by reading it and collaborating in its development.



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