



TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING: TRACKING COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCES IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES OF EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING

Sergio Alvarado-Vivas, Ph.D.
Uniminuto, Colombia

Abstract: *This paper aims analyzing how narratives transmedia are taking advantage of the evolution of the consumer to prosumer. This in order to explore through various cases, citizen actions caused by credible stories with which they connect and they want to be part of. In this way, the collective intelligences and the culture of convergence leads to think beyond the technological artifacts. Transmedia storytelling is a possibility of connection, immersion and experimentation, in times where cultures industrialize with greater vigor and where people sacrifice part of their privacies allowing a brand, a social reason or a media discourse to be part of their daily life.*

Keywords: *Transmedia storytelling, experiential marketing, prosumers, culture.*

Introduction

„If you're going to perform inception, you need imagination. You need the simplest version of the idea. The one that will grow naturally in the subject's mind. Subtle art.” [Nolan, 2010].

The stories have always been an inherent part of societies. Stories, real or fictitious, are the ways to build and give meaning to the social dynamics in every territory. This is how the transmedia narrative in recent decades have become a perfect setting for the experiential marketing. In principle for brand positioning, but also to arrange speeches, values, ways of seeing the world, all this in order to have an impact on the transformation of cultural practices. Thus, this paper focuses in explore and analyzing how transmedia storytelling is getting stronger in almost infinite sceneries of creation and engagement, in times where feelings, emotions and connections are more important than sell some a cold stuff without an experience behind.

For this purpose, it will be necessary to make some theoretical precisions regarding the current conditions under which marketing merges with greater ability with cultures. Reflecting, the symbolic capital of the collectives that conform on the internet. Communities in which the intangibles that circulate in the digital agenda are legitimated, consciously or not, in that agora of cyberspace that is always anchored in contexts that are not alien to users.

Likewise, aspects around experiential marketing and the arrival of transmedia narratives will be addressed to finally make reference to several experiences that have managed to activate in users a desire for participation and consumption, to less passive citizens who are involved in deep narrative experiences to the point of not hesitating when making use of their money to pay for products, donate to a social cause or give up part of their privacies in exchange for some benefit offered by a brand.

The value of the immaterial, the cultural and the collective

The consolidation of the internet as a favorable scenario to promote and position discourses and ideas, many of them around commercial brands or social reasons (NGOs, foundations and activists), has crystallized the projections that UNESCO [2005] had of cyberspace as a scenario possible to promote plurality, freedom of expression, collective construction, in addition to the exaltation of cultures.

This is where the knowledge economy has consolidated its place in the current evolution. Economy that focuses its interests on the value of the intangible, that is, on information and knowledge as the bases of production [Castells, 2000]. It is there where the creative industries have understood the prosumer potential that each citizen possesses. It is no longer exclusively a matter of a preponderance of the sales margins generated by traditional advertising, or of the figures after a crowdfunding or a campaign for community purposes, now it also matters the construction of solid and sustained stories in time that naturally grow in the collective ideology, legitimized as a truism, as something necessary and even non-negotiable. It is no coincidence that the most valuable brands between 2018 and 2019 belong mostly to the technology sector. Amazon, Apple, Google, Microsoft, Samsung and Facebook are the spearhead of an economy where reputation, familiarity, innovation, preference and loyalty are more related to those stories that are behind several of their products that only with a classic impulse of purchase [Brand Finance, 2019].

This is how the last time has been marked by the analysis of cyber, but beyond data management to approach a more complex field: cyberculture. Live tissues in computer environments, cultures that are now warps in almost infinite hypertexts that connect with each other and that are allowing witnessing deep cultural transformations, also in the ways of participating and connecting with others. Synchronies and communicative asynchronies where space is not shared and time is relativized [Fuchs, 2008]. Scenarios where the symbolic is enhanced in the countless resignifications, narrations, in the abductions of the image to give oneself the opportunity to create, to explore, to infect. Live reflection of the action of the collective intelligences pointed out by Lévy [2007], communities equipped with a creative network that can even organize topics in traditional media agendas. Not forgetting the pharmakon effect of the digital to be able to be a remedy or poison as long as it participates a lot or little in the collective dynamics.

But do not let yourself be carried away by the opacity of the environment and technological innovations, because collective intelligences depend on people, who put temperature in the middle [Lévy, 2007]. It is better to refer to a moment in the culture of convergence, where old and recent media merge, as well as community and corporate media. In addition, a moment where participants can interbreed in unpredictable ways. Times where the mind of each individual and the interaction with others allow him to trace the rhizomes that allow to connect dispersed contents. The mind is not able to store the overabundance of information that exists on each topic, hence inevitably want to share and talk with others to complete, complement and legitimize ideas [Jenkins, 2006; Pool, 1983]. All this creates a murmur, a contagious effect in the words of Fowler and Christakis [2009]. In this way, contemporary consumption is of a collectivity, where there are corporate participants with higher degrees of incidence, but ultimately where they constantly assemble and disarm puzzles that do not have defined corners [Jenkins, 2006].

Persuade with the emotional over the rational

In the current scenarios of a heyday of collective intelligence and the culture of media convergence, marketing has had to change its strategies, leaving the rational in the background to invest their efforts in the emotional. Hence, talk about experiential



marketing, understanding it as a field interested in stimulating significant experiences in people when they choose a product. It is about awakening the senses of the prosumers and achieving a longer memory to the point of adhering to their daily life. Overcoming the cold reasoning quality-price or the objective qualities of the product or service [Schmitt, 1999].

The legend „Designed by Apple in California. Assembled in China“ which is in the iPhones is evidence of the turnaround that marketing has undergone in recent times. No matter the working conditions where iPhones are assembled or their exorbitant prices, it is more important for the user that his iPhone allows him to access experiences linked to the exclusive, a synonym of status, a kind of symbolic capital.

So desired is the experience offered by Apple, that beyond its high costs, the long lines and crowds at the time of acquiring a new model is a common phenomenon. Even Samsung and Huawei have used those iPhone discourses to build some values of their own brands. Samsung with strategies such as the spot „Growing Up“, where they mock Apple speech to highlight Samsung Galaxy experience in everyday scenarios. While the Chinese giant Huawei has attacked with actions such as giving away batteries of 10,000 mAh with the message „Here's a power bank. You'll need it“ to those who made a long line at an Apple flagship store in Singapore.

In short, the experience is about generating engagement by exploiting the senses with which the body receives the messages, but in addition to the sensory it is about merging with the everyday and that the brands achieve articulation with the essence and with the cultural practices of their target audiences.

Example: a father is about to go out with his daughter, she has a soccer game, but the beloved bulldog mascot ruined the football shoes. What to do? Amazon with its Prime Air service takes you in a drone some new shoes in 30 minutes (or less) at the door of your house. Thus, exposes Amazon in an irreverent spot one of its most recent innovations where beyond the novelty of the use of the drone focuses on the experience offered in an emergency, a family situation that can happen to anyone.

Inviting a sensory exploration involves identifying the wishes of the public. Ikea has done this on multiple occasions responding to the clamor of many of its customers, who asked to have the opportunity to spend a night in the store. Ikea's experiential response was to offer a sleepover so that the attendees could enjoy the comfort, functionality and could also be treated as if it were a spa at home. Or can you imagine playing Pictionary in front of a screen that comes to life in a hallway of a mall to receive different prizes as if it were a „Jumanji“ effect? Or how about running fast in a train station against the clock to feel like James Bond fulfilling a mission to finally receive a refreshing Coca Cola and some tickets for the premiere of 007?

Experiential marketing then tries to draw bridges between the senses, the daily life of clients and the abilities of brands to enter the private and cultural sphere of their target audiences to connect, to satisfy wishes and then satisfy needs [Schmitt, 1999].

The social causes have not been distant to the exploration of the experiential, in this case for express purposes of persuading different sectors of the citizenry to collect funds or at least raise awareness about a particular problem. In this sense, technological support such as virtual reality or augmented reality, have been constituting immersive channels to achieve greater penetration and impact despite geographic distances.

Cases such as the devastation in Syria due to the bombings that have affected a large portion of the civil population prompted Amnesty International to launch the website 360syria.com in order to enhance the collection of funds that had already been done in a conventional manner. The resource: the use of virtual reality helmets where citizens of

London, Manchester, Bristol and Leeds, could see the destruction of Aleppo caused by the barrel bombs launched by the Syrian president Bashar el Asad.

Movements in the defense of animals have also found in the virtual reality a support to sensitize the population around the abuses suffered by pigs, cows and chickens in industrialized farms. This is the case of iAnimal, an international organization that focuses on reporting animal abuse. Through 360 ° tours, they immerse the user in an experiential story, to put themselves in the animal's place and to partially measure the situations of suffering and overcrowding that they go through.

Transmedia storytelling, what are they about?

In the contemporary times of experiential marketing, transmedia narratives have been consolidated as perhaps the most powerful resource to connect, promote brands and even more important, legitimize discourses, ideas and values made up in a story of zombies, superheroes, animals that carry in your pocket, a school of magicians or stories of far far away galaxies. Barring exceptional cases, the vast majority of transmedia narratives make their appearance alongside the mass media in the twentieth century. Cinema, literature and comics are the genesis of a large part of the stories that currently seduce and reach high rates of acceptance.

A transmedia narrative is a story that unfolds in multiple media where the prosumers assume various active roles for the expansion of the story [Scolari, 2013]. It is a whole set of narrative experiences that in different platforms allow audiences to do multiple immersions with their favorite characters, connecting with them and feeding the narrative universe, even extracting them to the real world.

For example, fears before an apocalyptic scenario have been present in the cultures of many societies. Hence, the narrative of The Walking Dead is added to previous experiences around stories that test audiences in relation to moral and ethical dilemmas in situations of fragility. This feed debates among audiences and from there arise prosumers that expand the narrative universe. There is also the traditional product placement in the narrative, where for example Rick Grimes and Shane Walsh save their lives thanks to the reliable Hyundai SUV before a frantic attack of zombies. In fact, during the second season, a car similar to the one that appeared in the series was raffled among the fans under the slogan „drive to survive!“.

In the case of superheroes, it is inevitable not to refer to the Marvel narrative that has reached historical peaks with the films produced in the last 10 years. Debates against the arms production (Iron Man), overpopulation and finite resources of the planet (Avengers: Infinity War) or reflections on interculturality and exploitation of the environment (Black Panther) are issues that have been coming in these fiction narratives, recognizing the realities of their audiences and the media agenda.

And what about the PokemonGo phenomenon? which managed to fuse tangible environments with the famous monsters that evolve through the use of augmented reality. Perhaps one of the most memorable cases is that of Amadeu Busquets, a Spaniard over 70 years old who, when diagnosed with diabetes, had to walk at least 4 kilometers. When he discovered the App his boring routine of touring Barcelona was transformed, to the point of walking 3,654 kilometers in 1 year.

Experiences such as these allow us to identify the passions and connections that transmedia narratives awaken, where the key is collective action and the culture of media convergence to raise the impact of stories and their contents on people's daily lives.



Conclusions

Thinking about marketing today implies thinking about the need to build powerful, persuasive, credible stories. Stories that allow multisensory experiences. It's not just about selling, it's about positioning discourses, ways of seeing the world. Generating money capital does not make sense if symbolic capitals are not being created behind. Selling a million cell phones does not ensure the success of a brand if after that sale there are no significant experiences that last in the collective memory.

The potential of experiential marketing cannot be ignored, since it is still a young trend, with many narrative and technological possibilities to be discovered. It is precisely in this sense that he has been encountering transmedia storytelling, one of his main pillars and evidence of the impact of a story on the daily lives of current societies.

This is where the audience often becomes a heterogeneous group of prosumers, capable of realizing, evangelizing and adding elements to the narrative universe that allow its expansion. Now are times of collective intelligences and cultures under media convergence where stories, experiences, but above all, the ability to position themselves against other stories prevail. Process that depends to a large extent on the contagion effects that are achieved in the citizens, so that through their active roles they give part of their privacies to invite others to be part of a narrative, to then activate the consumption of a product or service, or be a participant in a social cause.

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