

Chapter 23

Transmedia and Transliteracy in Nemetical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The increasing diversification of interconnected media platforms, which provide a complex discourse, demands an effective use of the space that is now called “transmedia.” This chapter provides terms and definitions for transmedia and for the new set of personal skills and abilities required to participate in it. It also presents the nemetic system, which facilitates analyzing, tracking, and visualizing communication interactions in virtual transmedia environments. Learning to use these new media platforms requires skills beyond the traditional listening and reading to be able to integrate multiple messages in multiple codes as an essential skill both for personal and professional communication. This transliteracy is a complex ability of intertextual navigation, the strategy for coding and decoding the multidiscourse in the digital ecosystem.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing diversification of interconnected media platforms, which provide a complex discourse, demands an effective use of the space that is now called “transmedia.” This article provides terms and definitions for transmedia and for the new set of personal skills and abilities required to participate in it: “transliteracy.” It also presents the nemetic system, which facilitates analyzing, tracking, and visualizing communication interactions in virtual transmedia environments.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7601-3.ch023

Since humans started to use both gestural and oral codes to communicate, messages have been elaborated and expressed differently when different communication channels were in use. In recent times, with the dawn of radio and television, that fragmentation of content has become of interest to researchers (Steinberg, 2012), and has been identified as a characteristic of mass media (McLuhan, 1994).

With social media, content is fragmented across multiple virtual and physical platforms, with varying degrees of interaction that add complexity to social communication. Interactivity among multiple authors and multiple audiences generates dynamic “cross-media” seriality, “transmedia narrative” that has been studied from educational, entertainment, and sociological points of view (Dena, 2009).

Learning to use these media requires skills beyond the traditional listening and reading, to be able to integrate multiple messages in multiple codes, as an essential skill both for personal and professional communication. This transliteracy is a complex ability of intertextual navigation, the strategy for coding and decoding the multidiscourse in the digital ecosystem.

These recursive communication experiences are the subject of recent research (Duarte, 2014) that explores cognitive patterns in narrative that can be represented through geometric models, consolidating the use of the term “fractal narrative” in the transmedia context. The aim of this multilevel analysis is to take into account individual discourse (micro level), collective interaction (meso level) and community knowledge building (macro level). Interested readers will find a practical example of this in the documentation of the co-creative process that led to Daniel Durrant’s representation of a NEME (Figure 2 of this article) (Nemetics Institute, 2015).

In December 2010, Mark Frazier had explored the fractal essence of digital discourse, and debated with Spiro Spiliadis, Daniel Durrant, and Michael Josefowicz the possibilities of expressing its complexity using a symbolic language (Frazier, 2010). After this early work with Ebdish (Emergent by Design’ish), the nemetic system has emerged as a more elaborated code to express and visualize interactive communication processes in the transmedia ecosystem (De, 2014).

BACKGROUND: TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Transmedia

The term “transmedia” is attributed to Marsha Kinder, who in 1991 used it to refer to an emerging entertainment supersystem, involving intertextuality and multiple sources with different levels of interaction (Kinder, 1991). It applied to tools, processes, and concepts, and opened the door to media that had not been invented then, such as wearables, implants, or augmented reality devices.

In 2003 Henry Jenkins described a process of “transmedia storytelling” in which “each medium does what it does best, so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics, and its world might be explored and experienced through game play.” (Jenkins, 2003) Later, he defined transmedia storytelling as a process “where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience.” (Jenkins, 2007)

Probably the best-known example of transmedia storytelling is the Star Wars franchise. The fictional universe of Luke Skywalker, Yoda, Han Solo, Darth Vader, and Lord Sith is created through the synergy of films, books, role playing games, comics, video games, toys, and animated shows, to create a collective imaginary world. But transmedia storytelling is not limited to the entertainment world.

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