

Research methodology

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Preliminary Research Methods Proposal

Introduction

I have met transmedia storytelling far ahead than I even realized. There was this generation that *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter* have become every kids' dream, as a representative of this generation, I have been obsessed with the two stories and devoted myself deeply in collecting the story from piece to piece, from books, comics, films and even last year, I went a trip to Orlando Harry Potter theme park. During my undergraduate school, I found out the collection I was doing is well designed and carefully programmed by the owner (no matter it is a film studio or any other institution) of the story. Obviously I still have no idea what I was facing at. That is a marketing strategy to brand a story through multiple media, a clever one, is what I had in mind.

At the beginning of the past term, I finally knew the exact word and some meanings of transmedia, and how could the conception practice into reality. The new and familiar acknowledge made me obsessed to the word of transmedia and became a relevant topic for my final research.

Thus, for my final research, I propose to document and explore the merging trends of Hollywood films that are producing transmedia storytelling narration and the influence of the trend on art world. Graduated from a commercial film production relevant program and consider producing films as my lifelong career, I pitched on Hollywood film as the object to expand the discussion.

My research question is launched on the discussion of how does Hollywood Transmedia storytelling influence art production. As observing through commercial film objective, sub-questions are pitched as following:

- How did transmedia storytelling happen?
- What mediums are included during a Hollywood film production?
- How does Hollywood Transmedia storytelling engage with audiences, or to say, fans?
- Can transmedia storytelling help branding a story and its effectiveness?
- How can art production learn from the trend?

Lecture review

In order to gain an overall understanding to the concepts of transmedia storytelling, the first source I read is an article covering through the general introduction of transmedia function at the aspect of media production. The article is a journal from International Journal of Communication, the *Transmedia Storytelling: Implicit Consumers, Narrative Worlds, and Branding in Contemporary Media*

Production by Carlos Alberto Scolari. The article gives me a fully understanding toward concepts and functions of Transmedia Storytelling in a well structure. However when finding answers of my sub questions, Perfessor Henry Jenkins' work seems a better material to look into, I suppose Jenkins' book and his blog is going to be an important resource for my next term.

The second peer-reviewed source I read is an article on observing the trend of transmedia storytelling phenomenon. The *Media Technologies, Transmedia Storytelling and Commodification* (2007) written by Göran Bolin. The article launches on the phenomenon of medias that has been central to the reshaping of the media landscapes over the past two decades.

The author as well states this generation is living under rapidity changing due to new tools and techniques are being invented. In order to support the statement of rapidly changing, he gives an example of the *Matrix*. Before reading Jenkins' books, I as well as most people who are researching on the topic, keeps consider that Matrix is a representative example of Transmedia Storytelling. However according to Henry, we cannot understand the key clue of the story if missing the stories taken place in the comic books, short animation and video game of *Matrix*. There is no doubt to put a complete story into different media and leave them for audiences to track the whole thing can be really exciting for fans, as for a normal audience who is facing one production of the series, it may occur a hesitate to participate due to not consume all. As we are know there are gaps in telling a story through different

medias during managing transmedia production, this lead me to a further question:
How can multiple media interactive properly?

The third article I look in is *Transmedia Storytelling, Corporate Synergy, and Audience Expression* by Leigh H. Edwards. The author uses analysis key examples as his main method to observe the transmedia storytelling, which gives me a really good list to observe successful Hollywood transmedia productions.

After going through excerpts touching on the trend of transmedia storytelling aspects, I decide to look into the practice uses of this relevant new production. Thus, the next book I read is *using comics to construct your Transmedia storyworld* by Tyler Weaver. At the third chapter (“comics and Convergence”) of the book, the context examines the mixture of comics with titular film, games and animation and focus on a question:” What are the strengths of each medium and how can the particular storytelling conventions of the comic medium augment those strengths and fill in where they are lacking?” (p.3). The author expands on the question into three case studies of successful transmedia productions by observing the way the productions are interacting. The way Weaver answers toward his question is lead me to my main research method: case study.

After reading through Weaver’s book, the methods he uses for research notice me the essential position of case study method may provide toward transmedia

storytelling productions, the last article I read focuses directly into two case studies, which is *Two Successful Transmedia Case Studies: The Blair Witch Project (1999) and The Devil Inside (2012)* by JT Velikovsky. Although the main question of the article is as well how to function transmedia storytelling, the article failed to expand on the topic.

However in order to make a comparison and thus to give evident of transmedia storytelling effectiveness, the author provides data of average feature film investment return of the two feature films to support his statement. And this leads me to my third research method of database collection.

Methodological design and discussion

For my final research I proposed to use are lecture review, database collection and case study to discuss my topic.

Lecture review

As O' Leary stated:

“There really is no other way around it- reading is an essential part of the research process. Why? Because you cannot really engage in research from a platform of ignorance.” (O' Leary. P71)

This works much more essential when discussing Transmedia object, most people are strange to this word and as well the trend. As mentioned above, me myself am

not familiar with the trend. To give a background and measurement to the effectiveness to of the new trend, I found myself starting at the very beginning of media. When doing this assignment, I finally got myself reading some really helpful books to “self-education” (O’ Leary. P71).

The tool I will be likely using is to review on the definition and existing texts of the key word relate to the topic. Key words may seem clutter in a research project, however when looking into difination of the key to the topic, a structured content can present an unfamiliar topic clearly. And as for my topic, without a clear discussed to the key words, it is likely to cause chaos understanding as we are now it is hard to boundary cross media and transmedia.

Possible key words might be: Media, Narrative, Transmediation, Transmedia Storytelling, Film Production.

As this is still a beginning period of my research, the only key word I have work on is media and a little on transmedia storytelling. The examples of how I used this method is below:

As we are living under a generation period that media is becoming much more essential and interactive ever period, ease access to multiple mediums diverse our technology life significantly and is constantly playing an increasingly influence in our lives. According to the Professor Henry Jenkins of University of Southern California, “Spreadability recognizes the importance of the social connections among individuals, connections increasingly made visible (and amplified) by social media platforms.” (H. Jenkins, 2013, p6). The “Spreadability recognize” allows

information shared in several levels through social connections via variety mediums. Media producers have thus been able to narrative one story into both upstream and downstream productions domestically and internationally.

The conception and inclusion of Transmedia Storytelling is well defined by Phillips Andrea as “the technique of telling a single story or story experience across multiple platforms and formats including, but not limited to, games, books, events, cinema and television.” (P, Andrea. 2012)

I have as well worked on the historical development of Transmedia Storytelling, The origination of the approach to disperse the content across various media can be traced to the Japanese marketing strategy of media remix in early 1960, (H, Jenkins. 2006 p110). The timeline of the origination is interacted with my third methods.

Database Collection

When I decided to use database collection as my second method, what concerns me is as my third method is case study, that the method in some ways will be concluded with the content of database. Or to say, when structure chapter of the project, the two methods may be in the same chapter as I expand on them. However my sub question goes to observe on the effectiveness transmedia storytelling production may cause and the importance art organization may learn from the trend, I suppose this is a method I must launch on.

The effectiveness can be a part of case study indeed, however it showed the essential of it that can be then separate from the case itself. As I am observing commercial Hollywood film, it can be really challenge to collect data directly from the producer of those works, the data collection method I will be using is indirect data collection to work with existing ‘texts’. The tool is going to be analysis data of my cases comparing to other film productions. To be more direct, the box office record and audiences /fans engage of the productions. The object, of course need to expand, a good box office results can be caused by different possible, not necessarily be the effect of transmedia storytelling.

In that case, at some point I may use direct data collection via questionnaire to help support my statement. Possible questions can be choice and experience toward a transmedia storytelling production.

Case study

The third, and the main research method I will use is to discuss at least two case studies of Hollywood Transmedia productions.

During taking the performing art course of AAD, I have already started observing a case of *Les Misérables* transmedia production. When doing the case study, I find out an interesting tool, or more likely a way to discuss the topic. It is to analysis the history, not only the case, but as well transmedia storytelling, to compare the timeline of the two objects. And by doing this I found an interesting phenomenon.

Before study the case of *Les Misérables* directly, I looked into the aspect of the *adaptation from a fiction to a play*. While an original fiction or short story is adapted into a play, rewriting, translation and literary adaptations happens. The original text is pruned or compressed as the example of the abridge versions of *Don Quixote*. The derivative work expands the original may lead to another literary style and narrative material by extra scenes. In this adaptation, transmedia trend of theater production can be historical, it can trace far ahead before the word is definite, ‘The Bible, the Homeric epics, the Bhagvad-gita, and many other classic stories have been rendered in plays and the visual arts across centuries. There are paintings portraying episodes in mythology and Shakespeare plays.’ (D, Bordwell, 2009). However as mentioned above, and according to Jenkins, the origins of the approach to disperse the content across various media can be traced to the Japanese marketing strategy of media remix in early 1960 (H, Jenkins, 2006 p110), how can cross media from fiction to theater was adopted so far from the time when the Japanese invented *media remix* in 1960s?

When figuring the question, I found a quote states that as a play can make a story happens ‘when the traditional proscenium stage is altered to bring the action on the stage closer to the audience.’ (Izzo p21).

As professor Jenkins has spotlighted, transmedia narratives create a more complex overall experience than that can provide by any text alone (H, Jenkins. 2006). While during centuries ago, cross media can only presented through play, oral and literature, which is now developed into film, video, television and even

games. The experience can be accomplished by actors twist among the different texts. And each unique experience can lead to a thought of tracking the entire story world.

In that case, I figures the answer of the question is due to the distinct experience of watching a play other than reading the story from a book. It is the whole area of what we now consider as adaptation is how matter of stories told by plays in a theater, the experience of cross media storytelling.

Still, this interesting finding may not be relevant to the topic I am working at, since all the objects I will be observing are recent years Hollywood production that none of them could have existing before 1960s. However to observe and compare both objects of the case and topic itself is working for my research, and could be a likely a special tool for the third method I have.

In conclusion, when writing the finish point of this paper, I realized how much works I will be facing, however the more I work on it, the enthusiastic grows. And after reading some of the works from Jenkins and determined on the final three methods I will be using, it seems I am now standing on a right start.

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