Mechanisms of Influence in Cross-Media Narration

Svitlana Bezchotnikova*

Department of Social Communication, Dean of the Philology and Mass Communication Faculty, Mariupol State University, Ukraine

*Corresponding author:
Svitlana Bezchotnikova

✉ www.sv-@mail.ru;
sbezchotnikova@gmail.com

Professor of Social Communication Department, Dean of the Philology and Mass Communication Faculty, Mariupol State University, Mariupol, Stroiteley Ave, 129, Ukraine.

Tel: +380 629 532 260

Abstract

The research is focused on the top-rated Ukrainian cross-media projects suggested to the Ukrainian audience in 2010-2015. The methodological approach includes description, comparison and expert assessment analysis in accordance with the principles of narrative studies and hermeneutics. As a result, the most effective platforms, technologies and types of narration are defined. It is shown, that all the popular Ukrainian cross-media projects are carried out within the framework of the world trend – united facilities of mobile telephony, Internet and television. The most effective form of the audience organization is gamification which can be evaluated in this case as a type of archaization, because the game is a more ancient form than culture. Interactive and game forms aimed at maximizing co-creation influences the consumer`s identity. Integrated full-plot campaigns save in the hermeneutic code the principle of enigma which is created with the help of cinematic effects and genre canons of mass culture.

 Among the most common tools of influence in cross-media, the following dominants are identified: mythology, detailed elaboration, accentuation, archaization, format, strengthening of the impact on emotions, making active the mechanisms of emotional contagion, crowd manipulation, suggestion (lat. suggestio). The research of the mechanisms of the influence in cross media narration arouses not only the question of the increasing efficiency of advertising and promotion. It also arouses the question of correspondence with ethical standards.

Keywords: Cross-media narration; Target audience; Identity; Gamification; Emotional; Contagion

Introduction

Digital technologies have influenced greatly not only the form but the content of media too. Media convergence has caused the appearance of such terms as multimedia, cross-media and transmedia which have become very popular in the modern communication sphere. First of all, it is very important to define the semantics of these words. It is noteworthy that most of the works concerned with the problem under analysis were written by experts in marketing, communication strategies and advertising and are largely concerned with the functional aspects of how to create a successful project, for example, such works as "Getting Started with Transmedia Storytelling" by Robert Pratten, "Transmedia 2.0. How to Create an Entertainment Brand Using a Trans medial Approach to Storytelling" by Nuno Bernardo ((Bernardo,) and "Transmedia Marketing" by Anne Zeiser, etc. Experts' discussions titled "The differences between multimedia, crossmedia and transmedia storytelling', 'Crossmédia, Transmédia… quelles différences?'), Multimedia, Cross-media, Transmedia… What's in a name?' [1] reveal discrepancies in use of words.

 To clear up the definition of these terms, their genesis and etymology really matter. The most widespread use of the word "multimedia" is related to journalism. The word combination "cross-media" often follows the word "marketing" to determine the scope. The word combination "transmedia storytelling" holds more wide sphere of mass communication. In our opinion, Kevin Moloney [1] proposed suitable formulas, such as:

Multimedia=One story, many forms, one channel;

Cross-media=One story, many channels;

Transmedia=One story world, many stories, many forms, many channels [1].

But these formulas do not embrace all the manifestations. It is

the research aimed at finding solution to the problem of dialog between fundamental science and the industry of brand new practices that must help understand the nature of a particular phenomenon and explain the mechanisms of influence as well as constant and variable characteristics.

Taking into account that in the postmodern epoch we are dealing not with clear forms but with collaborative forms. We can speak only about the dominants. In our case the cross-media dominant which has become more and more popular in the practices of transnational companies. This fact is demonstrated by the International Exhibition of Cross-Media Projects held in London (2013) which was visited by more than 6000 specialists in marketing and public relations. The Cross Media UK Trade Show, Cross-media – Japan Expo, the Conference CROSS - Change MEDIA 2016 Magdeburg-Stendal and Crossmedia Japan Expo Paris 2017. It shows stable interest to the theme.

Aim of Research

The aim of the research is to define the mechanisms of influence on the target audience with the help of cross-media projects investigation. To achieve the goal, we have to fulfill the following assignments: 1) to describe the structure of the top-rated cross-media projects suggested to the Ukrainian audience in 2010-2015; 2) to find out the most effective platforms, techniques, instruments and types of narration; 3) to determine interconnection between the popular techniques of cross-media narration and the mechanisms of influence on the target audience for further quantitative research.

Methods

The methodological approach includes description, comparison and expert assessment analysis in accordance with the principles of narrative studies and hermeneutics based on comprehensive research of such cross-media projects as "I love Ukraine" run by the Kievstar Company, "Red Quest" run by the MTC Company, "Star Factory" run by New Channel, "The beauty inside" run by the Intel and the Toshiba Companies, "Sun Valley Skip Town" run by the Sun Valley Resort Hotel and "Decode Jay-Z" run by the Microsoft Company.

In describing these projects, we cannot use the term "cross-media marketing". Instead we must use such terms as cross-media narration (Gerard Genette) and cross-media storytelling. The cross-media narrative is an interactive multimedia story presented on a number of media platforms in a variety of entertaining and gaming forms. Prefix -cross means movement through different media platforms, embodying the idea of media convergence; the narrative being the form of experience organized through the story. The structure of such story preamble is a kind of request in character meant to unite various parties and components of the situation of communication into a single communicative act.

The phenomenon of cross-media communication is relevant to the socio-cultural situation of postmodern era with mass culture dominating. An individual is both a consumer and co-creator of this culture. The modern individual's outlook is shaped by the knowledge acquired through indirect communication via Internet, mobile phones, social networks, computer games, cinema and

is characterized by rhizomatic unity of diverse elements. As for the recipient, the reality appears to be chaotic and fragmented even in terms of determining the symbolically articulated mode of existence which is predominant. Paul-Michel Foucault, a theoretician of post-modernism, emphasizes a new mode of thinking based on the non-linear method of understanding the world that emerged in the epoch of post-modernism.

This new semiotic system is strongly influenced by media. At the time of the Advertising Week Conference held in Kiev, Nielsen Company made a report concerned with the development of the new phenomenon of cross-platforming. Vice-President of this Company Patricia Mc Donah mentioned, among the results of the research as the trends of media market, the use of TV with on-line services and digital media content. The world's media consumption is turning towards DVD-movies, HD-ordered content, video games and digital Internet entertainment broadcasting.

In order to achieve good results, it has become important for a company involved in advertising or public relations to consider the united impact of all the communication channels. According to Dug Bruks, Vice-President of Marketing Management Analytics, "the capacity to unite media assets, measuring, segmentations and planning in one "integrated vision" will become new criteria of success" [2].

This integrated vision reveals itself in integrated history, which must intrigue and be interesting to the target audience. Let us analyze the most popular cross-media projects in Ukraine during the recent five years from the viewpoint of the aforementioned criteria: the type of the platform, the type of the recipient's manner of adjusting activities and the type of the narration. For example, the project "Red Quest" implemented by the advertising agency "Grape" intended to work with young people. Among the selected groups of the target audience, the preferences in terms of free time were divided as follows:

- Establishment
- Watching tv: 68%;
- Surfing the internet: 38%;
- Getting about the city: 27%;
- Playing computer games: 17%;
- Peak-fashion young people
- Listening to music: 74%;
- Watching tv: 61%;
- Spending time with friends: 58%;
- Looking through the internet: 53%;
- Mass total
- Watching tv: 72%;
- Caring for the economy: 44%;
- Surfing the internet: 33%.

As a result, the following platforms were chosen: television (the genre of talk show) and the Internet (social networks, blogosphere and websites) enabled by the mobile application provided by the MTS Company. The cross-media project "I Love Ukraine" organized by the agency "Adventa LOWE" was carried out on-line through portal and mobile services (SMS and MMS) as well as through e-mail and television (commercials on TV and competition with stars of show-business). The main platform for "The Star Factory" televised the on Ukrainian media market by

the "Star Light" Company was television and mobile interactive communication facilities (SMS-voting), an Internet portal and printed matter. The original version of this project designed by the British company "Endemol" was repeated in the national versions of nearly 50 countries. It is noteworthy that almost all the Ukrainian projects were analogues of the popular foreign versions and were implemented within the aforementioned market trend-a combination of opportunities available due to mobile communication, the Internet and television. The form of activity of the target audience in cross-media projects is the game. This form can be interpreted as an archaic technique. It makes communication simpler and more attractive, because the game serves as a more ancient form of activity than culture is. In general, it helps attract a wider range of consumers.

Despite various practices of gamification in advertising and public relations, the main goal of its usage is improvement of bilateral cooperation in the process of communication. The assignment herein involved is to understand the needs and the interests of the recipients and to make them become a priority which, in implementing promotion activity, helps meet the consumers' needs. Thus, Björk B, Vice-President of "Research Gamify", states that organizations should use game approach to achieve the goal of customers, staff and target communities. Reaching this goal, organizations increase their own business results [3]. Director of Brand Content Sales of the "Star Light" Company Tyulenev A comes to this conclusion. He ascertains that in cross-media projects "the main story is not so much a brand-story, but consumer`s story with product`s support" [4].

The aforementioned projects demonstrate strengthening of this tendency. For example, the interactive character of the project "I Love Ukraine" was determined by the idea of making photos in order to create an electronic album of picturesque Ukrainian landscapes. The idea was supported by the competition on the project's website, intellectual games for those interested in Ukrainian history, geography and culture studies with cash prizes equaling 1 million, 80,000 and 20,000.

In the cross-media project "Red Quest", the search of vitally important places via online quest and quest on the streets was organized. The game in social networks and geolocation mobile apps made it possible for participants to earn currency in bonuses and suprimas which were exchanged for gifts and to expand their opportunities in the MTS network. This tendency is demonstrated by the latest version of the "The Star Factory" as well, whereas the target audience plays the role of a co-author of the project. In playing the game, users change the storyline of the program by engaging in the fan clubs of their stars, giving them tasks and evaluating their performance through mobile voting.

Common place in all the cross-media projects is a story that turns around the brand-hero or the brand-idea. In the project "I love Ukraine", it is the patriotic idea of united Ukraine implemented through a virtual trip of the most attractive nooks of the country. In the project "Sun Valley Skip Town", it is a journey through some picturesque places around the favorite hotel for good rest. As for "The Star Factory", it is the main hero's cautionary tales aimed at searching for talents among the TV viewers. In the "Red Quest" game, ideas are based on literary allusions, images of popular

science fiction novels and films "Transformers 3", "Men in Black", "Star Wars" and "Spiderman". In the season of September-December 2010, the plot is focused on searching for the source of unlimited energy security guards; May-August 2011 told the viewers about the fight against the enemies of the mankind. It should be noted that the aforementioned projects solve the problem of meeting the participants' spiritual and social needs, such as: the need of recognition, socialization and self-realization.

In a cross-media project, the story is organized in the form of narrative. The problem of the narrative in mass media was studied in historical, typological, structural and functional aspects (narrative media studies). Here it is necessary to mention the joint work of scientists from Cambridge University Fulton H, Huisman R, Morphet J and Dunn A which resulted in the emergence of "Narrative and Media" [5]. It is also necessary to mention the work of American researcher Marie L Ryan, which resulted in the emergence of "Narrative across Media" [6]. Analysis of the narrative is based on the classical theory by Propp V, Levi-Strauss K, Barth R and Tz. Todorov. On the basis, thereof, the analysis units are hermeneutic, symbolic, semantic, referential, octantal codes, binary oppositions, types of storylines and characters.

In cross-media narration, the narrative serves not only as a link, but as a technique of approaching to the recipient's inner world as well. The process of involving the participant of the project in co-creation of the story makes an impact on the identity, thus making it possible for the object under promotion to enter into the consumer`s life. In "Memory, History, Forgetting", Ricoeur P writes that there is a direct link between human memory and identity, with the same memory material can be lined up different narratives of identity [7]. Russian researcher Turusheva Y argues that such a complicated structure as a human identity can only exist in time as a narrative. This helps create understanding of the integrity of life and construct an "I-Center" which preserves personal experience [8]. Thus, people organize their lives through a "personal myth" narrative. Professor H. Levin introduced the term "the principle of Don Quixote" which means that while listening, watching or reading process, the reader, the spectator or the listener identifies himself with the main character and begins to play this role in the real world [9]. Actually, in these cross-media projects, the consumer is suggested becoming the main character or someone who creates a virtual world of the cross-media project`s history [10].

The mechanisms of attracting audiences to cross-media projects can be passive, active, interactive and mixed. Active, interactive and collaborative forms are aimed at transformation of the identity. Influence on the recipient is made through the narrative structure which is open to the consumer`s creativity as much as possible.

In the multiline plot, complex campaigns, such as the MTS project "Red Quest" and single-line stories, such as the project held by the hotel "Sun Valley Resort" and titled "Sun Valley Skip Town", the hermeneutic code remains the principle of a riddle the consumer (the reader or the listener) must solve. This incentive leads the participants to a happy end which can be represented by a collective photo album, an artifact or numerous rewards in the form of bonuses and gifts.

The common feature for all the projects remains the hero as a given opportunity for the recipient to become like him. The idea of the project is not always embodied into the plot. Binary oppositions, literary allusions and reminiscences and the project's participants playing various roles characterize only full-campaigns, such as MTS's "Red Quest" or Microsoft's "Decode Jay-Z".

In the dynamics of the plot, the recipient himself creates a story of his own. The fragmental structure of media content's consumption helps him form connections between episodes and platforms of integrated services. Integrated and interactive projects can combine several media platforms, various types of authors' narrations and several styles in a virtual experiment. The types of combination of platforms can be the following: serial, parallel, simultaneous and non-linear. The type of audience participation can be the following: passive, active, interactive and mixed.

The types of cross-media projects correlate with the world's development trends of the communication market, Internet technologies and conventional models of communication described by Games E Grunig and Todd Hunt.

First, the Publicity Model involves a message sent in one order direction. Its main goal is to convey information to the consumer. It correlates with Internet technologies at the stage of web 1.0. In cross media versions, it is content promotion of various forms on various platforms when the screen version or the audio version is adapted to other types of media (websites, social networks, mobile multiplatform, computer games, etc.). The edited and adapted version of the content makes it possible for producer to promote it to other platforms. It also enables the consumer to use the media product regardless of the time and the place of its occurrence in mass media. Thus, the consumer can create an order of his own, his own version made of a number of scattered pieces.

The second Public Information Model meant for public meaningful messages is based on extensive audience participation in the process of communication. As for its character, it is of a one-way one. It correlates with the development of Internet technologies at the stage web 2.0. In cross media communication, this type is called "optional". The main production of media content focuses on the main platform, its further spread in other forms and on other platforms once transferred from the main platform. For example, a TV blockbuster can be transformed into a computer game or a radio performance in the edited version.

The third, Two-way Asymmetric Model, always includes communication with the target audience. Planning of projects is based on monitoring studies. This model is the most common technology using web 3.0. In cross-media communication, it causes transition to more efficient management systems and more effective impacts on the target audience. The advancing mechanism on the target audience in this type of cross-media communication is narration's structure or services that encourage particular actions, conversion to other platforms, SMS-voting, e-newsletter subscription in order just to fulfill commercial assignments. An example can be the project "The Star Factor" led by New Channel in Ukraine.

The fourth, Two-way Symmetric Model, is the most flexible one which contains the study of perception level of influence and results of a communication act on its target, enabling one to manage the feedback and to step by step correct effects of suspense. It backs up web 4.0 technologies and combines the first three levels. At this stage, cross-media and transmedia terms are equivalent. The subject of PR-activity creates only conditions for the game, a real unpredictable experiment where the consumer's experience is personalized. The audience creates its own stories and links which become a part of big postmodern history which, thanks to the many views and reconstructions, never ends.

On the basis of the analysis of successful cross-media projects, the following features can be defined:

- Fragmented nature of spread and consumption of media products located on numerous platforms, which makes it to possible to widen the target audience;

- Cinematic approach to the screen script formed on the principles of genre clichés and thematic canons of mass literature;

- Encouraging the audience to target activity through the game;

- Using the interactive forms for the target audience for the purpose of maximum co-creation;

- Cross-media narration aimed at transforming the identity.

As a communication technology, it unites the technics of event management and media relations for the purpose of reaching a synergic effect and providing for the target audience's loyalty to the object under promotion. Cooperation with media is adjusted in the form of advertorials method (a combination of advertising and informing). To create such a story, it is necessary to take into account not only the profitable implementation assignment, but the assignment of positioning the company (product) as well. To highlight the image as romantic, fantastic or desired, the image-creating tools and the arsenal of mass culture will be helpful.

The event (performance) communication technique in cross-media projects is used to encourage the audience to act instead of being a passive consumer of a product. It is based on the traditional rules of the promotion performance, such as constructing the plot according to the interests of the audience, dramatization, highlighting the image in an inspiring light, creating sustainably positive impression of the product, attracting celebrities. Compared with the traditional PR techniques, exclusivity of the cross-media project lies in its virtual form and entertainment character. The game evokes positive emotions, attracts, constructs an intrigue and satisfies consumers, fulfilling not only the informative but the advertising function as well. Due to this, the main message of the promotion campaign becomes more targeted, more personally oriented and thus more efficient.

Among the most common tools of cross media narration are such dominants as mythology, detailed elaboration, accentuation, archaization, format, strengthening the impact on emotions. An important role in positioning the image is played by sharpness of presentation. Sensation, intrigue, provocation and exclusivity are used for the purpose of reaching this effect.

For example, in the project Droga5 Agency for the Microsoft Company, the idea of diary reading of the popular rapper singer Jay-Z was realized through a game – the task was to find Jay-Z's things in real places (cafes, cinemas, museums, pools, etc.). Symbols on the map in a special section of the "Bing" search system became the tips for participants. Thus, the myth of the hero, an ordinary guy who became a pop star, the idol of young, had been read through the vital details of his biography. This story was enforced by Jay-Z's reminiscences as influence on emotions. The format of the search game helped involves a wide audience and keep mass interest in the book, which remained in the list best-seller books for 11 weeks. As a result, Bing added 12% of users and Jay-Z added 1 million fans on his Facebook page. Thus, the projects used such image tools as mythology, detailed elaboration, accentuation, archaization and a format-shaped kit meant for creation of the event and promotion of the media to the consumers.

Conclusions

Almost all the top-rated Ukrainian cross-media projects are analogues of the popular foreign versions, and are carried out within the framework of the world trend – united facilities of mobile telephony, the Internet and television. The most efficient form of the audience organization is gamification which can be evaluated in this case as a type of archaization, because the game is a more ancient form than culture. Interactive and game forms aimed at maximizing co-creation influences the consumer`s identity. Integrated full-plot campaigns, such as "Red Quest", preserve the principle of enigma in the hermeneutic code created with the help of cinematic effects and genre canons of mass culture. As a communication technology, it unites techniques of event management and media relations. Among the most common tools of influence in cross-media, the following dominants are used: mythology, detailed elaboration, accentuation, archaization, format, strengthening of the impact on emotions, making active the mechanisms of emotional contagion, crowd manipulation, suggestion. Sharpness of presentation is provided by sensation, intrigue, provocation, exclusivity.

The types of cross-media projects correlate with the world trends of the communication market's development, Internet technologies and conventional models of communication described by Games E Grunig and Todd Hunt. On the basis on the analysis of successful cross-media projects the following features can be defined:

- Fragmented nature of spread and consumption of media products located on numerous platforms, making it possible to accumulate the audience;
- Cinematic approach to the screen script formed on the principles of genre clichés and thematic canons of mass literature;
- Encouraging the audience to target activity through the game;
- Usage of interactive forms for the target audience for the purpose of maximum co-creation;
- Cross-media narration aimed at transforming the identity. The research of the mechanisms of the influence in cross media narration arouses not only the question of the increasing efficiency of advertising and promotion. It also arouses the question of correspondence with ethical standards.

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