CHAPTER 5

TRANSMEDIA FOR BRANDS, INSTITUTIONS AND ARTS

Not all the stories can be translated into transmedia storytelling projects, and neither all the brand can. First of all because they share the need of complex story worlds to refer to: not all the stories a brand can potentially tell can correctly be developed and spread on different media in an articulated way. Moreover, since transmedia properties are expansive narrative engines built to deliver almost unlimited stories across multiple media platforms, such richness and complexity can be too wide an objective for a company's communication strategy. Transmedia brands endure through the maintenance of a one-to-one relationship between the brand and the individual consumer, and the "one consumer" needs participation, synergism, mid-term conversation. The one consumer represents millions of consumers who do not speak the same language but can meet together for some time in different media simultaneously thanks to transmedia universes and experience. This bring us back to all the observations in terms of design and editing, technique and management, and, last but not least budget, which we have dealt with in the previous chapters. All these conditions contribute into the creation of the true, tangible difference between the marketing mix used to tell a brand/product, and transmedia used to embody and 'become' the brand/product itself. In order to clearly and stately define

such a boundary it shall be useful to get back to a couple of examples we have used in the previous chapters.

2016. Early in the morning. Mysterious packages popped up around Toronto. "The anti-static bags bore a #ANewSocietyRises writing and a picture of the black and white mask fans of the TV show *Mr. Robot* recognized as the symbol of the show's fictive 'fSociety' hacker collective. Inside the bags: a real $50 bill decorated with the same fSociety mask. Discovered by consumers who'd been following a set of clues online and in OOH (*out-of-home*) ads, the packages were the pot of gold at the end of a branded scavenger hunt created by Shomi to promote the launch of *Mr. Robot* on the streaming service. Crafted by Rethink, the campaign took its inspiration from *Mr. Robot*'s themes, such as hacking and re-distributing wealth. The agency 'hacked' its OOH ads half-way through the campaign with stickers promoting region-specific hashtags. Consumers who searched for the hashtags online discovered an Instagram account where a hooded figured – another piece of imagery borrowed from the show – was pictured hiding packages around Toronto and Vancouver. The campaign's TV spots, by Corus Entertainment, also followed the hacking theme. One of the 30-second spots appeared to be a simple re-run of a previous Shomi brand spot, then a few seconds in the ad was "hacked" by *Mr. Robot* and turned into a spot promoting the show".[1]

Example two. Five years before. The above mentioned TV show *Glee* partners with Chevrolet in an online/real world game. During the series' second season launch, the car brand is present on the red carpet alongside the actors. A presence that can be felt as intrusive since the brand can't justify its role in the narration. But this is not a case of product placement or sponsorship. For the music video filmed with *Glee* for the Superbowl 2011, in fact, the brand integrates the shooting of the commercial into the

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1. Russ, M., *How Shomi "Hacked" its own Mr. Robot Campaign*, accessed november 4, 2016, marketingmag.ca.

Img. 5.1 Mr. Robot on Shomi (2016). Urban artworks and TV-digital campaign.

story of the series, and the online presence of the two brands continues in a joint way furtherly on artworks and ads.

Moving from the role of authors and brands to that of the public of transmedia and looking for the most useful definitions referring to today's "participative consumers" it is relevant to mention Robert V. Kozinetz's *E-Tribalized Marketing,* who divides them – according to their active involvement and to their proactiveness – into the following categories: *tourists, minglers, insiders* and *devotees* (from the least involved users to those most involved in the communication and in the brand content)[2]. Consumers who – in the 'cross media' – co-operate within the range of complex story worlds, so that – if we compare those processes with traditional advertising and customer relationship management – the success of the promotional action shall be evaluated not only in terms of customer loyalty and approval rating, but also according to proactiveness and active engagement.

> Lately we have been experimenting and producing location based storytelling, embedding narratives into the locations that people are in and reaching them with these video-based narratives through their smartphones. I think this is an aspect where brands can utilize transmedia storytelling effectively, to strengthen their positions as

2. Kozinetz, R.V., *E-Tribalized Marketing. The Strategic Implications of Virtual Communities of Comsumption,* in *European Management Journal,* 1999, pp. 252-264.

parts of people's everyday life. AR, location based, VR... the technological methods are many, but at the core lies – as always – the stories and the experiences the audience, the customer, takes part of. The most successful and effective way of crafting such stories and such experiences is via the use of transmedia storytelling methods. Building the story world and the narratives and the arcs and the characters, deciding and focusing on platforms and engagement methods and making sure all parts fit together logically and naturally, thus heightening the overall experience. Only then can successful integration into all parts of people's everyday life become reality. — *Simon Staffans – transmedia Producer and CEO of ReThink NMS*

The relationship traditionally existing between brand and consumer's *emotional repertoire* identified by the "rhetoric of *lovemarks*"[3] in transmedia transforms the brand into a whole made of more narrative story worlds and the consumer into an experimenter, a tutor, a player, a supporter, and much more. Also, the constant and increasingly frequent shift from 'me' to 'you' and vice versa we are witnessing in interactive fruition of stories and brands is leading to a strengthening of the power of the narrative, if compared to that of the desire of possessing a given object or good. As Barry Stamos, CEO and founder of Videoo has it: "Consumers are now asking publishers to bring them not just the facts but the social story. Show me what others, like me, have to say, how they feel and what they're doing about an issue. This is social video transcending "my" story and "my" view and transitioning to 'our' story and 'our' view"[4]. When applying this concept to a brand it grows enormously its importance as the very idea of ownership in contemporary audience has in the meanwhile changed and – as Simon Staffan writes, "We're looking at generations of people NOT looking to

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3. The "rhetoric of lovemarks" as it was termed in 2004 by Kevin Roberts, defines the fundamental relationship existing between the brand and the consumer's *emotional archive*, a crucial element for the consumer to be able to interact with all the media involved in a transmedia communicative system. Ref. to: Roberts, K., *Lovemarks: The Future Beyond Brand*, 2004.

4. Stamos, B., *5 rules for adapting your company to the age of group-storytelling*, accessed may 3, 2016, in: venturebeat.com

own a new car or a fancy apartment […] but instead looking to have experiences to enrich their lives. As storytellers, that's exactly what we should be providing with – access to experiences on different scales, with different demands, different possibilities to dive in and engage, different communities, different niches"[5]. An example?

In 2012 NY agency Barbarian Group creates *GE Show* for American Electricity giant General Electrics, eager to develop a more friendly, ordinary and close to the public image of its brand. GE Show is an online multimedia container which has – over time – collected and hosted documentaries, games and apps which were to show the public all the activities of the business group, from motor to services to companies and hospitals, from aeronautics to renewable energy: the result was 300 million contacts in less than one year.
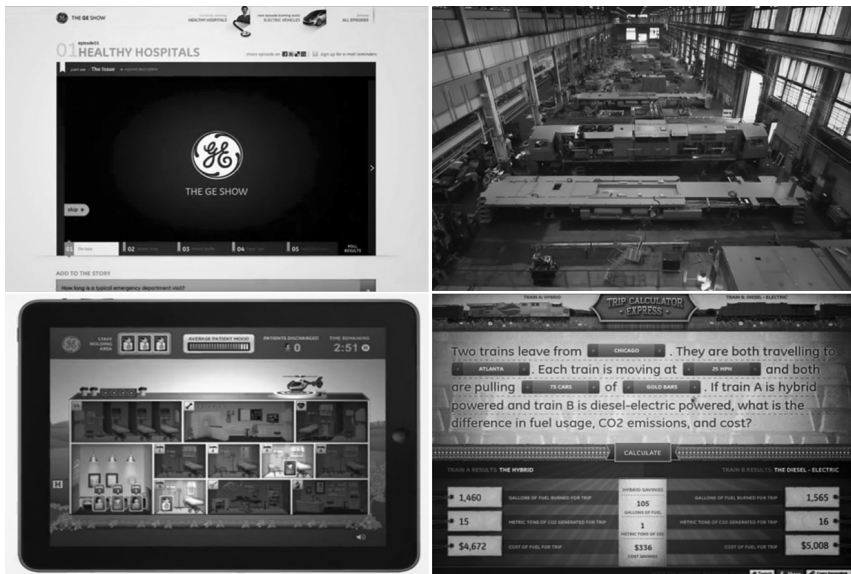
Img. 5.2 General Electrics – GE Show (2012). The show's website, the documentaries, the game apps for iPad and the online videogame.

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5. Staffans, S., *One year...* cit., p. 25.

The project was intended to create and diffuse a different idea of the corporation also by showing a parallel universe to those official media would present, broadly targeted in terms of age of the audience and much closer to the public. GE Show was meant to quickly go beyond its objective and give the company a great opportunity of brand activation to its potential future public: young families, influencers, young people into new media.

It was thanks to a supportive system that GE has exploited a crucial feature typical of transmedia: the creation of real experiences where, as it is with mosaic, all the different parts build on each other offers a total overview that is greater than the sum of its components.

DEODORIZING AND MERGING

Not all brands or institutions possess the necessary narrative and technological characteristics to effectively use transmedia. Also, because of its high visibility, transmedia may even appear to be somewhat cumbersome, out of context or invasive to the product or the service to be promoted or re-imagined. As I have stated above, transmedia is not for simply promoting, but to become part of a product.

As transmedia producer Jeff Gomez has it: "instead of advertising your product by cutting into bits and pushing it out to your potential audience, it is far better to recontextualize those bits or even create new bits that start familiarizing the audience with the characters, the back-story, and the larger story world". Such a consideration was confirmed by Jeff's transmedia contribution to the transmedia campaign for Coke *Happiness Factory* (2008), a contest that aimed to create an animated brand movie with the active contribution of the users on an interactive site. In the project, in fact, you had to choose a character from those presented in an introductory trailer, then register in a virtual job center and you soon started to work in the "Coke Factory". At the end of the competition, through the contribution of all the participants, an ad of the initiative was realized. The

appropriation of the narrative and the participation in the creation of the story were the users' task, but, at the same time, they were guided and helped to set the tale by the authors of the campaign who created an innovative narrative process that was protected by the brand.

> All we had to start with was the commercial. We were asked to build an entire fictional universe around it with a rich history, dozens of characters and wild adventures yet to come. Our first task was to immerse ourselves in the brand. Coke is a part of Americana, with its own archetype and mythos. We needed to make certain that was reflected in all aspects of the narrative. As with most of our clients, our first major milestone for Coke was a franchise mythology. This is a visually impressive guide to the people, places, history and devices of the fictional universe. We get into the cultures and mysticism, messages and themes, everything you need to know to produce dozens, even hundreds, of hours of content from this world. We also produced a transmedia roll out 'blueprint', strategizing how Happiness Factory can play across comic books, videogames, outdoor interactive ads and other media across the globe over the course of the next several years.[6] — *Jeff Gomez – transmedia Producer and founder Starlight Runner Entertainment*

Eventually, brand, form and content of a transmedia communication system of a product, they all need to shape their content according to the various market contexts where it operates. Such a process is called *deodorizing*, it was applied in the exampled above mentioned and is aimed at avoiding issues of cultural compatibility in specific community actions (such as those dealt with regarding genius loci) carried out in territories or times different from the original ones. Transmedia deodorizing of a brand is a revision process which may be applied at different degrees of intensity, through three essential operations:

- *camouflaging* or *censoring* of elements too 'local' or which might hurt other markets' sensitivity (religious, political, cultural, etc…);

6. http://www.starlightrunner.com
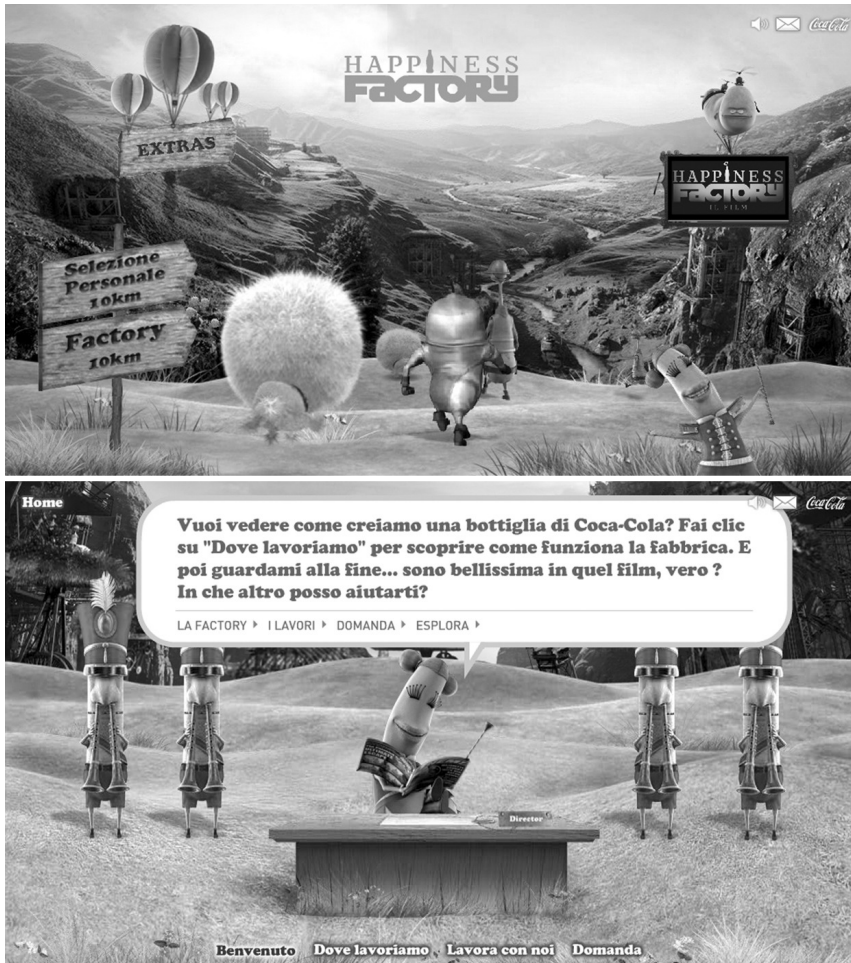
Img. 5.3 Coke – Happiness Factory (2008). New Character and a new, bizarre story world for the brand campaign, realized by Starlight Runner Entertainment.

- *combination* of different cultural traditions or the *temporary transfer* of the brand to alternative universes which get integrated in terms of plot, characters and location, describing the brand through a merging of different languages;

- a *new reading* or the *explicit violation* of the brand, aimed

at producing a 'surprise effect' in its positioning on the market.

Among the different activities, the last two are without a doubt the most used by transmedia applied to institutional and brand communication and promotion. Let us now give two examples to better highlight them.

First, the English-German brand Linx. It produces deodorants and has a very young target. Linx created a curious transmedia project at its debut on the Chinese market in 2011. After having identified with accuracy the primary target of the communicative action (male, twentysomething, eager to please and seduce, college education, digital media fan spending more than 30 hours per week on them), the project was structured in three steps:

- the creation of expectations through viral videos showing kinky situations positively finalized thanks to the use of the deodorant and presenting a live commentary by a fake focus group; it was an explicit *merging* of western television imagery (for example by quoting English TV series *Skins*) and movie imagery (with guests such as the US actress Angelina Jolie);

- the announcement of the launch, made with alluring posters and videos placed on skyscrapers facades evoking the seducing power of the product;

- the education of the new public, seduced by the messages of the campaign, focused on national pride (success vs failure) and on the individual dimension of consumption (sexy consumer vs loser).

Second example. Between 2001 and 2007 German car brand BMW created a transmedia project called *The Hire*, whose rabbit hole was a series of eight 'provocative' short movies sent online in two different seasons on BMW official channel (bmwfilm.com). The objective of the project was to refresh in a

Img. 5.4 Linx (2012). Apps, video with movie merging, reality show with fake focus group and comparative spots with consumer (irresistible) and non consumer (loser).

sporty and fashion light the brand's image on the international market. The short movies aimed at the same time at cinematic merging, with the use of contaminations between crime and action genres and the presence of various showbiz stars, and with an extravagant and ironic transfiguration of the brand's traditional image based on reliability and comfort.

The short movie *Star*, for example, was directed by Guy Ritchie and starred by popstar Madonna and actor Clive Owen. It told

the story of the temporary kidnapping of the popstar by a fearless driver who would joyride her on an aggressive M5 and then he would literally kicked out of the car in front of the paparazzi waiting for her in front of the main entrance of her concert venue.

The transmedial universe of *The Hire* was completed by four subplot films where BMW imagery was in part traced back to the brand's traditional image and by an alternate reality game where, through links on different websites such as Apple, Starbucks and others, a call action was launched. By using clues from the short movies this action would bring the users to find phone numbers and solve an enigma in order to win the Z4 object of the campaign. The 250 finalists of the game were then 'mysteriously' contacted via mobile phone where a voice message would invite them to meet in Las Vegas at a vip party where the prize would be given to the only winner of the competition with a very exclusive ceremony. This final action of the project would grant the brand a sporty and elitary image at once, one elegant and mundane, reliable and unexpected. Eventually, in 2004 the comics series *The Hire* and a series of audiobooks to be listened to in the car while driving were added to the products above described. The result was a hundred million views for the videos, one million DVDs sold and 17% global sales growth of the two models involved in the project.

Speaking the language of the different transmedia communities involved in an editorial project is an action which has to be carried out mostly by its addressees so that it shall become from the very beginning an important amalgam and the best pidgin for sharing the narrative. This is why, although swimming in the waters of advertising, synthesis, shortness and simplicity are neither the only nor the best solution possible in transmedia project applied to brands and institutions. Also in this case, imaginative universe, story world and design play a crucial role, one inalienable, one which prefers complexity over simplicity, engagement to passive and general consumption.

Img. 5.5 BMW – The Hire (2006). Deodorizing and merging of the brand through the project. Poster and two screenshots of the short movie Star directed by Guy Ritchie.

BRAND STORIES

Let's go back for a while on the role of experiences in transmedia storytelling. In marketing and advertising campaigns, in fact, the main features of a transmedia brand can be turned into narrative matter for participative authors who, on their own initiative, decide to manipulate those contents in order to make them personal, or create new narratives independent from the original. As Anne Zeiser reports in her book *Transmedia Marketing*: "When a brand touches audiences, it activates the senses. How it looks, how it sounds, how it feels, even how it smells are part of its identity. […] The visual identity of a brand is

created through consistent use of visual elements such as fonts, colors, and graphics that are specific to a brand"[7]. Design and storytelling, again. Transmedia for brands needs to be memorable, timeless, versatile and appropriate. And in telling the story of a brand, an institution, a product or service with transmedia communicative systems, brand stories mainly enhance the value of:

- a product's name, its brand image and its brand identity, that is the universe of reference created by the company;

- a brand's overall image and knowledge, including ideas, attractiveness and its consumers' "historical" expectations;

- brand value, that is the brand's value and reputation in its own market segment;

The added value given to transmedia projects by the use of brand story can be measured in terms of:

- *brand experience*, either in terms of engagement or of length, quality and satisfaction through consumption developed onto all the platforms of the communicative system;

- *brand activation*, since brand stories are often aimed at involving new customers into changing their consuming behaviour (within creative spaces identified by the company), through the transmedia system;

- *brand franchise*, since, through the audience's response to the new narratives and to the brand stories.

In order to take an active part in those different aspects of the brand in all the media platforms involved in the project, the "participative consumers" and the brand stories mainly use:

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7. Zeiser, A., *Transmedia Marketing*... cit., p. 124-25.

- structure of the story with different narrative layers corresponding to different communicative registers and experiential opportunities for the public;

- the presence of *early adopters*[8], *devoted fans* and *influencers* potentially able to become the brand's sounding board in order to have the most appropriate interpretation of the communicative action, even the most original and provocative;

- the use of few characters or at least one character (*testimonial*) in order to favour the self-identification of the consumer and leading he or she into the story;

Also in this case, let us present with two examples. In 2008 Ileana Douglas created the web series *Easy to Assemble*, which tells the adventures of an IKEA clerk and her bizarre colleagues, all with insuppressible artistic ambitions. Its value enhanced by the presence of famous actors and directors, the series uses a brand story which makes a very smart merging, with different television genres combining in each episode. Its main objective is the brand's vicinity to families, even though the series is supported by transmedia strategies only in particular cases such as for example the possibility for the public to rent a space in their houses where the IKEA catalogue could be displayed in plain sight, in the living room, in the bedroom, and so on…

An example of brand exploitation achieved with a transmedia narrative project is that created for NY agency Campfire in 2012. Harley-Davidson wanted a new and younger audience to be introduced to their timeless American brand. They wanted to create a destination for a new generation of fans to come together and interact. Campfire concepted both *The Ridebook* and *The Rideline* as digital environments to bring the brand to new life. *The Ridebook* in particular was conceived as: "The riding

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8. For a definition of *early adopter* as pioneers of media consumption and as an élite of new consumers 'chased' by producers and publicists, see Jenkins, H., *Cultura…* cit., p. XLVII.

Img. 5.6 IKEA – Easy to Assemble (2008) and its YouTube channel, in an episode which set the famous Swedish store in a "Ikea's got talent", example of transmedia merging TV based.

manual from the voice of those few who cherish the search for a new scenery with the wind in their face"[9]. As these fan communities grow, they aim to show how Harley-Davidson owners' lives were intertwined with the iconic motorcycle company's past, present and future. Strong characters, old-styled

9. http://www.campfirenyc.com

environments and traditional storytelling bridging from the Web to TV and digital platforms were the points of strength of the project and of the brand exploitation operation.

Img. 5.7 Harley Davidson – Harley Davidson Ridebook and Rideline (2012). Website and character of one of the brief documentaries: barbers and riders at Tomcat NY.

It is well known as transmedia loves celebrations and is eager to find in sudden and valuable occasions to express its potential at its best. This is even truer when it comes to fashion world, a universe spinning around rituals such as runway shows, seasons, collections, anniversaries and prizes, and has very weak fictional foundations, usually limited to a given stylist's, a fashion house's or a product's brand stories. Yet, fashion brands need to create lifelong relationships on multiple production lines and collections. An example?

In 2013 Burberry wanted to celebrate its 150 years of business and decided to create *Burberry World*, a concept that has become a sort of 'permanent philosophy' for communicating and promoting the brand since then. It all started with the e-book *Open Space*, which contains animations and old photographs of the brand, to make the whole project aiming at promoting

Burberry's founding value: trust. This was applied not only to consumers but with associates business partners and investors (in different countries and continents at the same time) in the first place. In cooperation with Google and Grow, Burberry launched the campaign *Burberry Kisses*, an app that allowed the user to send their pictures and interact in the official advertising of the campaign by simply wearing a Burberry item of clothing, and kissing the screen of the mobile phone. Then it was the music's turn to become the primary asset in the communicative system and the engine of the brand's britishness and behaviour. On the company's web site, *Burberry World*, a section called *Burberry Acoustic* was created, hosting young British music talents performing on video. Those clips were then brought into the real world thanks to outdoor concerts, worldwide in-store performances and ledwall screenings. This was basically done in order to lower down the average age of Burberry target consumers and then lead all their audience into the creation of an emotional bond to embody the brand and its history.

Differently from Burberry, the luxury french brand Chanel used a character-based type of transmedia storytelling in its 2012-2014 campaigns, but it was more digital than real-world oriented. Linear formats spread the character Coco Chanel in documentaries and in social media activities, and utilized touch points either in pre-purchase than in purchase and post-purchase experience. The campaign *Inside Chanel* re-interpreted Coco Chanel's role and biography with a multistrend series. Each episode began with the words 'Once upon a time' and used archive footage. As Stine Johansen reports: "Chapter 12 featured a tour guide through the streets where Chanel was originally founded. Anchoring the story at a specific place allows users to move from the digital platform to their own reality, binding those two worlds and sending an enforced message".[10] Facebook, YouTube and the other social media platforms which did not

10. Johansen, S., *Transmedia and Fashion Case studies and potentials*, Ref. to "Fashion Film & Transmedia. An anthology of knowledge and practice", 2017, pp. 83-95.

Img. 5.8 Burberry – Burberry World (2013). Digital platforms, music, in-store and outdoor performances, social network profiles in different continents.

possess the aesthetic characteristics of a luxury brand, used the black/white, tweed and pearl color branding in the art direction.

A different kind of example is represented by another successful fashion brand: that of the leader in sportswear for athletes and prosumers, sponsor of the Danish national football club, Hummel. At the end of 2016, a small group of young creatives linked to VIA University – Fashion & Transmedia of Aarhus, created and developed for Hummel the project *Change the World through Sport*. The project had two goals: creating a new story angle for the brand perception and celebrating the effective social impact of the "Hummel Universe".

Img. 5.9 Chanel – Inside Chanel (2012). Digital platforms and character-driven transmedia campaign.

The project consisted in a 3D Video Mapping experience to be performed in larger Danish cities / a teaser film on Facebook / pics-video on Instagram (*#Makehistory*) / a Portrait Film of Hummel Ambassadors / the video *Discover your own story* and user generated *Win a Sponsorship* videos. A final contest for small sportsclub would then launch a call to action for sports clubs promising to the best 5 teams an annual Hummel sponsorship to fulfill all their needs. The asset *Hummel Ambassadors*, in the

meanwhile, would use 5 athletes to identify and share positive messages with the audience. Finally, all the contents produced would be saved on Hummel Universe and celebrated in an annual event for testimonials and fans: the first "transmedia party" in Hummel's history.
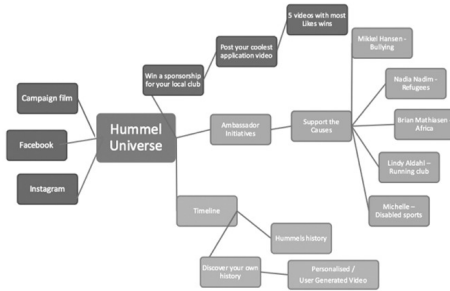
Img. 5.10 Hummel – Change the World through Sport! (2016). Platform layout and visuals from the Hummel Universe.

GAMIFICATION

Translating into gaming oriented actions a company's brand identity involves the integration of play dynamics into communication and promotion of products or services. A significant part of the public today gets fond of a given brand in a more long-lasting and effective way than before, and it prefers to "play" the brand rather than just listen to its slogans. The aim of this kind of strategy is quite clear: get the public closer to more complex messages in an easier and friendlier way; restructure subjects which were felt as 'too ordinary' – or conversely not enough popular – and, at the same time enhance and refresh the brand's intimacy with the public – what goes with the definition

of customer engagement – through games. Gamification offers transmedia promotion campaigns:

- informal and spontaneous, positive memorization (*mark up*) of the brand, granted by the positive interaction given by the experience of gaming;

- a deeper experience of the brand between consumer and product, thanks to the game;

- development of a different brand awareness by the consumer/player about the brand's universe (for example with experience and educational games);

- the creation of a database of consumers which would be impossible to reach out in any other way, but very present in the advergame microcosm.

In transmedia, a brand's gamification, or the gamification of a narrative experience can range from the proposition of a simple interaction with a given story to the creation of advergames or extremely free creative experiences such as *open worlds* and *sandboxes* (narrative spaces where audience's engagement is encouraged without limitations of creativity and self-expression). Within transmedia communicative systems dedicated to companies and to institutional communication, the element of game can be exercised through two basic activities:

- the creation of a brand gamification project whose task is to reinterpret the activity, the role and the image of the company through games used to illustrate, describe or directly experience its actions;

- the enrichment of promotional and advertising offer with forms of brand experience such as events, team games, urban quests, and so on…

An example with regard to the first point is that activated by Lego in 2012 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of its Australian market launch. Lego created a *Festival of Play* which moved

around the country, launched by an online trailer and immediately transferred into the real world thanks to the creation of urban forests and pop-up playpits inside and outside city centres. In the meanwhile the public would create posters dedicated to the idea of 'play' and *Play Days* were organized in schools with the aim of celebrating the milestones of Australian history, all translated in a LEGO light. The students' creations were published on the project's official web site, while an m-site would real time update the public on the events all over Australia. In the digital world an app would transform every piece of LEGO into a game. The project eventually ended with an interactive Christmas card, *The Lost Brick*. 15 million dollar profits in terms of communication, 400.000 visitors for the events, a sale rise on the local market of 18% in a year. Results do not need comments, really.

Img. 5.11 LEGO – Lego Festival of Play (2012). Urban installations and digital platforms.

To give an example of brand experience created for the 'inner' audience of a brand we must take a step back in time and deal with the case of one of IT world giants.

In 2010, after the great success of its previous *The Threshold*, Juxt Interactive asked No Mimes Media to partner in creating a transmedia experience to entertain and inform Cisco's Global Sales Force. "*The Hunt* put employees at the center of a thriller where characters sent and responded to their emails, left phone messages, communicated through Facebook and Twitter, even asked them to retrieve items from a dead drop and to send them photographs and information. And while helping fictional characters Isabel and Keith escape an ancient secret organization, the sales force also learned about new Cisco technologies coming to market. Cisco had new demands for the 2010 experience. A geographically and culturally dispersed sales force raises challenges when it comes to introducing dozens of new products and technologies each year. Cisco wanted *The Hunt* to have global reach, to educate, to build collaboration, and to be fun. This demanded new ways of storytelling and new ways of thinking. *The Hunt* was quick and intense, unfolding in real time in just two weeks. *The Hunt* involved audience members from countries around the world, including China, India, Netherlands, Germany, Norway, Pakistan, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It highlighted new Cisco technologies like Pulse and Mediator, painlessly engaging the audience in what those technologies do and how they work. How? "Players collaborated across silos, creating networks of cross-disciplinary experts. *The Hunt* pushed the boundaries of storytelling with events unfolding on Twitter and Facebook, and in the real world where the audience had to use social engineering to find and secure a package with vital information"[11]. Created with the collaboration of transmedia pioneer Christy Dena, and with thousands of players highly engaged around the world, *The Hunt* once again proved that transmedia experiences can effectively be

11. http://nomimes.com/hunt

used not only to meet the goals of a brand, but to entertain their audience as well.

As we have noted, the most important actions necessary to revisit and customize gamewise a product or the whole image of a company are not different from the traditional ones, although their application to multiplatform narrative and technological strategies makes precise strategic and editorial interventions essential. First of all the study of a brand's strengths and inadequate parameters to the new market. Secondly, the creation of cross-cultural universes and characters which can have a positive impact on the imagery of different types of users in terms of consumption and media habits. These actions require a close and accurate study of the technological platforms, the networks and the consumption attitudes of the potential target for the experience.

In this view, the use of affinity spaces and 'special effects' taken into analysis in the previous chapters of this book are crucial tools to – for example – make adjustments, or follow the public in the real world and digital spaces where they are used to traditionally interact with their most loved brands. Now, since in the previous chapters I have already presented cases of advergames and alternate reality games, I shall here make yet two different examples: one of a reality game and one of a transmedia ghost campaign.

2008. GMP, recruitment and HR world giant launched a transmedia campaign for the Asian market, and it does it almost with no costs at all. They had two main objectives: increase their brand's diffusion and win the loyalty of a new public: the people in search of a job. The campaign was based on a deeply heart-felt subject for the asian population: the relationship between life quality and the incessant rhythms of work.

The project's rabbit hole was a video uploaded on YouTube where two Singapore clerks who were working long hours in their office are visited, while in the elevator, by a ghost. The two

are so tired they do not even realize of the ghost's presence. The company's video cameras – on the other hand – have everything on video, which becomes viral and is viewed 500.000 times in ten days. After that, on the association's official blog, which was investigating on the apparition, three ghostbusters are hired and a call on action on the Web and on social network is launched. The immediate result is the spontaneous, operative and communicative contribution of associations specialized in paranormal phenomena, newspapers, TV shows all over the world, users who believed they have lived similar experiences, workers unions, bloggers and even studies on special effects trying to reveal the 'technical secrets' of the video. Finally, the 1st of May of that year revealed that they were beyond such an action, which triggered an amused media grapevine echoing all over the world, based on the subject of the story: no one should work late hours. The final result was a 30% increase of sign-ups on the company's web site and the equivalent of 500.000 USD in terms of media coverage completely free.

Conversely, if a company wants to conquer newer portions of the same market it operates on, a good example can be taken from *The Pink Squad* experience, a transmedia project realized in 2009 in Slovakia by insurance company Union Insurance.

The Pink Squad action aimed at denouncing dangerous driving behaviours responsible for the rising of insurance policy prizes and at finally giving those consumers burdened by those few irresponsible driver's behaviour a new, audible voice. This is a clear example of a two goal structure. The action was successfully achieved thanks to the intervention of a task force of activists who, wearing quirky pink masks, for weeks went around punishing in a theatrical way those responsible of behaviours in open breach of the street code. The campaign's rabbit hole was a viral video presenting the Pink Squad manifesto, broadcasted in an seemingly illegal way on the country's main broadcasters. The squad's website and several videos showing the nastiest punishments carried out by the

squad were the following steps. It was only after two weeks of posting videos online and broadcasting on the main national channels, followed by thousands of denounce and support messages posted by consumers on the main social networks that Union Insurance openly stated they were behind such an action. It was then that official spots and traditional communication started.

Results? A million web pages viewed, 80.000 friends on Facebook and, above all, a free media campaign worth 500.000 euro. And yet the story of Pink Squad was not over, as the fictional group became the promoter of a "National Weekend Without Road Accidents", which was followed by thousands of Slovak drivers who were invited to display something pink on their cars. This action resulted in a diffusion and brand awareness and, most importantly, in a significant 80% reduction of car accidents in that year's All Saints weekend. Finally, mechanics dressed in pink for that occasion would become the company's testimonials in all the car repair garages of the country. These elements are suggesting a further reflection on another aspect of transmedia applied to brand and corporate storytelling: as Simon Staffans has it: "in order for the audience to fully immerse themselves in what the company, brand, product or service is about, we first need interconnected stories that support each other and build over the long run"[12], to succeed.

The examples we have described and all the other successful cases over the last few years clearly demonstrate how all the social and cultural differences a brand or a transmedia campaign face in a moment of transition from a market to another may nowadays be seen as a resource and a basket full of opportunities, rather than an operative or editorial limit for the transmedia author. However, since this subject shall be dealt with in the following chapter of this book, let us investigate the contribution

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12. Staffans, S., *One year...* cit., p. 59.

Img. 5.12 Union Insurance – The Pink Squad (2009). Viral videos, newspaper articles, online messages sent by users on the official website, Facebook profile and videogames.

transmedia can give other kinds of products or public or private services: those with an artistic and cultural vocation.

TRANSMEDIA FOR INSTITUTIONS AND ARTS

The use of multiple media to support institutions, public or private bodies and associations operating in the fields of art promotion, education and culture is one of the most natural fields of application for transmedia and yet, at the same time, also one of the most undervalued and fragmented internationally. We all know art is fragile. It is the province of personal interpretation, of unpredictable or even 'timeless' consumption. Its rites are performed in limited spaces and times, where the

spotlight lights on and off very quickly. Lastly, art is made of 'behind the scenes' very difficult to access and which require a great deal of patience.

Yet, at the same time the imaginative sense, the use of storytelling and the performative nature so familiar with transmedia consumption would fit very comfortably into the creation of integrated communication projects such as virtual museums, centres, foundation networks, exhibition centres, theatre schedule and posters, itinerant exhibitions, just to make a few examples.

For these reasons transmedia projects involved with art and institution are always *supportive* (especially those transnational), or *omnivorous* (to leave a trace on the media). They are never *competitive* (because they are too fragile to afford a positive fragmentation of their audience). The weapons transmedia has to act more effectively in this field are:

- active involvement of audiences belonging to different targets, especially through the activation of strategies of bridging between platforms;

- the social media as pivot of the communicative system, because they are economic as well as direct persuasion platforms able to host the content and the 'story' artistic projects always present with;

- the discovery of spaces, places, workforce and mechanisms which 'create day by day the magic of art' (especially in terms of storytelling);

- the activation of long term practical education experiences hosted in the same spaces where exhibitions or performances take place (thus enhancing the value of the story's genius loci);

- the presence in the media (and particularly in the internet) of influencers easy to be identified and of extremely 'consumption-vertical' communities: these

> actors need to operate internationally and with a
> particular predisposition for participative interactivity.

Lastly, art and institutions can largely benefit from those spaces in the last chapter I have identified as the 'affinity spaces' of transmedia consumption, that is real world experiences, choice excitement, immersive environments and story-based entertainment experiences. The two examples I am about to give in the following paragraphs are again 'personal' and concern two *transpaces* crucial to artistic expression and production: museums and theatres.

The first project, *Inventori di Mondi*, was a container in which I coordinated young designers with the aim of creating a transmedia communication system of the omnivorous type. It was 2011 and the client was the Museum of the Mind in Rome[13]. The project started with an analysis of the history of the institution and of the quarter of the city where it is located (the old criminal asylum in the compound of Hospital S. Maria della Pietà, an actual city within the city). The investigation was carried out through two different and yet complementary materials: documents, such as video, interviews, iconographic research, and fictional, with an emotional itinerary to be carried out on the territory. A series of short movies dealing with the disorders treated in the hospital, graphic postcards where Rorshach inkbolts were given a QR code to be turned into online reference for all the material in the communicative system. This low budget project succeeded in communicating the museum imagery, telling its synthetic universal structures (the asylum's rules and the laws on mental disorders), its imaginative isotopes (the relationship between normality and diversity, identified – for instance – in concepts such as 'getting out while in') and its archetypal figures (the patients) narrated in the full respect of the different interaction forms of its halls and moving them in

13. Project coordinated for Museo della Mente and IED Istituto Europeo di Design of Rome with media designers Alessandro Alpago, Daniel Bedusa, Nicola Cerzosimo, Tommaso Del Prete, Davide Di Santo, Andrea Incardona and Micaela Monterosso.

virtual spaces which could make its online reputation grow and, indirectly, the number of potential visitors as well.
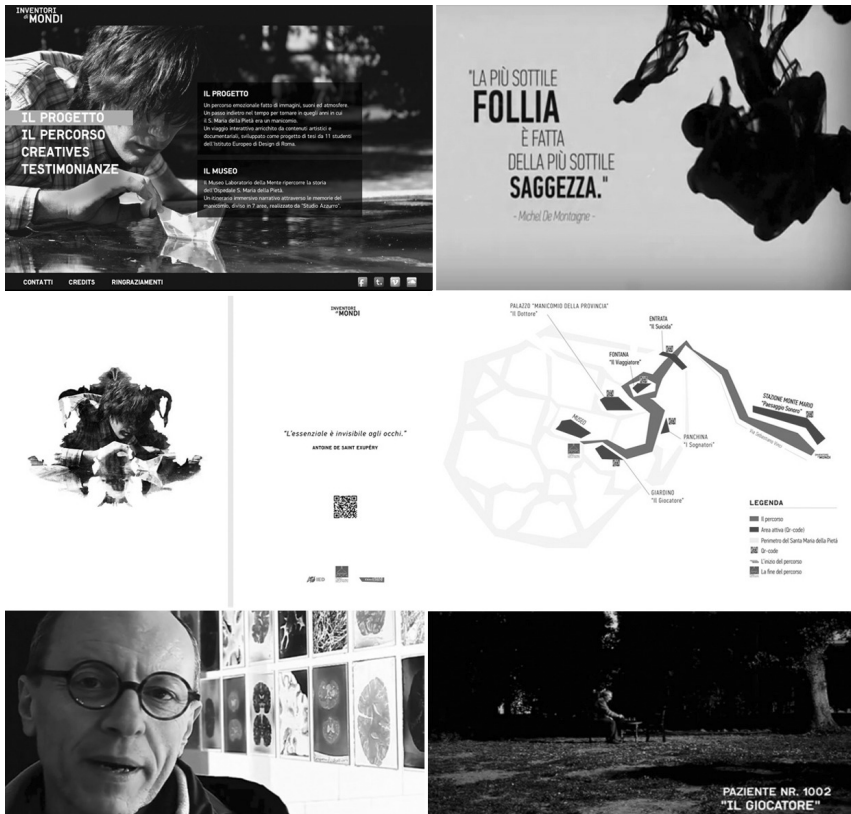
Img. 5.13 Inventori di mondi and the Museo della Mente of Rome (2011). Website, theme trailers, postcards and emotional itinerary, interviews and videos telling the stories of the patients of the asylum.

A different case is represented by the series *Fabbrica*, produced by IED (European Institute of Design) and Rome Opera Theatre in 2016. This project introduced in the circuit of European webseries what I personally define the *vice versa paradigm*.

Fabbrica is a Webseries/TV series which tells the story of five participants of the first Young Artist Programme of the theatre. A docuseries which stresses the importance of the sacrifice, the fear of the stage, the responsibility and the great power of talent

in the Opera world. Shot in restricted locations with a particular focus on the 'behind the scenes' of the theatre performances of the season from the POV of a singer, a director, a compositor, a production designer and a costume designer, each episode focusing on the magic of the art, with the aim of engaging the audience in an emotional continuum from the first day of the "Fabbrica" to the final show of all the participants. The transmedia project founded the brand identity for the series (imagining the Fabbrica as a steampunk-artistic lab under the Opera's building in Rome), produced the series and a social media campaign, animated character posters and the official website of Fabbrica. But… the writing process of the series started after six months of social media management of the official channel and of the Opera Theatre, all managed by the creators of *Fabbrica*, to study the audience behaviour, attitude and consumption before going on the fly. At the time, to enroll the audience in the story world, we created character poster, teaser video daily released at the same time, facebook streaming of some of the masterclasses hold with the artists involved in the story, artworks and graphics to keep the hype high on the story world. In the same days, *Fabbrica*'s participants were involved in labs with school students and kids dedicated to the different shows presented by the theatre's season (all showed with video on line). Finally, the project was launched online during the Christmas Holiday in Rome with an amazing performance: three singers of the *Fabbrica* were involved in a 3D Projection mapping on the facade of the theatre for 15 days, performing the three arias "Casta Diva" (*Norma*, Vincenzo Bellini), "Vissi d'arte" (*Tosca*, Giacomo Puccini) and "Una voce poco fa" (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioacchino Rossini). Then, an amazing "Opera bus" started playing *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in some strategic, popular squares of the city, to engage and enroll new audiences to the Opera World.[14]

14. Project coordinated for Teatro dell'Opera di Roma and IED Istituto Europeo di Design with the filmmakers, the sound designers and the interaction designers: Valerio Argenio, Edoardo Ballato, Federica Cannavale, Beatrice Cocchia, Ilaria Fusco,

Img. 5.14 Fabbrica – Teatro dell'Opera of Rome (2016). Website, theme trailers, pictures from the shows and character posters of the protagonists of the narrative.

I now would like to close the chapter with another example focusing on giving more value to a cultural event, rather than on promoting a structure or a project. The case we are looking at is that of the 2012 Brisbane Writers Festival in Australia, an event dedicated to all literature and narrative lovers celebrating its fiftieth anniversary with the creation of a communicative system of the omnivorous type, centred on both the web and the real,

Giulio Dominici, Silvia Latini, Carolina Mammini, Martina Monaco, Simone Patti, Beatrice Perotto, Matteo Serafini, Valeria Vaglio.
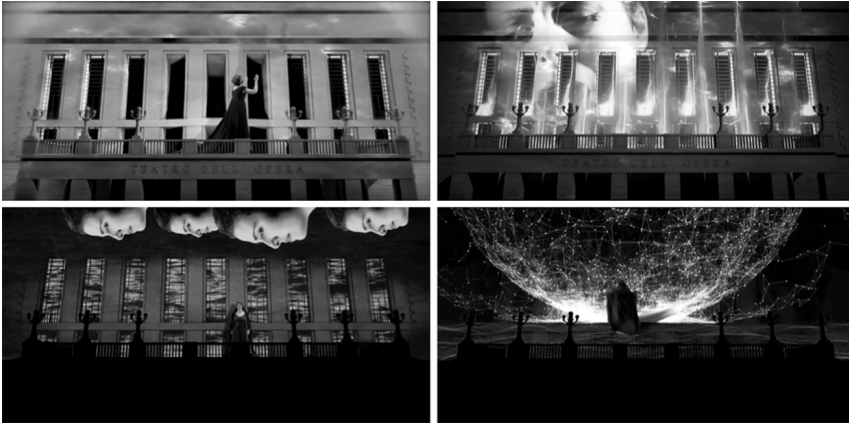
Img. 5.15 Fabbrica – Teatro dell'Opera of Rome. Three singers performing a 3D Projection on the theatre's facade in occasion of the web launch of the series.

physical space and aimed at broadening the festival's target also to a younger audience.

The project was named *Celebrate the heart of the Story* and its rabbit hole was the publication on Facebook of a contest where festival goers were invited to actively contribute to the creation of the venue. Hundreds of novels, essays and short stories were sent to the festival organization in response to such online call to action; those contributions were then used to create a giant installation placed in the festival physical location. "An heart of books" which became both the campaign testimonial on all traditional and online media, and a sculpture realized by a famous Australian artist. Moreover, with the aim of making the very heart of the narrative beat fast before the festival launch, fifty famous international writers were invited to contribute to the creation of a story via Twitter, using the hashtag #BWF50. Each author published two tweets a day for fifty days: the activity was extremely popular and was soon transferred from the 'champions' of literature on to their most fervent fans. Hundreds of customizable postcards were disseminated all around the pubs and venues of the festival to invite students and visitors to talk

in physical presence about their favourite authors and give their point of view on 'the heart of a story.' Results were again amazing: 30% increase in Twitter followers, 35% on Facebook, more than 7 million dollars worth media advertising for free. More than 500.000 new contacts to the twitter story and the highest number of visitors to the festival in its whole history, reaching 300.000 units. All fuelled by a very low budget and a transmedia project even a small association or a cultural foundation can afford.

As we could see, transmedia storytelling applied to communication and the promotion of companies and institutions can be very similar to that dedicated to narrative and entertainment: a container of imaginative universes and technological solutions but, at the same time of strategies and actions which so often gets near to the idea of voluntary work, activism, collective experiments and a positive image of social and cultural differences. Strong interactions, so intense they deserve an in depth investigation in the next station of our journey.

WORKSHOP 5 – TRANSMEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Choose a brand, an institution or an artistic project and carefully evaluate its potential and communicative strenght. Create the transmedia communicative system you judge to be the most appropriate to vehiculate your message. Identify target, platforms, content to implement, the most appropriate language to use and the activities to create in order to give the best value to the different strengths of your project and its potential cultural, emotional and commercial results. Enhance at its best the brand identity through transmedia story worlds. Create a supportive – or omnivorous – communicative system and try to make a plausible preventive plan on the impact the project may have. Make your plans rigorously on figures taken from the same market segment – both traditional and transmedia – you are planning to operate on. It is way more crucial to use all the necessary time to research on affordable data, rather than follow
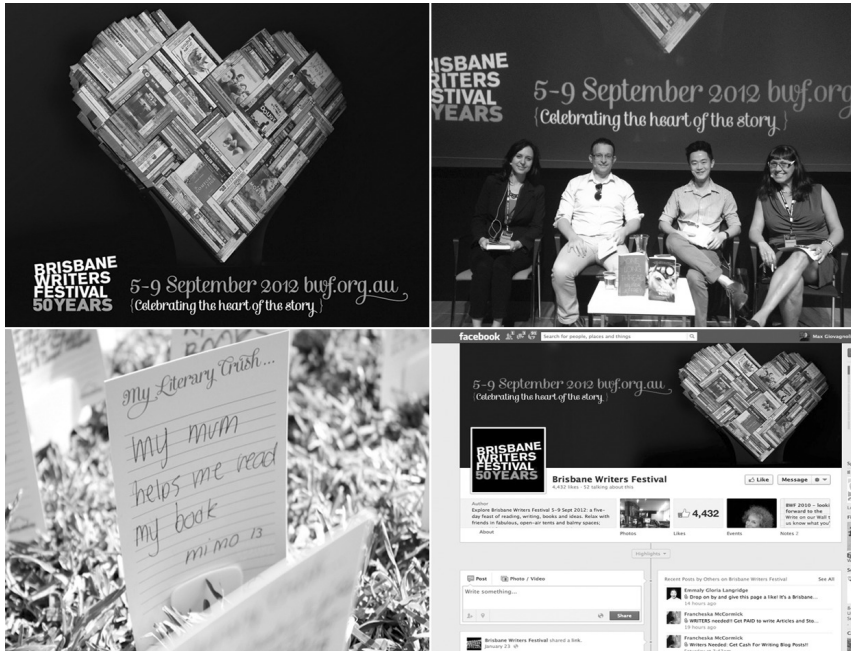
Img. 5.16 Brisbane Writers Festival (2012). The 'heart of books' realized by the readers and sessions with the writers via Twitter. Literary postcards made by readers and the Festival's Facebook profile, 'primary asset' of the event.

the strength of the concept or the instinct of the storyteller as it was for some fragile or risky projects we have described during this chapter.