The Transmedia Trip:
The Psychology of Creating Multi-Platform Narrative Engagement for Transmedia Migration

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Abstract

Transmedia storytelling describes the coherent delivery of a story across multiple media to create a richer, more immersive experience. While the specifics of transmedia storytelling vary, all definitions rely on audience participation. Multiple platforms enable the audience to travel in a storyworld by moving from one text to another, propelled by their own interests and choices. Because the multiplatform structure of transmedia is nonlinear with multiple narrative threads creating a coherent whole, a transmedia storytelling project is an intricate and complex proposition to design, build and launch. This can keep discussions unintentionally producer-centric, focused on identifying the practicalities of undertaking such a project, such as funding, finding necessary talent, and best practices for the design and management of the assets that make up the transmedia universe. While the design of a transmedia project will include multiple opportunities for participation, the success of a project rests on the audience's ability and willingness to take the journey and move across texts. This requires bridging the gaps between assets and facilitating the psychological journey that motivates the audience to migrate from one text to another. Using heuristics from neuroscience to understand motivation theory, narrative transportation and the concept of optimal engagement known as flow, this paper provides producers with rules of thumb for integrating a theory-driven approach to transmedia design to recognize and incorporate elements that keep the audience engaged, rather than leave it to hope and chance.

Keywords: transmedia storytelling, narrative engagement, transmedia migration, psychology of transmedia.

Introduction

Audiences are always hungry for a good story. Research shows that stories have the ability to engage audiences more than any other form of information delivery, making content more powerful and more persuasive (e.g., Haven, 2007). From campfires and cave paintings to the proliferation of media today, stories are central to human life, entertaining, bridging differences, connecting people and transmitting culture. The unique capacity of the human brain to project, visualize and identify turns good storytelling into a journey, taking people away from the experience of their physical location into imagined worlds (Green, Chatham, & Sestir, 2012; Kwan Min, 2004; Mar & Oatley, 2008; Oatley, 2002).

Technological advances that support fluid information flows across media platforms have inspired storytellers to find new and exciting ways to tell their stories. At the same time, social technologies and accessible tools have turned consumers into producers, effectively enabling the audience to tell and share their own stories (e.g., Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013). The proliferation of content has disrupted traditional business and creative models and shifted power into the hands of the consumer. At the same time, these trends have created an information economy where content is plentiful and attention is scarce and in high demand.

Proactive media producers have adapted by developing stories that can be told across multiple platforms. This approach, often called transmedia storytelling, uses multiple narrative threads of a larger story to build a larger, more immersive experience, or storyworld (e.g., Jenkins, 2008; Phillips, 2012). Different platforms can be used to construct or tell different aspects of a story in new and often interactive and participatory ways. This approach offers opportunities for exploration and the potential to satisfy the demands of an increasingly empowered and experience-craving audience. It also creates a continual dialogue between producers and consumers—both direct and indirect—that influences the success of every media property. This is an evolving market, where the psychology of consumer expectations continues to influence media producers, who in turn, must adapt as quickly as they have can acquire the necessary skills, hampered only by their ability to shift structural processes and business relationships.

Transmedia storytelling, ironically, describes both a ‘new’ approach to storytelling that takes advantage of the current environment, and it replicates the way the human brain has always processed information. The brain collects information from multiple sources to construct meaning. This happens in different ways throughout information processing, from instinct and perception and conscious meaning-making through active information gathering. Thus, by designing for the current environment, a transmedia producer is creating a more brain-friendly means of transferring experience.

While the particulars of transmedia are subject to debate (e.g., Phillips, 2012; von Stackelberg, 2011), the centrality of audience participation remains a constant (e.g., Dena, 2009; Jenkins, 2003). Storytellers creating multi-platform experiences need the audience to be active participants in the telling of their stories. The audience’s engagement must be sustained from

one text to another. It is this activity that makes the transmedia experience whole and the project a success, not the existence of the parts.

The complexity and limitless options inherent in transmedia construction increases the practical burdens on the producers while it simultaneously increases the psychological burden on the audience. Therefore, whatever challenges the producers face, the nonlinear and multiplatform transmedia structure must create motivation for sustained engagement, carrying the audience from one portal of the storyworld and tempt them to enter another. If a story is a journey, the thoughtful application of psychological theories can guide the design of structural and narrative elements in ways that keep the user in the "transportation zone." Success rests on the craftsmanship of a great story with the psychological elements that propel and sustain its passengers across gaps between the entry points into the next available text. Successful transmedia stories create a deep engagement that triggers core drivers in the audience, such as identity and affiliation and the promise of conscious and unconscious rewards. These don't happen, however, without active attention to providing scaffolding to support the journey[i]. When these elements are in place, transmedia storytelling can build agency and self-esteem, promote social capital, enhance eudaimonic wellbeing, changes beliefs and creates transformative experiences.

Thus, the question I begin to tackle here is: how do we evaluate the psychological elements of a transmedia structure that allows, invites or encourages the consumer to move among the parts to achieve the total experience. If transmedia storytelling is a story told across multiple platforms, then a critical issue is to understand what motivates the consumer to pay the cost, whether its cognitive, emotional, social, temporal or financial, to move from one media asset or text to the next. The goal is to isolate concepts that can be applied by media producers to improve their ability to take the audience on a journey across media platforms and not lose them in the gaps.

Defining Transmedia

Transmedia storytelling is a contentious term and a buzz word tacked onto many projects where the relevance is unclear. Hollywood Screenwriter and Producer Tim Kring pared down the definition saying, "Transmedia is a fancy word for a simple concept: telling stories across multiple platforms" (Carr, 2010, August 2, para. 3). In doing so, he strips it down to its core feature from the storyteller's perspective, but neglects the role of the audience or the views of media producers whose perspectives are informed by widely diverse creative processes, such as Alternate Reality Games (ARGs) or tangible media, such as books and comics. More common is the definition offered by communications scholar Jenkins (2011) provides both frequently quoted and more widely accepted,

> Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each

> medium makes it[s] own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story. (para. 4)

This definition describes a main story arc made up of multiple narrative threads. A key feature of this definition is that the threads can be consumed and enjoyed independently, but taken together they create a richer and more immersive experience, changing a narrative from a story to a storyworld that can be explored.

This characterization, however, remains a producer or story-centric one. Few would refute the centrality of the story as the driving mechanism of audience experience. Even though Jenkins (2011) and others address the integral role of the audience in transmedia (e.g., Jenkins & Deuze, 2008; Jenkins, et al., 2013; Phillips, 2012), the functions that fuel audience motivation rarely receives the emphasis they deserve. It's important to be clear that this view does not undervalue the complexity of a transmedia project or the importance of the skill and resources necessary to create one. It's also important to note that the audience is always important in the success of any media project, whether an entertainment property or marketing campaign. However, the response of the audience is often assumed without addressing the qualities that support its engagement. Thus, descriptions of transmedia strategies often describe the role the audience is to play, such as searching, lurking, generating content, interaction, co-creation of content, social sharing and community formation. However, few strategies articulate the elements to be put in place to motivate the audience's behaviors or describe theoretical rationale fueling the audience, or sparking the desire or intentions to do any of the activities and behaviors so carefully waiting for them.

Transmedia Travel

All storytelling creates a journey for the audience. Transmedia's reliance on audience participation adds new importance to the myriad of elements that transform a story into a journey due to the need for a compelling reason to get the audience on board to explore the storyworld. The construction and distribution of the story must be designed to motivate the audience to stay on the journey. The engagement path must bridge the texts and so that the audience actively seeks out additional elements to experience the full storyworld.

Transmedia properties are designed with the assumption that audience will consume more than just one piece; that they will move among different parts of a larger story. It is this additive experience that enhances the feeling of taking a journey into a story's universe. The sense of presence is the cognitive and emotional experience of "being there" in the story. The psychological immersion that define the sense of presence can give narrative experiences wide-ranging effects (de Graaf, Hoeken, Sanders, & Beentjes, 2011; Green & Brock, 2002). They can be emotionally engaging and rewarding but they can promote attitude shifts and behavioral change (Appel & Richter, 2010).

Presence is a function of the psychological foundations put forth in the primary narrative (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009) but can be enhanced or disrupted throughout the engagement path.

It is ironic that the very features that make transmedia engaging, the use of multiple platforms to expand the story experience and extend opportunities for presence, also put it at risk of disrupting the audience's engagement through discordant choices of platforms, subplots and clumsy user experience. Strategic decisions at the development phase influence the audience's ability to transport into the narrative, extending beyond the initial media text to create the psychological bridge that fuels further engagement.

Deconstructing Engagement

The technological sophistication that has enabled transmedia storytelling has also impacted the ability to measure consumer behavior. Even something as subjective and inherently qualitative as "engagement" has been operationalized into numerous quantitative measures, such clicks, shares, time on a page, scroll downs, reach and conversion. Knowing 'what,' however useful it may seem, does not tell you why. The *Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, the transmedia adaptation of Jane Austen's classic story *Pride and Prejudice*, was an unqualified success by most measures. It had millions of views for the 100 webisodes, thousands of Twitter followers for the main characters and a record breaking Kickstarter campaign, Yet, according to the producer Bernie Su, marketing was not his and co-producer Hank Green's priority (Su, 2014, January 22). They were focused on the format (vlog style YouTube series with social extensions) and the hook (translating Jane Austen into high quality content consistent with the proposed format). Their success triggered case studies. articles and Slideshares exploring the marketing lessons to be gleaned from their success with *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (e.g., Larson, 2013), but Green and Su's less successful series, *Emma Approved*, the adaptation of Jane Austen's *Emma*, underscores the importance of the psychology in deconstructing the 'what' into the 'why' when you are looking for best practices.

What Are the Challenges? Why Should the Audience Make the Trip?

Successful transmedia projects, however, must overcome both practical and psychological challenges. The 2013 SyFy serialized television drama *Defiance* was launched in conjunction with a multi-player online game developed by Trion. Unprecedented and ambitious, the benefits of world expansion also hampered world development. The producers were unable to maintain a narrative structure that satisfactorily accommodated both platforms. Information about backstories developed in the game weren't known by the non-gaming audience, resulting in the need to 'play catch up' with the TV audience in ways that disrupted narrative flow. Promises of vast frontiers from the pilot didn't emerge as the show developed, leaving the audience with expectations for a storyworld that seemed undeveloped (e.g., Tolf, 2013, July 15).

These disconnects result in subjective experiences, such as confusion, frustration and impatience, which form the foundation for future expectations, values and beliefs which then drive subsequent behavior (Liu, Hu, & Grimm, 2010; Rayburn & Palmgreen, 1984). People

continually run "cognitive" cost/benefit analyses in the face of a decision or behavior change. The costs and benefits can be broken down into categories of subjective evaluation derived from the major motivation theories that go into answering the question every person experiences, even if they consciously going through the exercise: "do I want to do this and why?" The points of consideration are:

1) Expectations for success, such as feelings about one's abilities, belief in one's competence, and potential for attainment (Bandura, 1977)
2) Intrinsic value, such as the enjoyment that comes from the balance between stimulation and control (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991), the act of performing a deed, play
3) Usefulness, such as longer-term goal achievement, learning (Ajzen, 2002; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002)
4) Perceived costs, such as investment of time, money, identity or other opportunities (e.g., Eccles & Wigfield, 2002)
5) Social connection and affiliation (Lieberman, 2007; Rutledge, 2011, 2012a)

The above rules are all ways of conceptualizing the motivation for taking action. They matter because a traveler in a transmedia story wants as few costs as possible to achieve his or her desired experience. However, it is the transmedia producer who has the burden of recognizing and avoiding potential obstacles that hinder experience or diminish expectations of outcomes. Psychology generates a more audience-centric focus that integrates individuals' beliefs, values and goals and illuminates much about why individuals choose different activities and make different choices. The goal in this paper is to condense the complexity of psychology into a applicable process.

Rules of Thumb for Practice

Engagement starts in the brain. The brain processes and makes meaning out of all information, from sensory input such as touch and smell to shapes, symbols and sounds that are decoded into communication (Lieberman, 2007). Thus, all higher-level functions, such as the evaluations of the costs and benefits for any behavior or decision, begin as sensory input and only occur if it attracts attention by passing the basic survival criteria of the human brain—is it worthy of attention and is it relevant.

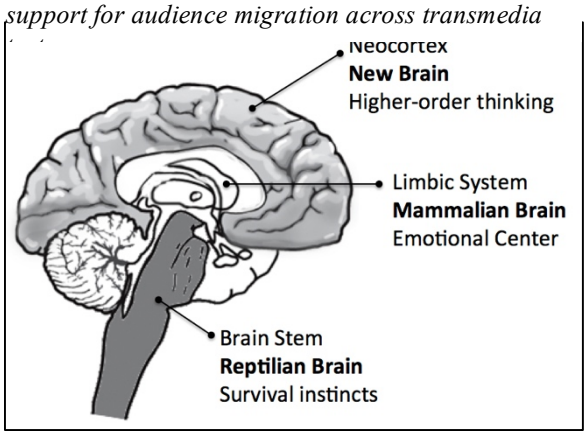
Understanding some basic brain functions provides a simplified approach that decodes more sophisticated theories. Using this basic knowledge adds important insights when building in the motivational factors to promote transmedia migration. Starting with the triune brain theory (MacLean, 1985), we can then link both narrative transportation (Green, Brock, & Kaufman, 2004) and flow, the theory of optimal engagement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991) in ways that can readily be applied.

Start with the Brain

In trying to better understand the impulsive and often unpredictable nature of human behavior, neuroscientist and physician Paul D. MacLean (1990) proposed a modular concept of the human brain. He hypothesized a Triune Brain model, conceptualizing it as three separate brains, with each brain representing a distinct evolutionary stage. In his view, the human brain evolved over time, overlaying new capabilities onto existing structures, with the three brains working like "three interconnected biological computers, [each] with its own special intelligence, its own subjectivity, its own sense of time and space and its own memory" (pg. 9).

MacLean's model links the behavioral differences in each major functional area to the evolution of animal life, arguing that the brain effectively has three parts that are representative of the major stages of evolution: the reptilian or old brain, the emotional center or mammalian brain, and the neocortex or the new brain. While simplistic relative to the physical complexity of the human brain, this model successfully highlights the difference between conscious and unconscious behavioral drivers. Its success in isolating primal instincts, such as emotion, affiliation and identity have made it a powerful framework for understanding human responses to different stimuli and experiences, from media content and website design to leadership and management practices (Renvoise & Morin, 2007; Weinschenk, 2009; Wilson, Gaines, & Hill, 2008; Wooten, 2007).

Figure 1. The Triune Brain theory provides a valuable heuristic for including psychological support for audience migration across transmedia



In MacLean's theory, while each brain is connected through the nervous system to the others, yet each operates as its own system with distinct proficiencies. The three brains are:

1) The reptilian brain, made up of the brainstem and cerebellum, functions subconsciously. The reptilian brain is a primitive organ and is driven by instincts. It controls breathing, hunger, sex drive, and basic emotions like aggression. The reptilian brain has only one prime directive: survival of the species.
2) The limbic or paleo-mammalian system is in what neuroscientists think of as the emotional center. It is reactive and operates at a subconscious level, driven by emotion, like love, happiness, anger, disgust and fear. It is in collusion with the reptilian brain and processes the emotions responsible for 'gut' feelings.
3) The neocortex brain is the last or newest part of the brain. This are the conscious cognitive processes responsible for rational thought, language and planning. The new brain generates the much-debated 'theory of mind' and the sense of self.

MacLean was one of the first proponents to recognize that the rational brain does not, as many supposed, control thoughts and behavior. MacLean demonstrated that the unconscious

instincts and emotions, such as fear, joy, desire, and curiosity, can and frequently do drive the rational thought of the neocortex. Recent research has shown that up to 95% of cognition and decision-making occurs in the unconscious mind (Haidt, 2006; Zaltman, 2003). Similar models reinforce the power of the subconscious and automatic responses, such as that of Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman's (2011) dual cognitive systems and other dual processing systems.

Implication of Triune Brain for Media Producers

All information starts in the unconscious, therefore focusing on the primal instincts and emotions provides a more powerful initial framework to conceptualizing the transmedia path. The old brain governs how a person will experience a story as well as triggering instinctive responses, such as the desire to follow, the need to get an answer or seek resolution, the yearning to connect with others, the drive to feel powerful, the attraction of positive emotions, the pull of sex, the avoidance of pain, and the threat of attack. Originating in the subconscious, all can be theorized as a forces that motivates the audience to pay attention long enough to engage at the conscious level, where senses become meaningful.

The conscious level is susceptible to motivations such as planning and other value propositions as listed in listed in the right-hand column of Figure 2. The neocortex makes meaning and assesses values with a future view, something instinctive responses do not consider. For example, *East Los High* is a transmedia webisode series aimed at a young Latina audience with a high pregnancy rate. The show builds identification with characters through salience and high emotion. Once engaged, the new brain begins to make meaning and seek longer-term rewards such as learning or developing social connection. At this stage, viewers find value in activities such as downloading 'how-to' dance videos and recipes. The identification, reinforced through social sharing and participation, also creates a sense of ownership which triggers both instinctive and conscious motivation to protect perceptions of ownership and affiliation. The producers, Population Media Center, purposefully applied psychological theories from the Sabido Methodology (Barker, 2007) for maximum engagement with the end goal of creating social change. Miguel Sabido, producing education-entertainment properties since the 1960s, intentionally designed his methodology to communicate directly with all three parts of the brain. He applied a melodramatic structure to elicit emotion and empathy, crafted narrative arcs that modeled behavioral options to activate social validation and enhanced personal relevance by linking behaviors to the pain or gain perspective of the old brain.

Figure 2. Attention Triggers Vary for the Old and New Brains. Always Start with the Old Brain.

OLD BRAIN	NEW BRAIN
Emotions	Skill-building
Visual images	Responsive feedback
Pain and gain	Participation, ownership
User-centric, personal	Social validation
Safety	Empathy
Stories have the unique ability to tap into the capabilities of both the old and new brain. They get and hold attention. They maintain engagement as the new brain makes meaning. The process becomes mutually reinforcing.	

Moving the Audience Across Texts Using Flow

The theory of flow is perhaps best known as "being in the zone." Flow is the state of optimal engagement where the challenge of an activity matches the skills of the user at a level that requires effort and concentration yet is within the boundaries of the user's capabilities (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Flow speaks to the practicalities of moving an individual from one media text to another within a transmedia story.

To achieve balance between skill and challenge in flow, there must be clear goals and feedback, absolute concentration on the activity, a sense of control and a loss of self-consciousness and time. The result of staying in the 'flow zone' is a sense of deep enjoyment. Maintaining flow requires balancing the challenge with the requisite skill level, as shown in Figure 1. If the challenge is greater than the skill, it results in anxiety; if the skill is greater than the challenge, the individual experiences boredom. The flow theory is often used to develop and analyze gameplay, user experience, art creation and other activities with intentional concentration (de Manzano, Theorell, Harmat, & Ullen, 2010; King, 2003; Neal, 2012; Sherry, 2004; Walker, 2010).

The triune brain model can be used to contextualize the theory of optimal experience by translating the balance between skill and challenge into arousal and competence (Rutledge, 2012a; Weber, Tamborini, Westcott-Baker, & Kantor, 2009). In a transmedia strategy, the flow zone must extend across media. Thus, the level of challenge and arousal, operationalized as the attention and interest the audience member feels, must be commensurate with the sense of efficacy, defined as the audience member's ability to find and execute actions necessary to reach the next entry point. In the context of the triune brain model, the flow process is a primitive balance between threat and reward. The challenge of an activity must be difficult enough to

achieve arousal and generate the attention of the old brain without escalating arousal to a level that is perceived as a threat to survival and triggers avoidance. The skill and challenge equilibrium must work within the zone to enhance self-efficacy that triggers the dopaminergic reward system; this bolsters identity and self-esteem at the conscious level. Challenges that overwhelm skills threaten identity and self-competence, unconsciously triggering the threat response which is consciously interpreted as dislike and frustration by (Rutledge, 2012b). Research shows that staying in the flow zone increases positive affect (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2005); positive emotions increase motivation by inhibiting cognitive dissonance and increasing optimism and resilience (Fredrickson, 2004). Unconscious negative experiences create a cognitive challenge to individual identity and can have a halo-effect, influencing the global opinion of a media property. This cognitive dissonance is sometimes resolved by the user in ways that preserve a positive sense of identity and ego consonance by attributing the negative experience to the activity (Elliot & Devine, 1994). Thus, challenges and dissonance that disrupt the ease of movement creates flow exit points, resulting in the potential loss of attention and lapse of motivation to continue exploring the storyworld.

The Narrative Zone

Transporting into a narrative is phenomenologically similar to flow in that it results in complete absorption. Where flow speaks to the emotional experience of being within a transmedia structure so that movement across texts is seamless, the narrative zone speaks to a larger, more meaning-based subjective experience. Flow involves smooth, uninterrupted focus on an activity, where narrative immersion is the fluency of imagining. Busselle and Bilandzic (2008) describe reading as the construction of mental models with narrative transportation the result of ease of processing.

The flow state is often equated to narrative immersion with similar impact on subjective experience (Holt, 2000; Joo, Joung, & Sim, 2011). However, I argue that there is an important difference. Flow is a 'new brain' activity or task undertaken with intention that activates old brain responses, such as seeking out a companion social media site to a video series or following a link from one text to the next. Narrative actively engages all levels of the brain but relies primarily on the old brain responses of emotion, visualization and instinct, which is passed along for processing and meaning-making in the new brain (Rutledge, 2012a).

Research shows that stories, with their linear and causal construction of information, is how the human brain organizes, stores and recalls information (Mar & Oatley, 2008; Whalen, 2010). Stories replicate authentic human experiences by creating a gestalt or holistic experience. The brain's instinctive ability to project and visualize increases the experience of presence and transportation in a story. The old brain then translates the nonverbal impressions for the new brain. This transfer allows the creation of empathy and the conscious sense of 'being there' and knowing the characters. Good stories feel 'real.' Characters that people spend a lot of time with become 'known,' creating parasocial relationships that fuel fandom of all kinds (Horton & Wohl, 1956), from fantasy entertainment and talk shows to sports (e.g., Giles, 2002; Tukachinsky &

Sangalang, 2016). The discovery of mirror neurons showed that visualizing activities or experiencing emotional identification triggered comparable neural network activity to the responses to real events (Iacoboni & Lenzi, 2002; Winters, 2008).

Immersion in a story creates a narrative zone that is a balance of tension and release through the relational investments in characters and plot. It also inhibits cognitive challenge, thereby increasing the motivation to pursue further opportunities for relationships and being part of the characters' world. Crossing platforms breaks the fourth wall and challenges traditional mental schemas of entertainment narratives. Social media feels real and unmediated, more reflective of the experience of personal relationships than conceptualizations of entertainment. The movement of the story into the audience's personal space makes it part of the audience's personal story, impacting identity and beliefs. While stories take place in the imagination, transmedia stories are multisensory experiences, thus the neural mechanism create genuine physical responses and emotions (Bailenson, Beall, Loomis, Blascovich, & Turk, 2005).

Gerrig (1991) described three main components necessary for traveling in a fictional world: 1) cognitive engagement, 2) emotional engagement and 3) mental imagery. These correspond to the functional breakdown of the new brain, midbrain and old brain of the Triune Brain theory. It is the combination of the three that produces the experience of narrative transportation. This is enhanced by audience interactions within the storyworld, whether it's exchanging Tweets with Gigi from *Lizzie Bennet Diaries* or posting comments to the pregnant teen Cici's vlogs in the transmedia production *East Los High*. The physical embedding of the story increases the drive to maintain connection. The old brain is motivated to protect against loss, shifting the cost/benefit ratio.

Narrative Travel

In a good story, the audience becomes a traveler, transported into a storyworld where the narrative determines their role and shapes their textual identity. Different types of media platforms offer distinctive types of embodied experience dictated by affordances, however, however the brain's power of projection and imaging overcome any distancing of emotional engagement as long as the platform and the story are complimentary and follow the canon psychologically as well as factually. The willingness to suspend disbelief or active creation of belief creates the psychological dimension of presence. The traveler takes on and adapts to the logic and laws of the narrative world. There is, therefore, a transformation during travel, when the journey changes into one belonging to the traveler, and not the storyteller alone.

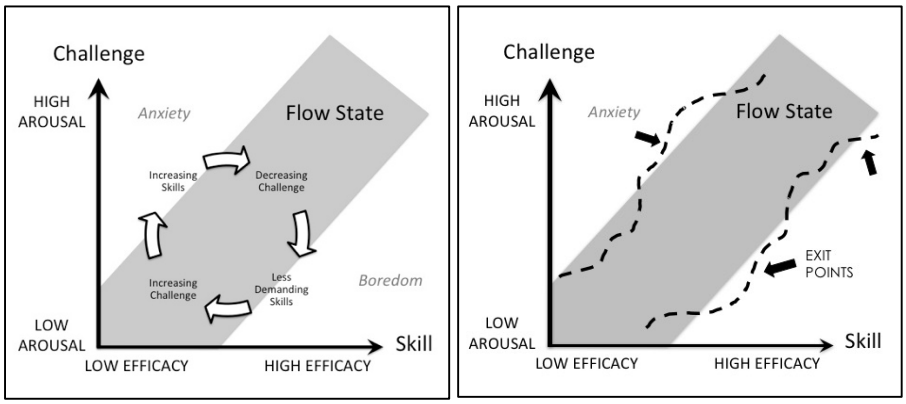
One motivation to migrate across media comes from the persuasive nature of presence and the assumed ownership of the narrative. Narrative transportation theory describes persuasion as a function of an individual's ability to process information in the context of self. Self-referencing is a cognitive process where new information is compared to what a person knows and believes. The greater the salience, the greater the impact on learning, memory and recall (e.g., Klein & Loftus, 1988). The nature of stories allow the audience to find the shared

meaning (relevance), connection (emotion) and step into an experience as a character (identity) because it is imagined self-referentially.

Green and Brock (2002) argue that mental immersion is persuasive because it leads to disinhibiting of the critical thinking functions and heightens emtional responses. From a neuroscience perspective, immersion activates and engages the self-focused primitive brain. Escalas (2004) reports audience members were imagined themselves as the 'star' of a narrative had stronger emotional responses that led to more favorable evaluation of an experience, ad, brand or product.

This also underscores the importance of maintaining the narrative zone and not, like the flow exit point, losing the audience to disruptions in plot coherence, mismatches between plot and platform, and, as in the example with *Defiance*, insufficient background to provide narrative context.

Figure 3: The flow zone is created by a balance of challenge/arousal versus skill/perceptions of efficacy. A similar zone exists for narrative immersion. In both cases, disruptions, inconsistencies and other psychological and physical 'costs' to the transmedia traveler create exit points that diminish motivation and focus and discourage the traveler from expending the effort to continue to explore a storyworld experience.



Putting the Pieces Together

Engagement is complicated to create and harder still to measure. In transmedia properties, it is no longer about one text or asset; it is the ability to weave narrative threads into an experience that inspires participation from the audience. The audiences are moving, so the storytellers are becoming must be adept at designing for movement. Creating a transmedia project is no guarantee of success. Engagement is more than awareness. In transmedia, it is providing the motivation to follow a story across channels and the subtle structure to close the gaps and lead the audience along the way. As producers grapple with the issues surrounding multiplatform storytelling, they are creating a journey. This demands knowledge beyond good storytelling.

Case Study in Brief: TOMS Shoes

TOMS Shoes is an example of a brand that successfully created a transmedia story experience for its customers. In brand stories, the bulk of the story is supplied by the customer, not the storyteller. The storyteller is the enabler, opening doors of possibility to the customer's imagination, relying on core psychological drivers to construct the engagement path that motivates migration for exploration and converts interest to action as consumer assume the role of protagonist. To create action, a successful brand story offers the consumer an identity-based transformation.

TOMS shoes integrated social purpose into a new business model that captured people's attention. However, there were other psychological factors that fueled their success.

1) They had a clear, compelling and believable origins story
2) They amplified the story with "old brain" triggers, i.e. images of children in need
3) They simplified a large problem—world poverty-- that seems out of reach to the human level—children without shoes—creating a problem that could be solved, introducing efficacy
4) They equated consumption with a positive social outcome, supporting ego enhancement and identity
5) User participation introduced group affiliation and leveraged social influence
6) They had the market advantage of being an innovator with a new and exciting business model

In addition to these factors, TOMS integrated other features with significant psychological impact to enhance their story and reinforce the psychological commitment of their customers. TOMS Shoes:

1) Encouraged fans to appropriate the story and connect with each other.
2) Had highly sharable media and activities that further increased efficacy
3) Linked online and offline actions expanding access and entry points
4) Developed rituals and artifacts to further trigger the narrative experience
5) Gave the audience continual positive feedback about the results of their actions, reporting how many shoes were donated.
6) Maintained authenticity of the brand, continually reinforcing identity
7) Expanded into story-coherent new products to maintain attention and interest

Case Study in Brief: East Los High

Like TOMS, *East Los High* also had a social mission. As discussed above, *East Los High* integrated the psychological components by using the Sabido Methodology (Population Media Center, n.d.). This included:

1) Dramatic theory for characters and structure to increase attention and direct focus
2) Circular communication theories to capture interactivity
3) The use of universal characters drawing on Jungian archetypes to reach a wide population
4) Providing transitional characters to demonstrate realistic change

5) Distribution schedules at a frequency and the use of media technique that enhanced parasocial relationships, such as eye contact with the camera,
6) Coherent narrative arc and character voices across media to enhance the suspension of disbelief
7) Triune Brain theory and Sabido's theory of tone

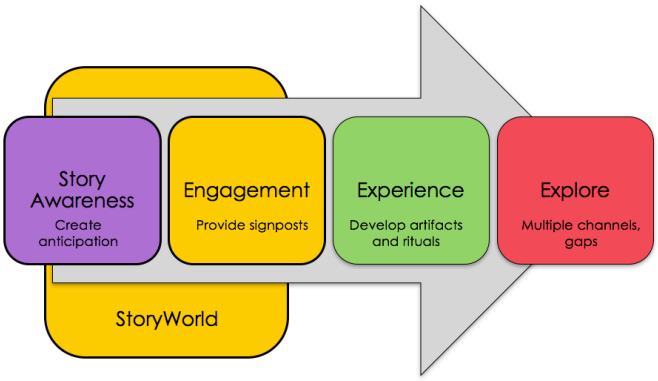
These techniques built a narrative space that needed to be extended across the gaps. Various techniques were used to scaffold the audience and support their journey:

1) Clear signposts on every medium
2) Offers of value propositions for master of skills and through resources
3) Hub for social connection and affiliation
4) Access to alternative media sources to fill time between episodes
5) Validation of audience experience through authentic storylines and an ethnically appropriate cast
6) Continued messages that reflect respect for the audience
7) Multiple narrative devices (i.e. cliffhangers)
8) Demonstrations of positive emotions of determination, grit, hope and resilience. Positive emotions spread more rapidly across social networks and are stickier than negative ones (Fowler & Christakis, 2008).

The Transmedia Migration Engagement Path

Psychological motivation is necessary to move the audience from one platform to another. Many transmedia models identify the process of 'what' as a path for sustaining the audience, taking them from awareness through engagement to experience and exploration. See Figure 4.

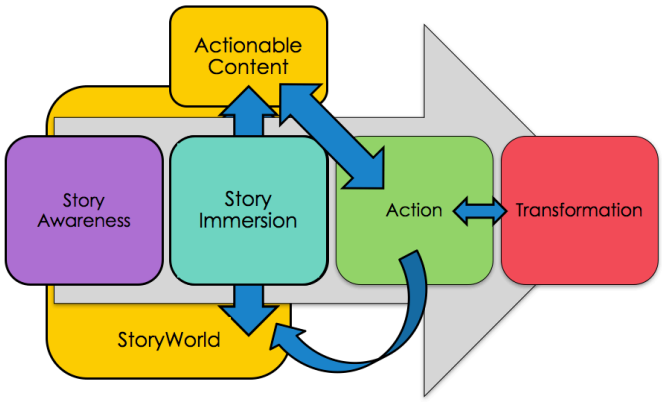
Figure 4. Transmedia Engagement Path. (Adapted from O'Flynn, 2013)



By introducing psychological drivers of motivation, the model becomes more sustainable because it is rooted in identity and emotion. When people are personally invested, they begin to

feel ownership. Experiencing the storyworld becomes the reward; to not do so would be a loss. At this juncture, the story has effected a transformation in the audience.

Figure 5. Transformative Engagement. (Adapted from Srivastava, 2013)



Conclusion: Getting to Why

Applying psychology to transmedia design emphasizes an audience-centric view of the journey. From the producer side, it can be easy to forget that a) people use media and technology to satisfy their needs and goals and b) not all needs are obvious, rational or even conscious. Most are driven by instinct and emotion and then rationalized later, if at all, making self-report investigations of little use when taken at face value. Thus, consideration of the core drivers of human motivation will facilitate design and structural decisions to create a more satisfying experience at all levels.

From the perspective of the audience, the migration among story elements poses a conflict between the rewards of further experience and the transaction cost. Neuroscience highlights the role of instinctive and emotional drivers within the migration experience, both in terms of maintaining the narrative zone and keeping the audience focused by balancing the challenge and skill necessary to stay engaged.

Transmedia storytelling offers a powerful experience to the audience, but it relies on the audience's ability to 'make the trip.' Producers who can provide psychological structures and bridge the gaps between assets, will facilitate the entire journey and enhance the audience's motivation to continue exploring by migrating from one text to another. The triune brain heuristics provides useful rules of thumb that be applied in the field and explain optimal engagement and narrative transportation. These can be integrated into the design process as well as used to perform a functional audit to test transmedia strategies for adequate support and triggers for sustainable audience engagement, rather than leave it to hope and chance.

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[i] The term scaffolding applied to transmedia migration arose in a conversation with doctoral student Patrick McNabb in a discussion of his proposed dissertation evaluating a case study for the structural elements that support transmedia migration based on the Vygotskian concept of scaffolding.