Methodology for the evaluation of transmediality in journalistic content[1]

Metodología para la valoración de la transmedialidad en los contenidos periodísticos

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to develop a methodological tool that will allow the identification of transmedia features in journalistic stories by using a qualitative content analysis sheet. These types of stories have spread to other fields of communication and have been successful thanks to their adaptation to the consumption habits of today's hyper-connected society. The method used to develop the analysis sheet is based on a triangulation technique involving a literature review, in-depth interviews with media professionals and managers, and content analysis. This allows for the systemisation of the characteristics of transmedia stories from both an academic and professional point of view. It also allows for the identification of the variables that can be analysed, and enables them to be adjusted by examining 13 journalistic stories. The results offer a valid and re-usable analysis tool.

Keywords:

Transmedia journalism; transmedia narrative; methodology; newsmaking; multi-platform.

Resumen:

El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo construir una herramienta metodológica que, a través de una ficha de análisis de contenido cualitativo, permita identificar rasgos transmedia en los relatos periodísticos. Este tipo de historias se han extendido en otros campos de la comunicación y han resultado exitosos gracias a la adaptación a los hábitos de consumos en la actual sociedad hiperconectada. El método empleado para su construcción se sustenta en una triangulación de técnicas -revisión de la literatura, entrevistas en profundidad con profesionales y directivos de medios y análisis de contenido- que permite sistematizar las características de los relatos transmedia desde una visión tanto académica como profesional, determinar las variables susceptibles de analizar y ajustarlas mediante el análisis de 13 historias periodísticas. El resultado ofrece un utensilio de análisis válido y replicable.

Palabras clave:

Periodismo transmedia; narrativa transmedia; metodología; newsmaking; multiplataforma.

1. Introduction

The last two decades have seen disruptive transformations in social communication. The vigorous upsurge of technology has changed the traditional communication model, reshaping the role of sender and receiver (Fernández, 2011) and altering the traditional production and distribution of messages by the media.

Relationships take place in a communicative space that is global, digital and mobile, where information consumption habits differ from those of a few years ago. Today, audiences are more fragmented (Salaverría 2018; Scolari, 2017; Owen 2016 and Huertas, 2015) and clustered around platforms, which are considered to be online content hosting intermediaries (Gillespie, 2010), which offer highly diverse content (Pérez, 2018 and Bell and Owen, 2017). They also have a greater role in the communication process (Russell, 2016; Nuñez Ladevéze, 2016; Luchessi, 2015; Fernández, 2014; Jenkins, Ford and Green, 2015; Castells, 2010 and Scolari, 2008) and consume content through a wide variety of formats, which forces media companies to engage in cross/multi/transmedia production (Serrano, 2019a) and the hybridisation of languages (Salaverría, 2018; Spyridou and Veglis, 2016; Adell, 2014; Scolari, 2009; Quinn, 2004 and Jenkins, 2008).

In this hybrid system (Chadwick, 2013), space is shared by new and old media rationale, which are understood as the "assumptions and processes for producing messages", according to the definition of Altheide (2014). They converge on some occasions, and on others they remain independent. This perspective tries to understand the complexity of the media reality and grasp its diversity, but its convergence as well.

With varying degrees of success, media companies are trying to adapt to the new information needs of audiences, and are taking advantage of the potential offered by technology in three main areas: distribution of content, knowledge of the user through data analysis, and the use of narratives to capitalise on the possibilities of available channels. This last area includes transmedia journalistic stories (Almazora and Tárcia, 2012; Gambarato and Alzamora, 2018; Gambarato, 2018; Serrano, 2016 and 2019b; Domínguez, 2012; Porto and Flores, 2018; Ossorio, 2012 and Calvo, 2018). These narrative universes, which have long been used successfully in the entertainment industry, are composed of fragments that are interrelated but self-contained for consumption. Moreover, they are disseminated through multiple channels and allow for a deeper understanding of the story without content duplication. Each of these parts is adapted to the communicative characteristics of each language, medium, or platform and, as a whole, they seek interaction with users. As such, it is possible to satisfy the preferences of any citizen interested in the story, ranging from those who are satisfied with superficial information to those who prefer more leisurely reading with additional contextual information, perspectives, or parallel stories.

The academic world has contributed theories and instruments that explain part of the innovative phenomena linked to digital journalism. This has given rise to terms associated with different displaying procedures such as multimedia, multiplatform, cross media and transmedia. Calvo-Rubio (2018) has gathered different perspectives to explain the scope of these terms (Table 1).

Table 1. Differences between the concepts of multimedia, multiplatform, cross media and transmedia

	Media/Platforms	**Dependence on each fragment**	**User participation**
Multimedia	One		Possible
Multiplatform	Various	Dependent (replication/adaptation)	Possible
Crossmedia	Various	Dependent (story expansión)	Possible
Transmedia	Various	Self-contained (story expansión)	Yes

Source: Calvo-Rubio (2018)

However, continuous evolution makes it necessary to strengthen analyses, on the one hand, especially in areas that have received little attention or are linked to the most recent innovations, and, on the other hand, to employ new techniques to do so (Salaverría, 2019). Regarding the hypothesis that states the possibility of assessing the presence of transmedia features in journalistic stories, this research reveals the development of the methodological tool used in the doctoral thesis of one of the authors to determine whether journalistic coverage follows this rationale of creating and disseminating stories, and therefore is adapted to the new content consumption habits.

2. Methodology

In order to achieve the stated objective, this work has been divided into three phases. In the first phase, an in-depth review of the international literature was carried out in order to identify the main contributions to the state of the art and to determine the essence of transmedia content and its characteristics from an eminently academic point of view.

In the second phase, 15 interviews were held with the heads of some of the preeminent media companies and journalistic innovation laboratories in Spain in order to learn more about their work dynamics related to generating multiplatform content. Given that the emphasis was on the real world and on understanding and describing a social phenomenon from the inside (Flick, 2011), research of a qualitative nature was chosen with the firm conviction that rigour in observation does not require numerical measurement, as advocated by Lévi-Strauss and quoted by Callejo (1998).

The use of a semi-structured, in-depth interview was preferable, as it differs from a closed questionnaire and focuses on a series of topics (Corbetta, 2010), which allowed us to delve into transmediality practice and develop a conceptual approach from the professional field. A guide was prepared reflecting the following issues of interest: current context; definition and characterisation of the transmedia narrative; journalistic uses of the transmedia narrative; transmedia production; marketing of transmedia products; the journalistic impact of transmedia products; and new professional profiles together with new lines of work. Subsequently, a series of questions with specific points were established according to the area of specialisation of each of the interviewees.

As argued by Hernández (2014), qualitative research does not have a clearly defined beginning and end. In order to provide a valid, adequate sample for the research objective, we used the concept of saturation (Berteaux, 1980), which is seen as the point at which the empirical work can be considered complete when the interviewees within a homogeneous group "essentially repeat what has already been said" (Callejo, 1998: 96).

The study by Salaverría (2015) on innovation laboratories promoted by journalistic companies was used as an initial reference for the selection. Given that the work of this professor from the University of Navarra is international in scope, the selection only took into account companies that were active in Spain in December of 2018. Based on these criteria, the organisations chosen were *El Confidencial Lab, RTVE.es Lab*, and *Vocento Media Lab.*

In order for the study to cover the majority of the Spanish media system, the decision was made to include media companies representing radio, television and the print media. In each of these groups, objective criteria were sought to justify the choice. Thus, we took into account their position in terms of listeners, audience, and circulation in the *Estudio General de Medios* (General Media Study) (*AIMC 2018*) *Asociación para la Investigación de Medios de Comunicación* (Association for Research into Media Communication), with data from October 2017 to May 2018. Using these parameters, *Marca* and *El País* were chosen as the most widely-read newspapers, and *SER* and *COPE* as the radio stations with the highest number of listeners. To avoid the presence of two media from the same group that might have had similar strategies, *Marca*, *SER* and *COPE*[3] were selected.

Moreover, two other categories were considered as well: digital native media and news agencies. In the latter category, *Agencia Efe* was considered suitable due to its prominence and range of services. As for digital native media, based on Comscore data from May 2018 "Comscore and the *OJD (Oficina de Justificación de la Difusión* – Office of Authorised Dissemination) confirm that *El Español* is fighting for digital leadership in Spain", 2018), *Elconfidencial.com* was the most popular, but was left out because its laboratory was already being represented. Thus, *20minutos.es* and *El Español* were selected.

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3   *El País* and *SER* are part of *Grupo Prisa.*

On the other hand, it was considered relevant to add topic-based digital media. In this category, the two media chosen were *Newtral* and *El Desmarque*, due to the fact that *Newtral* is a benchmark fact-checking media, and *El Desmarque* is a digital native focused on sport that has experienced high levels of growth in recent years and was acquired by Mediaset in March 2019[4].

Similarly, the interest in including media companies in which innovation was linked to the business model was also assessed. In this respect, *Eldiario.es* was chosen for its subscriber system as a complement to advertising and its position among the top ten media outlets with the most unique users in Spain.

Finally, Castilla-La Mancha Media (CMM), which is a regional public broadcaster with radio, television, and a digital presence with a clear commitment to innovation, was also included.

In each organisation, the person closely related to the development of news products using new narratives and channels was sought. After this process was completed, the list of those selected was as follows:

Table 2. Selection of the professionals and managers of media companies and laboratories for the in-depth interviews

Name	Position
Alejandro Laso	Head of *Elconfidencial.LAB*
Daniel Muñoz Guerrero	Business Development Manager at *El Confidencial*[5]
Borja Bergareche	Director of *Vocento Media Lab*[6]
Miriam Hernanz	Head of *RTVE.es Lab*
Juan Ignacio Gallardo	Director of *Marca*
Nacho I. Rojo	Digital Director of *Cadena Ser*
Monserrat Lluis	Deputy General Director of Content, Innovation and Development at *COPE*
Irene Gómez	Director of Audience Development at Grupo Henneo (owner of *20 minutos*)
Laura Sanz	Product Director at *El Español*[7]
José Luis Fernández-Checa	Deputy Director of Digital Content at *Agencia EFE*
María Ramírez	Director of Digital Strategy at *Eldiario.es*
Marilín Gonzalo	Digital Area Coordinator at *Newtral*
Isaías Blázquez	Digital Content Director at Castilla-La Mancha Media (CMM)
Javier Padilla	Director of Technology at *El Desmarque*
Carlos Tur	Head of Content Dissemination at *El Desmarque*

Source: Prepared by the authors

4   The press release issued by *Mediaset España* on 6 March 2019 is available at the following link: https://www.mediaset.es/mediaset-espana-adquiere-eldesmarque_0_2717925015.html.

5   At the time of this writing, Daniel Muñoz Guerrero is Director of Business Strategy at *El Español*.

6   Borja Bergareche left Grupo Vocento in May of 2019 and started working for Kreab.

7   Laura Sanz is currently work*ing as Audie*nce Manager at Telefónica.

As can be seen in Table 2, in the case of *El Confidencial* and *El Desmarque*, two people participated in the sessions as we felt that their contributions could enrich the interviews.

The interviews were held at the headquarters of each media outlet between January and June of 2019.

The combined methodology of the first two phases has allowed us to join the academic perspective with the professional reality and thereby achieve greater precision and reliability in describing transmedia journalism and creating an analysis sheet that has been useful in determining the presence of transmedia features.

As a final step, with the aim of testing and making the necessary adjustments to the instrument, the tool was used to study the content of a selection of journalistic works. This technique is commonly used to obtain indicators by means of systematic, objective procedures for describing the content of messages in order to infer knowledge about the conditions of production/reception (inferred variables) of such messages" (Bardín, 2002: 32). This analysis "is not limited to the content, but also takes into account the 'container' as well" (p. 25). This clarification is necessary, because the purpose of our study includes the need to approach both the medium through which the stories are disseminated and their content as well.

In accordance with Abela (2002), we began by defining the object of study. In order to understand the way in which transmedia journalistic production takes place of transmedia journalistic production, analyses were carried out regarding the content linked to a single story published by each of the media or laboratories that formed part of the previous phase: *El Confidencial, RTVE, Marca, Cadena SER, COPE, El Español, Agencia Efe, Eldiario.es, Newtral, CMM, El Desmarque,* and *ABC* (the latter on behalf of the Vocento group). The digital newspaper *20 minutos* was replaced by *Heraldo de Aragón* because due to the fact that they belong to the same group (Grupo Henneo) and that the input of Henneo's Director of Audience Development was obtained, it was considered that analysing the production of a local media company with a strong link to print was of greater interest to the research.

In order to select the samples, an initial review of each media was carried out in search of a story that was told through different channels, which is a prerequisite for defining a transmedia universe.

The aim was to include the largest sample possible in terms of diversity of topics, type of coverage, media used, strategies, etc. Based on these criteria, the following stories were selected:

- *Guerra a la mentira* (War on lies), by *RTVE* (July 2017). This story includes an interactive docuweb that is one of the most highly awarded productions of the *RTVE* Laboratory. It is especially interesting for the parallel use of television with digital environments.
- *90 años de la estación internacional de Canfranc* (90 years of the Canfranc international train station) by *Heraldo de Aragón,* belonging to Grupo Henneo (July 2018). It was chosen because it was a concluded story in a local media with a previous strategy that works mainly in paper format and on the web.
- *Exilio olvidado* (Forgotten Exile) by *Agencia EFE* (March 2019). This was the first transmedia production announced as such by the Spanish news agency.
- Coverage of the Catalan Parliamentary Elections on 21st December 2017, by *El Confidencial.* This is an ongoing story with an ending that is still uncertain, and it was covered by one of the most innovative digital native media.

- *Programa Carrusel Deportivo, Cadena SER* (Sport Carousel Programme, *Cadena SER*): 17 August 2019, *La Liga* (First Division League) 2019-2020 kickoff and a match between *Celta Vigo* and *Real Madrid*. This is the programme with the most listeners on Spanish radio. The medium is joined by other channels in the digital space.

- Coverage of the *Celta de Vigo-Real Madrid* match by the daily known as *Marca*. (16, 17 and 18 of August 2019). Following the analysis of the event on radio attention is given to the same story, but told by a news company with a strong daily print publication, which is joined by various media and platforms.

- Coverage of the fire in *Barchín del Hoyo* (Cuenca) by *CMM* (July-August 2019). News that is closer to the people and more service-oriented is characteristic of regional public media. Moreover, the choice of this story is a result of interest in analysing the coverage of an evolving event by a public broadcaster that combines radio, television and digital media.

- Follow-up of the 2019 feminist strike by *Eldiario.es* (March 2019). The digital native develops a story on a prominent social issue.

- Interview with Zouhair Feddal in *El Desmarque* (March 2019). The inclusion of this story in the sample is significant, as this kind of genre is unusual in this type of approach.

- Coverage of the Open Arms boat situation in *Newtral* (August 2019). This content development company specialises in fact-checking, so a multi-channel story has been targeted that includes this journalistic speciality.

- Pedro Sánchez's congressional investiture debate in *El Español* (July 2019). This was an eminently political topic covered by a media company that specialises in these issues and was founded in the digital realm.

- Floods in central Spain due to the passage of a *DANA* (Cold drop) that appeared in *COPE* in August 2019. *COPE* is making a strong commitment to the development of a digital platform. An event was sought that would allow for an analysis of how media associated with immediacy such as radio and the internet are used.

- Coverage of the surgery of the King Emeritus of Spain, Juan Carlos I in *ABC*, a Vocento Group media outlet (August 2019). The chosen subject matter reflects the interest usually shown by this newspaper in issues related to the monarchy. On this occasion, it is useful to observe how a company with a strong link to print production follows a news item that is very close to current affairs.

Each of the media or platforms used to extend or disseminate the story was established as a unit of measure. The analysis was carried out between 1 August and 7 September of 2019 using the content of each story that recorded in the logs of the different platforms (web, apps, social networks, etc.), as well as in the paper editions obtained through the platforms *Orbyt* (*Marca*), and *Kiosko y Más* (*Heraldo de Aragón* and *ABC*). Consequently, to give one example, this meant there was no record of Instagram stories that had not been saved as Highlights, as their publication disappears after 24 hours.

This study has focused on verifying the degree of compliance with the conditions that had been established in phases 1 and 2 for identifying a transmedia strategy.

3. Development of the methodological tool

3.1. Theoretical approaches to transmedia journalism

From the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the concept of transmedia started to become popular among content creators to refer to a new way of developing and distributing stories that sought to exploit the possibilities of the available communication channels to the maximum, moving beyond multimedia (Salaverría, 2008; Moloney, 2011b), multiplatform, and cross media practices (Costa and Piñeiro, 2012).

The first transmedia stories emerged in the field of fiction (Costa, 2013 and Mayor, 2014), where numerous scholars established the domain of their research (Jenkins, 2003, 2009 and 2011; Scolari, 2013; Costa, 2013; Costa and Piñeiro, 2012; Porto and Flores, 2018; Gosciola, cited by Porto and Flores, 2012; Jeff Gómez, cited by Scolari 2013; Guarinos, Cordillo and Ramírez, 2011; Pratten, 2015; Bernardo, 2014).

Gradually, transmedia stories reached other fields, such as the following: brand communication (Rodríguez, Paíno and Ruiz and Jiménez, 2017; Villena, 2014 and Galán, 2016 and Tenderich, 2014); popular celebrations (Calvo, Cantero, Serrano, 2019); social movements (Arana, Narbaiza and Mimenza, 2015); education (Scolari, Lugo and Masanet, 2019; Cabrera and Díez, 2018 and Pence, 2012); and television content (Evans, 2011; Cantero, Calvo-Rubio, Benedicto, 2020); and others. Journalism has also turned its attention to transmedia narratives. In addition to those cited in the introductory section, the following authors are examples of researchers who have analysed this subject from different perspectives: Moloney (2011), Porto and Flores (2018), Ossorio, (2012), Irala (2014), Prádanos (2013), Haye (2011), Galán, Rodríguez and Marzal (2018) and Valle (2013).

While searching for a characterisation of these narratives that could be applied to journalism, as a result of the literature review, it has been possible to determine a series of features that are characteristic of this type of narrative, which are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Characteristics of transmedia narratives highlighted by various authors

| | Single story | Interrelated narratives | | | | | Multiple platforms | Coordination / Strategy | Participation | Production in mobiles |
		New contributions	Complete comprehensibility	Unfinished	Adapted to the medium	No need for full consumption				
Costa and Piñeiro		x	x		x	x	x		x	
Jeff Gómez	x				x		x	x	x	
Vicente Gosciola	x						x		x	x
Rodríguez, Paíno, Ruiz and Jiménez							x		x	
Jenkins	x		x		x		x			
Guarinos, Gordillo and Ramírez		x		x						
Scolari	x						x		x	
Ossorio	x	x			x					
Irala	x				x				x	
Prádanos	x	x					x		x	
Valle	x						x	x		
Haye	x	x					x			
Galán, Rodríguez and Marzal	x	x	x				x		x	
Pratten									x	
Bernardo	x		x				x		x	

Source: Prepared by the authors

Base on this theoretical foundation, transmedia storytelling can be defined as telling a story through several related fragments that allow for self-contained consumption without duplication of content. Furthermore, they are distributed by taking advantage of the communicative characteristics of each language, medium or platform, and they seek the participation of users.

3.2. Professional perspective on transmedia journalism

Now that we have a definition and characteristics that have resulted from the academic study, it is of considerable interest to investigate the vision that the professionals who work in the media have of this issue.

As in the previous section, content analysis of the in-depth interviews has allowed us to gather a series of distinctive features that have helped to conceptualise the rationale of transmedia production, although it is necessary to make a preliminary clarification: of the 13 newsrooms visited, only four of them –*COPE, CMM, El Desmarque*, and *RTVE*– use the term *transmedia* diligently. The rest of the newsrooms consider the term to be theoretical. However, it will be confirmed later that in many cases stories with transmedia features are developed, yet they are not labelled as such by the creators themselves.

Table 4 lists the characteristics highlighted by each of the professionals interviewed. Once again, based on their convergence, we can provide a definition of the transmedia journalistic story: a branching out of the original content through different media and formats, taking advantage of the particular characteristics of each of them (Hernanz, Padilla, Sanz, Gonzalo, Bergareche, Muñoz, Blázquez, Gallardo and Lluis), and taking into account new consumption habits (Laso, Ramírez, Bergareche and Lluis), in such a way that each piece contributes meaning to the story (Tur and Muñoz).

Table 4. Characteristics of transmedia stories highlighted by media professionals and journalistic innovation labs

	Single story	Multiple platforms	Adapted to consumption habits	Branching (non-linear)	Participation	Complementary stories	Selecting the best format	Giving importance to the story	Taking advantage of multimedia resources
Monserrat Lluis			x						x
Laura Sanz		x			x				
Daniel Muñoz		x	x	x	x	x			
Alejandro Laso			x						
Borja Bergareche	x	x	x	x		x			
José Luis Fernández-Checa		x							
Juan Ignacio Gallardo		x							
Ignacio I. Rojo		x					x		
María Ramírez			x		x				x
Marilín Gonzalo								x	
Isaías Blázquez		x		x		x			
Javier Padilla							x		
Carlos Tur		x		x		x			
Miriam Hernanz	x	x		x	x				
Irene Gómez		x	x						

Source: Prepared by the authors

In general terms, common characteristics can be seen in the description offered by the academic realm. Now, by focusing on journalism and combining the academic and professional vision, the definition of a transmedia story would be as follows: a journalistic story that is told through different fragments which, in addition to being related to each other, allow for stand-alone consumption without duplication of content among such fragments, and is distributed by taking advantage of the communicative characteristics of each language, medium or platform, and seeks the participation of the user to increase its dissemination and/or contribute new content.

The proposed definition makes it possible to stipulate the conditions that a story must fulfil in order to be considered as a transmedia strategy: (1) A single story told through different channels; (2) Expansion through fragments in different channels that allow for self-contained consumption; (3) The adaptation of each message to the language of the channel through which it is disseminated; and (4) Fostering the participation of the target audience.

In order to record these special characteristics in an analysis sheet while pursuing the highest level of reliability possible in order to limit discrepancies and allow for replication, a series of elements to be coded were established for each characteristic according to the categorisation in Table 5.

Table 5. Methodology for content analysis of transmedia stories

C1. CHANNEL	C2. DOES IT INCLUDE SELF-CONTAINED FRAGMENTS THAT PROVIDE NOVEL CONTENT?	Does it make complete sense?
		Does it provide information to expand and/or deepen the story?
	C3. IS THE CONTENT ADAPTED TO THE MEDIUM?	Is it adapted to the language of the medium?
		Does it use resources specific to the medium/platform?
	C4. DOES IT ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION? *(This is not required in all the channels. It is sufficient for the narrative universe to possess channels for participation)*	Does it enable the sharing of content?
		Does it use gamification?
		Does it allow comments?
		Does it have profiles on social networks?

Source: Prepared by the authors

In order to infer that a story follows a transmedia rationale, the number of channels used must be two or more. In addition, fragments have to be found that answer 'yes' to the questions in the second characteristic category (C2), 'yes' to the first question in C3, and that include several elements related to the second question in C3. Finally, some of the participation tools of characteristic 4 must be present in the group of channels.

Therefore, although the unit of measure is the channel, the content analysis had to involve a search within each media, messages or pieces of information that complied with the characteristics described.

4. Implementation of the methodological tool

In order to test the methodological tool, which was developed after conducting the bibliographic study and in-depth interviews with the media professionals and, if necessary, to make necessary adjustments, it was applied to 13 news stories, bearing in mind that the intention was not to evaluate the quality of the work, but to determine the use of a transmedia rationale.

In all cases, it was possible to find content linked to the story on several channels, as this was a prerequisite for the selection of the sample, as mentioned in the methodology section. Likewise, all the stories made use of at least two channels to extend the narrative universe with novel content and complete comprehensibility; it was not necessary to go to another platform to understand the message, unless one wanted to delve deeper into the story.

Thus, in the study of the second characteristic (C2), of the total units of measure (n=97), the figure of 41.24% (n=40) contained fragments of the story with complete comprehensibility, which also provided new information or a different point of view to the story. Therefore, the self-contained fragments helped to extend the narrative universe. To this end, the following channels were used: web pages, television, social networks, print editions, podcasts, infographics, videos on social networks, apps, radio programmes, and more.

Channels were also found within their respective stories (n=16) that were used to include new content as well as expand existing content in other media. This group mainly included social networks and mobile apps.

A third group consisted of channels that did not meet the requirement of containing stand-alone and/or recurring content (n=41). Mostly, these platforms (social networks, really simple syndication (rss), newsletters, etc.) are used to lure traffic to the main part of the story.

In the next stage, it was found that the channels of the first two groups (n=56) adapted to the language of the medium by using its codes (words, effects, music, silences, etc., on radio; image and sound on television; text and links on websites, etc.). In all cases, the first requirement of the third characteristic (C3) was fulfilled and some element of the second was included as well.

Once all the above requirements had been met, the next step was to find channels of participation. In this case, it was sufficient to find a medium that simply offered this option in the entire narrative universe. In all the stories, at least one channel was found. Only in one story was a single medium employed for user participation. In the rest of the stories (n=12), between 2 and 7 were used. In this section, social networks (whatever their number) were counted as a single channel of participation.

As a final result, it was possible to conclude that all the stories had transmedia features.

This phase of the study made it possible to optimise the coding of the methodological tool that was finally used as follows:

C1) A single story told through different channels.

a. Name of the channel used (print, web, television, radio, app, Twitter, Facebook, etc.)

C2) Self-contained fragments

b. Completely understandable. Develops a complete idea that can be understood without having to refer to other parts of the narrative universe (Yes/No).

c. Provides new information that allows the story to be expanded and/or elaborated (Yes/No).

C3) Adaptation to the dissemination channel.

d. Does it adapt to the codes of the medium?

i.   Radio: words, noises, effects, music, silences, etc.

ii. TV: image and sound.

iii. Print: text, infographics, photonews, etc.

iv. Web: text, infographics, video, image, sound.

e. Does it use its own resources? (Yes/No).

i.   Print channel: appropriate layout, headline features, images, etc.

ii. Web channel: proper accessibility and design, adaptive design, titling features, hyperlinks, images, videos, etc...

iii. Radio/podcast channel: good sound quality, musical accompaniment, sound effects, etc.

iv. Video channel: good quality of image, labelling, graphics, etc.

v.   Social networks: links, tags, graphic features, appropriate size for viewing, etc.

C4) Participation channels

f. Content sharing facilities (Yes/No)

g. Gamification (Yes/No)

h. Allows comments (Yes/No)

i. Social media profiles (Yes/No)

j. Other means of participation (virtual reality, 360º videos, mailboxes for submitting information, etc.) (Yes/No)

5. Discussion and conclusions

In view of the results, the process of developing the methodology and its testing has made it possible to fulfil the objective of having a tool to determine the presence of transmedia features in a journalistic story. This instrument combines the contributions made in the academic field with the news making processes followed by newsrooms that comprise a representative sample of the main Spanish media.

The literature review and interviews with professionals have led to the establishment of the characteristics of transmedia stories in journalism: fragmentation of the story into autonomous narratives that provide new information and allow

different levels of detail; multiple distribution channels that exploit the possibilities of each language in providing multiple entry points to the story; searching for the audience and encouraging their participation with the aim of involving them in the story. The multi-channel nature, the expansion of the story into self-contained fragments, adaptation to the special characteristics of each medium used, and the encouragement of participation can all be confirmed by following the proposed analysis sheet. The result does not establish the degree of transmediality or the scope of the transmedia universe. The aim is not to establish the degree of transmedia quality, but rather the presence of the characteristics that allow for the affirmation that a story is transmedia in nature.

Analysis of the narratives under study has shown that the Spanish media produce information that is in line with the transmedia approach to a greater or lesser degree, and therefore to current consumption habits. In this case, we started with a prerequisite in the analysis that predetermined the results and limited generalisations: we were looking for narratives that were present on at least two channels. However, this has allowed us to evaluate the usefulness of the proposed methodological tool for identifying transmedia journalistic narratives.

Media strategies are highly diverse in terms of the choice of channels, the content disseminated in each of them, and the channels that are open to participation. This is especially relevant as it shows that the proposed tool can be adapted to different scenarios and media. It has been used to study the coverage of ongoing events, concluded stories, a diversity of topics (political, social, sports), universes that run through multiple platforms from a central core in the press, television, radio, and digital media, which use various strategies to foster participation.

Likewise, it does not limit its validity to existing languages, channels and technologies, but allows for the use of new approaches for content and narrative development (artificial intelligence, voice assistance, etc.). This is possible because the variables that comprise the analysis sheet allow for the possibility of identifying basic elements of any unit of measure (channel) that contribute to shaping transmedia stories. We are not looking for particular characteristics that define a medium (new or existing), but rather features that are determined by the proposed definition of a journalistic transmedia universe.

This analysis sheet is the seed of a new phase of study that will allow us to delve deeper into the use of transmedia narratives in the Spanish media and to establish a guide for best practice.

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