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Building a platform

Transmedia is a term used to describe the proliferation of a brand on to different platforms. We look at how it has changed modern marketing



If there's one thing that Hollywood blockbusters are good at, it's making the most of a brand. This year's summer cinema hits will probably swiftly have their own clothing lines, lunch boxes, action figures, computer games and even their own amusement rides. These franchises can become as big as the films themselves and together give the movie brands far more impact. Successfully expanding a product to other categories allows them to complement each other and create something that's much more than just a sum of the film's parts.

Today's transmedia is more than just franchising. It's the art of creating a single story that can be enjoyed across a range of platforms. The success allows the viewers, or users, to delve deeper into the worlds that have been created. To immerse themselves and learn more, increasing their brand loyalty in the process. "Transmedia is a strategy to spread your content across multiple platforms, with different contents on each platform, not just replicas," says Mr Lam Wai Keung,

senior lecturer in the department of communication design and digital media at HKDI. "It's all interconnected. You can create engagement and marketing strategies to build fan loyalty to your media content. That's why transmedia is a concept to fix the culture of social media."

The *Harry Potter* series makes a great example of this concept. Not only are there the books and films, but fans can also play various computer games, see the sequel in a West End show, visit the Harry Potter theme park at Universal Studios in the US or Japan, go behind the scenes on the studio tour in England, or even find the half-entered luggage trolley on platform 9¾ at London's Kings Cross station. Disney, however, is perhaps one of the biggest skilled at transmedia storytelling with *Star Wars* now joining the mix, but everyone from Marvel and DC Heroes to Dreamworks, with characters like Shrek, are turning films and comics into multi-platform experiences.

One unlikely success in this transmedia approach came from an Australian public service announcement campaign to promote rail safety. The Dumb Ways to Die video, with its catchy song, quickly went viral, which led to a series of apps and games, books and illustrations, as well as the characters appearing in a life assurance commercial. Basically, using immersive entertainment technology has revolutionised the advertising market. By using the basis of a popular film or brand as the basis, other brands are increasing their audience engagement online, an area that has proved tough to produce results.

Turkish Airlines worked with Warner Bros films and their latest movie, *Batman V Superman: Dawn of Justice*, for



its recent campaign. The airline produced a series of adverts offering its latest destinations as the fictional cities of Metropolis and Gotham (home to Superman and Batman respectively), including virtual tours available online of each city for people to explore, complete with nightlife, culture and sightseeing activities. In addition, a printed *Time Out* travel guide was created of the two cities and handed out to customers, while the planes featured themed amenity kits and menu items. "To build fan loyalty you have to immerse them in your storyline," says Lam. "They created a website for fans to book airline tickets to the cities in the fictional storyline. They employed a transmedia agency and worked with Turkish airlines. It's a kind of engagement marketing and what's different about this is that it extends the fictional story to reality. It's what we call alternate reality. It's a big concept in transmedia. Alternate reality is to realise some of the fictional components from the story into reality."

For *The Hunger Games* series of films, an online fashion magazine, *Capitol Couture*, was created to document the styles of the Capitol as her Katniss planned her revolution on screen. The magazine, which featured five editions in total, contained a mix of news, fashion and trends from the fictional world. It was compiled with the help of notable talent, including top model Hannah Davis, photographer Steven Klein and New York creative director Susanne

Harry Potter



PICTURE CREDIT: ©2006 WARNER BROS. STUDIO

Left to right, from top: Harry Potter movie poster; The Wizarding World Of Harry Potter at Universal Studios Orlando; interactive exhibitions at Harry Potter Studios in London; Harry Potter video game; The Wizarding World of Harry Potter in Universal Studios Japan



Bartsch, and allowed fans to experience life inside The Hunger Games world. Along with the website, the mock brand had its own Twitter, Instagram and YouTube pages.

Local publishers, too, are getting in on the act. *100Most* (100港币) is a print magazine that thinks like a website, producing short articles, satirical pieces and round-ups in each issue. It created a series of fictional characters which appear on its TV channel, in some of its music videos, on its website and in other outlets. "They can use these characters for different media content, in the way that Marvel does," says Lam. "They have the power to make a campaign go viral. They use the fictional characters they have created and create a story around these characters. *100Most* has built a localised concept of transmedia. In Hong Kong, the audience is quite passive. They just sit and read the content." HKDI has been collaborating with *100Most* on a four-day education training programme for students, which has resulted in a viral movie, posted on to the *100Most* Facebook page, produced by our students and the *100Most* creative team.

Last January 2016, HKDI transmedia students also created a campaign for a romance movie called *Anniversary* by local production house, Orange Sky Golden Harvest. "Our students had to apply the concept of transmedia or alternate reality to create 11 personal Facebook pages for

11 fictional characters," says Lam. "Fans could then add the characters to be their Facebook friends and interact with them." *Anniversary* is a follow up to the 2006 film *Marriage with a Fool*. There are 10 years between the times the films are set, so the Facebook profiles cover the decade-long histories of each character since the first film. "Our students had to imagine the main characters over these 10 years," says Lam. "The fans can follow what has happened since the last film, which is not mentioned in the new movie. It's an extension of the storyline."

Earlier this year, students at HKDI, from a range of specialisations, including advertising, film and transmedia, worked on an immersive solution for local Cantopop band, The Wynners. The result was a 360-degree music video, which allowed viewers to scroll around the scene while it played. The band were celebrating 40 years of making music and wanted to do something special. "The lead singer, Alan Tam, has earned the nickname Headmaster by encouraging a new generation of artists," says Leonard Wong, senior digital promotions manager for Universal Music in Hong Kong. "Headmaster suggested creating a special music video to celebrate the anniversary while giving the young generation a chance to explore their innovation."

"Our students focused on the marketing strategy," says Lam. "They created a media journey for the fans to follow.

Batman



PICTURE CREDIT: STUDIO CITY MACAU



Clockwise, from top left: Turkish Airlines campaign for Batman V Superman; Batman theatre at Studio City Macau; The Lego Batman game; Batman V Superman movie poster

Originally the 360-degree music video was segmented into five pieces and these five pieces were uploaded on to the band's Facebook page. At the start, the fans had no idea why there were five segments but after they had seen all of them they found that, if they used five mobile phones to play the five segments, they could see all of the music video. After we had shown the five segments, we published the full 360-degree video on to the internet. It formed a journey by spreading the media content, to engage the audience to follow it."

"360-degree videos and virtual reality provide a means of naturally and intelligently interacting with information, giving people a brand new experience," adds Wong. "Due to more people using mobile devices and promoting brands through social media, online music platforms and other websites are more interactive than traditional media."

The Higher diploma in Transmedia at HKDI is a two-year course designed to nurture creativity and transmedia storytelling techniques. The idea is to understand the trends of social media and to also analyse big data to gain business or marketing insights to create a media portal. "Traditionally, students would just train in film or storytelling," says Lam. "It's not very often they get to analyse big data, to do research and to estimate the effect of the content, as well as look at the marketing and promotion side. Transmedia students have to fit the media content and have to plan the marketing strategy to promote the media content. Many media companies have been in contact with us, looking for people to help them manage the social media marketing because traditionally creative students would not have the business sense. Our students are doing both the creative and the marketing side on this course."

Hunger Games



Hunger Games-inspired fashion from Capitol Couture

PICTURE CREDIT: GLOINGATE, COURTESY OF LARK FILMS