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TRANSMEDIA CONSUMPTION EXPERIENCES:  
CONSUMING AND CO-CREATING INTERRELATED STORIES  
ACROSS MEDIA

BY

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DISSERTATION

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## ABSTRACT

Marketers and consumers alike are experiencing immense changes in the way entertainment is conceived, consumed, produced, distributed, and marketed as a result of intensifying socio-cultural, technologic, and economic convergence (Jenkins 2006, Dena 2004). Transmedia storytelling, aesthetic and product of this convergence culture, is the systematic dispersal of narrative elements across multitude of media for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated consumer experience (Jenkins 2006). To respond to the increasingly cluttered mediascape, producers of entertainment and non-entertainment brands are under pressure to develop engaging experiences for consumers and also to manage brand stories that integrate various media platforms. Transmedia storytelling becomes a relevant and lucrative solution that helps producers achieve these ends. Adapting and extending on the idea of transmedia storytelling and grounding transmedia to the consumer behavior and marketing fields, this dissertation seeks to develop transmedia consumption (TMC) — transmedia logic — that focuses on the consumer practices and processes around transmedia narratives. This dissertation is guided by the following research questions: What constitutes transmedia consumption experiences and practices? How do consumers consume and co-create these consumption experiences?

The findings detail the key practices, boundaries, and important processes of TMC. The findings maintain that TMC experiences entail broader and diverse consumption and co-creation practices than the mere consumption of media texts. Building on the works of DeCerteau (1984) and Jenkins (1992) on nomadic behavior of fans, this dissertation identifies migration — consumers' navigation behavior across media platforms — as one of the salient processes of TMC and explores patterns, motivators, and barriers of transmedial migration. The findings of

this study have implications for marketing scholars and practitioners about creating and managing unified and coordinated brand narrative experiences across multiple traditional and social media.

Dedicated to my parents and my grandmother,  
They define me...

*Bismillahirrahmanirrahim*

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## PREFACE

This dissertation is about transmedia storytelling, the telling of a story through different types of media. Indeed, as a prologue, I wanted to start this dissertation by embedding a video story about transmedia. I was looking for creative ways to apply transmediation to the very document at hand by dispersing some elements of the “backstory” in a different medium. However, unfortunately, I am limited by the conventional academic representation styles that mainly lend themselves to the textual forms. But, that’s a story for another day, or maybe another dissertation. Generally, qualitative dissertations start with a quote that would reveal how as a PhD got interested in the dissertation topic. Yawn! After looking for that enlightening quote in my data, I decided to write my own journey of becoming a transmedia consumer as a preface. Because no quote was rich enough to describe my story of falling into the black hole of transmedia, becoming a transmedia scholar. Maybe some parts of Alice’s story in Wonderland can be inspiring. Don’t judge me, that’s called intertextuality!

My life led me to this point slowly sometimes through conscious decisions and steps and sometimes via twist of faith. I always had a thing for the movies. Before starting the PhD program at UIUC, I thought I was a movie geek although I avoided *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, and any sci-fi movies for that matter at all costs. What an illusion I was living! Above all, I was giving a side-eye to anyone talking about themselves as a fan. I still remember the mind blowing experience I had when I watched *Star Wars* for the first time. But, it didn’t take me long to explore *Star Trek* and choose *Star Trek* over *Star Wars*. In 2005, when I was sitting at *Enterprise* and explaining that I was interested in media products, I did not know what I was getting myself into. I wasn’t also aware I was being recruited by Captain Kozinets into the next generation aca-fans (academic fans). Three years after that, I was at a conference at MIT Convergence Culture

Consortium and listening to Prof Henry Jenkins explaining transmedia storytelling to a vibrant and media loving crowd. A year later, I was devoting all my spring break to watching the ABC TV show *Lost*. I was quickly sucked into this multi-layered story that I enjoy falling deep and deeper into. Things you would do for research! I have received several jealous texts and emails from friends – sometimes tagged with an offer or wish to be my research assistant – after they saw my ‘tough’ research load. I have started playing alternate reality games for the first time in my life. Remembering about my responses to my old friends about fantasy role plays, I was thinking *I was paying back karma at a vastly accelerated rate*. I was attending, organizing, and chasing *Lost* theme parties and joining into *Lost* discussion email lists. I was planning my weeks around Tuesdays and not responding to any phone calls during the weekly *Lost* episodes. For the first time in my life, I registered for an account on a fan site. I had to choose a nickname, an avatar, and a line from the *Lost* script to accompany my posts. I was posting to forums, reading theories, discussing with other *Lost* viewers. I was connecting with other *Lost* fans on Twitter and Facebook. I even had to beg a gamer friend to teach me how to play the *Lost* video game on Xbox. After all his sighing and teaching, I played some of the *Lost* video game with his assistance and had a taste of the experience. My first video gaming experience made me feel like *I diagonally parked in a parallel universe*. In the meantime, I was also catching up with other transmedia franchises like *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *The Matrix*, *Harry Potter*, *Babylon 5*, *Battle Star Galactica*, and so on. I was enjoying my weekly talks with Cele (Otnes) about the things on the *American Idol* blogs. And, I embraced being the only business student in James Hay’s media and popular culture classes. I adopted many new media practices, but more importantly media studies adopted me.

Being a transmedia scholar is a transmediated experience. As of today, my twitter account is listed in 32 twitter lists about transmedia. I frequently receive emails from doctoral and master students who are interested in transmedia consumption for their graduate studies. During my journey of being a transmedia consumer and a transmedia scholar, I realized that even to appreciate The President of United States, Barack Obama, citizens have to engage in some level of transmedia consumption. I was at Grand Park cheering for him and jumping to see him behind his protective glass curtain. I was smiling when he flashed the Vulcan Salut in one of his speeches. Even more, I subscribed to his YouTube account, followed him on Twitter, and “like”d him on his Facebook fan page. I still enjoy looking through Obama fan art on Flickr. Memorable experiences!

As of now, I am finishing two and a half years of transmedia journey. Unfortunately, linear narratives are not doing for me anymore. After all the complex stories of sci-fi dominated transmedia franchises, I want and expect more from my media consumption. I became this media-hyped, transmedia hungry consumer. I know my life will never be the same. In addition to my unshakeable nerd-charisma in the classroom as a professor and the joy of hanging out with the coolest and dangerously creative media scholars and practitioners, I am enjoying this rich world to its deepest layers.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Have any of you seen the #ish people have found hidden in the Find815 game? Decoding, reversing, color enhancing, brail reading... Who the heck are these fans that can do all this stuff? Am I that computer dumb? Better question, who are the people that are finding all this information? There is an extensive amount of physics topics. Are TPTB [creators of the show] really this intelligent to know all this stuff and tie it together? It is almost a turn off the show itself.  
(JohnLockesHair, ARGs: The *Lost* Experience, 2008)

The above quote is an excerpt from a members' post in one of the forums on *Lostpedia*, an online community where consumers participate and share their *Lost* experiences pertaining to the *Lost* television show, video game, novels, and alternative reality games (ARGs). This is a rich quote as it displays the range of activities *Lost* consumers engage across media platforms and also illustrates the frustration of a *Lost* consumer with the multi-platform and multi-layered transmedia narrative and with its creators.

This quote hints at the central focus of this dissertation — transmedia consumption experiences; that is, consumption of interrelated narratives across a set of media platforms. Transmedia storytelling, a contemporary media practice, is the systematic dispersal of narrative elements across multitude of media for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated consumer experience (Jenkins 2006). This dissertation seeks to expand and enhance the existing studies on transmedia storytelling — primarily conducted in the communication field — by exploring how transmedia narratives are consumed and co-created, and by extending these insights to help brand managers broaden and renovate the way brand narratives are developed and orchestrated using traditional and social media.

## **Motivations for the Topic**

Marketers and consumers alike are experiencing immense changes in the way entertainment is conceived, consumed, produced, distributed, and marketed as a result of intensifying socio-cultural, technologic, and economic convergence (Dena 2004; Jenkins 2006). Pointing to the changing expectations and practices of contemporary consumers, Jenkins (2006) assert that children who grew up consuming and enjoying *Pokémon* across media now expect this same kind of experience from the other content as they have gotten older. Moreover, creators and producers, for example of *Lost*, *The Matrix*, Coca Cola, *Star Trek*, Audi, or BMW, are conveying concepts, messages, and stories of their brands and interacting with audiences across an array of media platforms. Similarly producers of entertainment and non-entertainment brands are under pressure to respond to the increasingly cluttered mediascape, develop engaging experiences for consumers, and manage brands and content that integrate various media platforms. Cultural convergence is changing the consumerscapes, mediascapes, and brandscapes of the contemporary marketplace.

As such, transmedia storytelling becomes a relevant and lucrative solution that can create value for consumers and generate economic prospects for producers. Transmedia storytelling can create value for consumers by proliferating the touchpoints that consumers can interact with the franchise. Consumers who are not big fans of the comics, for example, can still enjoy Spiderman in a movie. Similarly, consumers who do not know how to play video games, can still watch the Halo movie, read its books, or enjoy its anime. Furthermore, transmedia storytelling can create value for consumers as it increases the incentives for participation. Propelled and enabled by the developments in the digital media, transmedia storytelling introduced new and intriguing means for sharing, collaboration, co-creation, and knowledge and community building. The increasing



online and knowledge communities become an integral part of transmedia storytelling and add to the consumer experience.

The economic prospects of transmediation, on the other hand, are attractive for both content producers and the entertainment industry as a whole. Illustrating the extent of this economic prospect, a Forbes.com article (2005), “Star Wars’ Galactic Dollars,” estimates the value of the *Star Wars* transmedia brand at \$20.52B that breaks down as follows: \$6.52B in global box office sales, \$700M in books and other publishing, \$2.8B in home video sales, \$1.5B in video games, and \$9B in toys. As of 2010, Star Wars value reached to \$3.25B in total value and placed the franchise at 97<sup>th</sup> place on Forbes 400 List in 2001. In his blog, Jenkins (2007) summarizes the economic motivation of transmediation practice: “Transmedia storytelling reflects the economics of media consolidation or what industry observers call ‘synergy.’” Furthermore, synergy, or the ability to own and control all manifestations of content, helps media companies sustain consumers’ interest across a range of media industries. Transmediation helps lower production costs, expand the franchise, and reduce the risk of the new releases (or new product introductions, in more general terms).

Transmediation assists in lowering production costs as it provides an opportunity to effectively use new media, which is ephemeral, digital, variable, modular, interactive, dispersed, and hypertextual (Bolter and Grusin 1999; Castells 1996; Lister et al. 2003; Lunenfeld 1993; Manovich 2001). Due to these characteristics, new media lend themselves more to the sharing of assets across platforms and facilitating the transfer of some scenes or characters that are created for movies, for instance, to other media. According to David Alpert and Rick Jacobs (2004), the average cost of a Hollywood film in 2003 was \$63.8 million. In addition, another \$39 million was used to market each movie, making the average total costs \$103 million. As of 2010, the

costs of making a feature-length Hollywood increases to an average of \$106.6 million per film (Hollywood Report 2010). Furthermore, game productions are still less costly on average, but are definitely starting to reach Hollywood-equivalent figures with the increasing need for animation labor, due to more demanding graphics resolutions and formats such as High Definition television. With these high production costs and the high uncertainty of success across the entertainment industry, cross-platform distribution and transmediation can provide the means for producers to make production more cost efficient. Maximizing profits compels a strategy of crossing over as many media as possible (Lemke 2004). Thus, cost recovery establishes itself as the core value of operation in the financial logic of transmediation.

Furthermore, transmedia storytelling expands the potential market of a franchise by spreading the content across various media and creating different points of entry for different audience segments. So, for example, DC produces comic books that tell the *Batman* story in ways the firm believes will be particularly attractive to female or younger readers (e.g., coloring books or picture book versions of the classic comic book stories; Jenkins 2006). Similarly, the strategy may work to draw viewers who are comfortable in a particular medium to experiment with alternative media platforms (e.g., as in the development of a *Desperate Housewives* game designed to attract older female consumers into gaming; Long 2007), or offer an alternative medium to consumers who do not possess the necessary skills to engage with content in a particular platform. For example, *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life*, originally a video game, expanded its viewer base when released as a box office title.

Finally, transmedia storytelling is also a very effective method to reduce the risk of new releases or new product launches. For example, the publishing of comic books or video games in advance of film release dates is a common practice in the entertainment industry to increase

pre-awareness and in turn, to reduce risk. DC, owned by Warner Brothers, publishes comic books in advance of the release of films such as *Spiderman* or *Batman Returns* (Jenkins 2006). The same trend can be traced in the video game industry in which most bestsellers are sequels, movie franchises, or often both (Aarseth 2006). The entertainment industry has long discovered the profitability of reducing risk via pre-awareness with the sequels. Since 1980, sequels have grossed over \$20 billion at the box office. The average annual box-office revenue for sequels has more than doubled to \$1.9 billion annually this decade, compared to \$718 million in the 1990s (Sood and Dreze 2006). Yet, via transmedia storytelling, the financial risk can be spread across different product categories that entail different consumer groups, and also accommodate complex, multi-layered, and multi-platform storytelling aesthetics that provide engaging and richer stories for consumers.

In addition to the novelty and possible benefits of convergence and transmedia, it is important to understand these contemporary conditions and practices in light of the historical evolution of the media theories and media institutions. First, the existing media theories do not work well any longer in the context of convergence and similarly for the topic of this study – transmedia consumption. Older theories of the media commonly focus on a particular device or a technology and describe the theoretical, critical, and historical approaches about this specific platform such as film studies (Leo and Kohen 1999), television studies (Williams 1975), or game studies (Murray 1997, Aarseth 2001). Although some of these theories acknowledge that the media texts do not stand alone but are related – like Williams’ (1975) concept of flow, they still concentrate on a particular platform. Yet, as a result of the proliferation of digital media and new modes of distribution in convergence culture, the information, stories, and texts start to flow across multitude of media platforms more easily asking for a new set of theories and ways of

looking at the media problems. Thus, older theories of media consumption do not provide enough means to study transmedia consumption experiences.

Second, transmedia consumption – in the context of convergence culture – should also be understood in relation to the older and more traditional media. Scholars like Jenkins (2006), Mittell (2009), and McCloud (2006) are more celebratory about the positive and revolutionary role of new media, new technologies, and their roles in convergence that would facilitate mobilization, seamless flow of information and texts, and erosion of social boundaries as a result. On the other hand, media scholars like Kackman et al. (2010), Quellette and Hay (2008), and Terranova (2000) challenge this glorification over the convergence culture and question the presumed newness of the concept and transmedia storytelling as well as their role in presenting a big opportunity for initiating grassroots consumer agency. Kackman et al. (2010, 4) maintain that “the possibility that the current instantiations of media formats, audience behaviors, and technological apparatuses might re-inscribe rather than challenge the existent power relations.”

Regardless of new or old media discussions, the critical studies in media has always been concerned that the media institutions define and dominate the media production, identity projects, and individual agency. These institutional, cultural, and political factors that shape our contemporary media environments still exist for the convergence era. These institutional and political factors also moderate, create, and shape transmedia consumption experiences as media producers control, pace, and systematically coordinate the distribution of their own products. Although this institutional side is not the focus of this study and, above all, very difficult to capture via behavioral analysis adopted in this research, it emerges from my data. My informants express their lack of faith in the media producers and their discomfort with the spoon-feeding practices of entertainment businesses through their marketing and distribution activities.

This new economy is also characterized by mass customization that introduces new ways of distributing and making the new product. One of the features of convergence that distinguish new media consumption practices from the older forms is the “customization and personalization that accompanied digital technologies” (Kackman et al. 2010, 3). Mass customization emerges in interactivity and participatory form, that introduces new demands from the consumers such as being watched (Androjevic 2004), risk management (Quellette & Hay 2008) production (Toffler 1980) immaterial labor (Terranova 2000). Relating to the modes of production becomes challenging for the consumers as it requires higher media literacies and new investments and labor not necessarily creating value for the consumers. In this new economy of customization and personalization, assuming the role and responsibility of the producer or prosumer becomes the biggest challenge for the transmedia consumers.

In addition, the proliferation of distribution platforms is one of the dimensions that set transmedia consumption different from the older forms of media consumption. Media industries engaging in horizontal forms of production is a familiar concept to marketers. Disney owning film companies, broadcasting firms, hotels, and theme parks is a precedent of media companies adopting horizontal and vertical integration principles, even before the heated times of Jenkins’ convergence culture. Pointing out to media companies’ increased interest in multitude of media platforms, Kackman et al. (2010, 4) assert that “it is not to say that there is nothing new in our current new media environment. New digital technologies, and new appropriations of existing technologies, have made transmedia exploitation by the producers and distributors virtually instantaneous.” Cultural industries transform into creative industries that dominate the digital and web based new economies (Hartley 2005). In addition, the proliferation of distribution platforms in convergence era is a manifestation of this intensifying exploitation.

In short, although there had been some precedents of convergence culture and across platform media consumption practices, transmedia consumption can be considered as a new historical formation due to the paucity of existing media consumption theories explaining this new contemporary practice and also due to the new demands and challenges the consumer faces as a result of customization and personalization that accompanied digital technologies in this new media economy that introduces plethora of new distribution platforms to introduce and consume new media products.

### **Purpose of the Dissertation**

Adapting and extending on the idea of transmedia storytelling and grounding it in consumer culture theory and marketing; this study seeks to develop the concept of transmedia consumption experiences — transmedia logic — that focuses on the consumer practices regarding transmedia narratives. This dissertation is guided by the research questions: “What constitutes transmedia consumption experiences? How do consumers co-create and consume transmedia consumption experiences?”

Within the field of marketing and consumer behavior, consumption of media and media narratives (texts) have received substantial interest from the socio-cultural branding, consumer culture theory, and literary theory scholars. Over the years, studies have been conducted to explore the individual or communal entertainment consumption experiences and consumers’ meaning making practices of the media texts. This dissertation aims to contribute to the existing literature by exploring the consumption and co-creation practices of transmedia narratives that are intertextually connected and systematically dispersed across a multitude of media platforms.

Consumer scholars have studied media and entertainment consumption as an individual hedonic experience (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982) focusing on the pleasure and engagement (Holbrook 1999, Deighton 1992) or as a communal consumption around brand(s) (Kozinets 2001) focusing on the social and cultural consumption (e.g., bonding, identity, value practices) (Brown 2007; Schau and Muniz 2004). Going beyond their interest in the nature of the media and entertainment consumption, scholars start studying how the consumer experience deviates from what the producer intended. Studies have been conducted to explore the co-creation of meanings and interpretation (Reader Response, Scott 1994), co-creation of identity (Star Trek, Kozinets 2001), co-creation of text and narratives (Harry Potter fan fiction Brown 2007), and co-creation of exchange value (Humphreys and Grayson 2008).

Consumption of text or media-text has also been an interest to literary criticism studies in consumer behavior. These studies tried to understand consumers response to media texts through the synthesis of the characteristics of the text and psychology of the consumers (Deighton 1989, Scott 1994). Literary criticism tries to “explicate the relationship between language, meaning, and consumption” (Stern 1989, 323). Literary theories vary in terms of their focus: a text-centered approach based on structural qualities of the narrative\text (e.g., Hirschman 1988; Stern 1995; Arnold et al 2001), whereas the reader-centered approach focused on the readers and the act of reading (e.g. Scott 1994). Reader-response theory for instance, focuses on the experiences of the reader, act of reading, and the reader’s role in creating and re-creating the meaning of the text (Scott 1994). In so doing, reader-response theory positions the reader as “the dominant partner in the literary triad —author, text, and reader” (Holland 1975; Iser 1978, as cited in Scott 1994, 462).

Transmedia consumption experiences can also be considered as consumption of brand extensions. From a very basic marketing perspective, the media-text that are dispersed across media can be considered as brand extensions, which are defined as the use of established brand names to launch new products (Keller 1993, 1998). These extensions create touchpoints for different audience segments (Askwith 2007, Jenkins 2006, Long 2006). Brands, similar to transmedia stories, are also created, developed, and communicated through narratives (Brown 2005; Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003; Holt 2005; Sherry 2005) and are products of multiple narratives that are communicated via different channels (Diamond et al. 2009). Diamond et al. (2009) establish that powerful and emotionally resonant brands are the products of multiple narrative representations in multiple venues. The narrative view of brands — creating and perpetuating deep brand meaning through narrative (Sherry 2005) — has produced a substantial amount of knowledge about the role of narratives in understanding the socio-cultural nature of brands.

Although these extant literatures on media experiences and consumption of brand extensions establish a conceptual foundation to understand transmedia consumption as an experience and as an extension, they do not fully capture and explain the consumption and co-creation practices pertaining to intertextually connected media narratives that are systematically dispersed across a set of media platforms. The existing literature fall short of explaining the TMC experiences on two main points. First, existing studies on the consumption of media text, text-centered or reader response theory alike, assume that the text is a coherent and bounded unity. The act of reading as detailed by reader response theory is based on this definable and bounded nature of the text within a particular medium or form, such as a particular ad (Scott 1994, Stern 1990) or a novel (Radaway 1983). Yet, transmedia narratives are interconnected with



other texts — in other words, they are intertextual. The boundaries of transmedia texts are permeable and are not clearly defined due to their built-in interconnectedness. This unbounded transmedia text with permeable boundaries challenges the application of literary theories to comprehend the reading of transmedia texts or transmedia consumption experiences. There have been limited studies that focused on the consumption of intertextual texts (O’Donohoe 1997, Hirschman 2000). Yet, none of them addresses the types of narrative consumption practices that are led by the intertextually connected texts. For this specific objective, the reader-response theory falls short as the main consumption activity in this framework is limited to the reading practice that is “based on a collection of conventions, shared strategies, and processes readers use to create meaning” (Scott 1994, 463). This perspective does not take the other possible consumption and co-creation activities that assigns – or even demands – a different role to the consumer beyond reading.

The second insufficiency of existing literatures to understand TMC experiences pertains to the way brand extensions are and have been studied in marketing and consumer behavior. To date, majority of brand extension studies have assumed that the brand is a collective of associations<sup>1</sup> (Keller 1993). These studies deem brand extensions in a parent brand-extension dyad format(e.g., Keller 1993, 1998). In the transmediation context, there is a web of intertextually connected brand extensions rather than a dyad. The narrative view of brands provides a good foundation to understand powerful brands that are products of multiple narratives at multiple venues (Diamond et al 2009). Still, to explore the transmedia consumption as consumption of extension of interrelated narratives, there is a need for a vocabulary and

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<sup>1</sup> Brand association is an attribute or benefit that differentiates a brand from competing brands (Maclnnis and Nakamoto 1990).

framework to understand how consumers consume and co-create brand extensions in the narrative view.

### **Transmedia Storytelling: An Aesthetics and Product of Convergence Culture**

Jenkins (2006) conceptualizes current media space and related social, cultural, technological, and industrial practices that influence media consumption as “Convergence Culture.” Jenkins (2006, 2) defines convergence as the cooperation between multiple media industries, the flow of content across multiple media platforms, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want. As such, convergence is a “paradigm shift” in our understanding of media, culture, and society and their interaction (Jenkins 2006, 5). The changing relations between consumers, producers, technologies, and markets all challenge the conventional ways media industries are operated, media content is produced, created, distributed, consumed and conceived.

Convergence is “an umbrella term that refers to the new textual practices, branding and marketing strategies, industrial arrangements, technological synergies, and audience behaviors enabled and propelled by the emergence of digital media” (Kackman et al 2010, 1). The term might be used to imply different media-related processes at different levels. At the level of production, for example, newspapers, music, and television — which once had very different production bases — can all now be substantively produced using the same networked multimedia computer. At the level of distribution, convergence refers to the merger of previously discrete networks into the single process of online networks — that is, news, music, and entertainment that can all be accessed through the Internet. In a limited fashion, convergence

might be used to refer to a technological process bringing together multiple media functions within the same devices. The term convergence has also been applied to new media with respect to the common operating systems and shared content. In that context, the term applies to “matters of both form and content: of multimedia PCs and videogame consoles; for example, increasingly common digital aesthetics and branded content made available across numerous media platforms” (Keane 2007, 154). But beyond all these, convergence occurs not only through media technologies or delivery platforms, but within the minds of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others.

Transmedia storytelling is a unique product and aesthetics of cultural and economic convergence — a process of narrative convergence (Ruppel 2005). As Chapter 2 will discuss in detail, there is a lack of consensus over what transmedia actually is, and how it can be defined. Chris Dahlen (2001) defines transmedia storytelling as a process whereby one story, in one medium, expands into other media, other stories, and eventually into an entire world told across many platforms with many points of entry and participation for the audience. Although articulated differently, the existing definitions agree that transmediation is a process that is about telling stories using multiple media (Dena 2004; Jenkins 2006; Long 2007). Transmedia storytelling, a technique and aesthetics of convergence, enhance viewers’ experiences via enriching backstories and multiple touchpoints.

Transmedia storytelling is ideally a systematic and coordinated process where the producers of each medium adopt a similar and unified vision of the franchise and make sure that all the stories told across different media are in agreement with each other and contribute to the building of a meta-narrative. Each narrative in each medium is accessible on its own terms and still makes a unique contribution to the narrative system as a whole (Jenkins 2006). Yet, there is

no single source or text one can turn to access all the information needed to comprehend the narrative. In short, transmediation can be summarized as the “unfolding of meta-narrative across multiple media platforms with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole” (Jenkins 2006, 95). However, as I will explain in Chapter 2, other definitions of the term vary with respect to the issues they emphasize and the criteria they employ to judge transmedial qualities.

Transmedia narratives are about a universe that is composed of several interrelated characters and interrelated stories. This “act of creating compelling environments that cannot be fully explored or exhausted within a single work or even a single medium is called world-building” (Jenkins 2006, 116). The challenge of worldbuilding is to design a fictional universe using interrelated stories across a set of media platforms that will sustain franchise development and that is sufficiently detailed to enable many stories to emerge. *The Matrix*, one of the best and frequently cited examples of transmedia storytelling, creates a world that is composed of three movies, twelve animated short movies, two collection of stories, three video games, and comic books. Following the release of the first movie in 2003, important elements of the backstory of *The Matrix* were embedded in these animated short films, comic books, and a popular video game. Jenkins (2006, 95) explains how each media platform and content in *The Matrix* franchise makes a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole *The Matrix* world:

The Wachowski brothers played the transmedia game very well, putting out the original film first to stimulate interest, offering up a few Web comics to sustain the hard-core fan's hunger for more information, launching the anim e in anticipation of the second film, releasing the computer game alongside it to surf the publicity, bringing the whole cycle to a conclusion with *The Matrix*

*Revolutions*, and then turning the whole mythology over to the players of the massively multiplayer online game. Each step along the way built on what has come before, while offering new points of entry (Jenkins 2006, p 95).

Although the Matrix products are not the first examples of transmedia storytelling, they represent a very visible success story that well illustrates the opportunities and challenges of transmedia storytelling as an aesthetic and a practice of the contemporary mediascape.

One of the fundamental elements of worldbuilding in transmedia storytelling is to sow negative capability in the narratives. Negative capability is “the art of building strategic gaps into a narrative to evoke a delicious sense of uncertainties, mysteries, and doubts in the audience” (Long 2007, 9). These intentional gaps are implemented in a narrative as a reference to the people, places or events external to the current narrative that provides hints to the past of the characters, or to the world that has been built by the franchise. The unanswered questions, mysteries, and uncertainties in a narrative create opportunities for new stories to be told. Negative capability supposedly “empower individuals to fill in the gaps of their own imaginations while leaving them curious to find out more” (Long 2007, 53). The letter handed to the Kid at the beginning of second *Matrix* movie is referred to frequently as an example of a successful migratory cue. It is a hint for viewers to look for more information on the letter in *The Animatrix* (animated movie) and *Enter The Matrix* (first video game). Yet, the second *The Matrix* movie is designed to be understood “without knowing where that letter came from and without consuming either of those two pieces of media” yet the audience might track the other media for a richer experience (Ruppel 2005, as cited in Long 2007, 60). Negative capability actually creates rooms for consumer co-creation and consumer intelligence “pockets” in the

narrative. They point out to consumers where there might be more “candies” (Jenkins 2006) — gifts and rewards in the text to be discovered.

### **Research Context: *Lost***

This dissertation explores transmedia consumption practices as realized in the empirical context of *Lost*, a popular television series that premiered on ABC between September 2004 and May 2010. *Lost* is about the lives of the plane crash survivors on a mysterious island in Pacific Ocean. With multiple storylines, nonlinear progressions of events, and gaps in the television text, *Lost* is labeled as a complex narrative (Johnson and Mittell 2005). *Lost* has been widely acknowledged as a transmedia narrative by media practitioners and academic scholars. *Lost* represents a new generation of convergence-era television texts: complex narratives that encourage viewers to experience the show across different platforms programs and in a microscopic fashion that requires repeat viewing and careful analysis (Askwith 2007). The series also have a very wide audience base that would reveal the differences across transmedia consumption practices for varying levels of consumer engagement.

The *Lost* television show — the serialized six seasons — is the most common and “prominent point of entry” into the *Lost* world. This core media, called as the contained media in this study, entail the vital elements of the *Lost* transmedia universe and help consumers have a unique and complete experience without any need to rely on other media or story. Media platforms that producers use to expand the basic and central story told via the *Lost* television show are called secondary media. Mobisodes (episodes released for mobile phone users), licensed novels (e.g., *Bad Twin*), video games (*Via Domus*), ARGs (e.g., *The Lost Experience*, *Find 815*, *The Dharma Recruitment Project*), and podcasts are examples of these secondary

media in *Lost* universe. Secondary media might or might not provide new information that expands the larger *Lost* story.

Furthermore, the *Lost* story also extensively integrates intertextual references from the outside literature and other popular culture titles. Viewers catch “significant references to more than forty different works of literature, including significant works of fiction (e.g. *Alice in Wonderland*, *Watership Down*), mythology (e.g. the *Bible*, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*), and science (e.g., *A Brief History of Time*)” (Askwith 2007, 137). The show integrates references to disciplines ranging from quantum physics, to mythology, to religious studies. In addition to the engagement with extensions created by the producers, millions of fans also experience the show via other activities such as building up fan websites, organizing conventions, and creating fan fiction such as *Lost Wiki* or *Lostpedia* pages.

### **Contributions of the Dissertation**

This dissertation offers a new understanding of how convergent culture affects the lived experiences of media consumers through transmedia storytelling. To develop and explore the TMC concept, this study builds on and also extends consumption of media and media-text studies in consumer behavior, particularly consumer culture theory frameworks. It also borrows insights from the socio-cultural branding literature. This dissertation contributes to the existing research in three main areas: transmedia storytelling, consumer culture, and branding.

This dissertation extends the discussion on transmedia storytelling beyond the structure and aesthetic qualities of the transmedia text. Transmedia storytelling has been mostly studied to describe the narrative that characterizes this contemporary practice. The formal qualities of text such as negative capability, migratory cues, and hermeneutic codes (Long 2006) and the

interconnectedness of the narratives (i.e., intertextuality; Kristeva 1966) are major interests of transmedia scholars. This study also maintains that transmedia consumption (TMC) experiences are broader and more diverse than the mere consumption of media texts such as simply watching a movie, playing a video game, and reading the comics of a transmedia franchise. This dissertation contributes to the existing transmedia studies by dimensionalizing the different practices consumers co-create, experience, and engage with transmedia narratives to create unified and customizable media experiences. This dissertation also furthers our understanding about consumers' nomadic behavior (Jenkins 1992) across stories and media platforms. This study supports that transmedial migration is not only an experience-enhancing option, but is also an integral and prominent process of TMC and is not limited to highly engaged consumers (or hard-core, über-fans).

Studying TMC is like marrying the transmedia studies that focus on the narratives dispersed across media with the consumer culture studies that focus on the co-creation and experience of narrative consumption. In contrast to prior entertainment or consumption of media studies that focus on either the text (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982), the experience (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982), or the meaning-making processes (Radway 1985), TMC provides a holistic look at the text, consumer, and the consumption of narratives. This dissertation provides a more complete perspective on the consumption of media and entertainment — not only the exploring the text and not only exploring the consumption practice, but also examining how they interact. In addition, TMC experiences entail narrative consumption strategies beyond reading (Scott 1994). This study reveals that consumers adopt several other narrative consumption and co-creation practices in addition to reading. Consumers not only read texts, but they co-create meanings of the texts through activities such as anchoring, extracting, and patching, as I will



explain. In that regard, similar to Cova et al (2007), this study identifies a range of productive roles of consumers.

Although this dissertation does not focus on the producer's perspective, it nevertheless also contributes to the brand extension and socio-cultural branding literatures. First, the typology illustrates consumers' co-creation practices for a brand of transmediated entertainment, and its extensions. Similarly, the transmedial process of migration describes how consumers navigate across a web of brand extensions to create a unified and complete media experience. TMC clarifies that the deployment and re-camping of brand narratives creates, sustains, and communicates a unified consumer experience, which is interwoven among texts, consumers, and communities. TMC also contributes to the self-branding practices. By self-branding, I refer to the ways consumers adapt in producing and distributing their identities through social networking venues and through digital media. Consumers circulate, commodify, and expose their brands across media platforms.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on transmedia storytelling, the short of history of this contemporary media practice, and its theoretical foundations. Chapter 3 offers a review of the relevant literature that establishes the conceptual background to understand transmedia consumption as the consumption of media experiences and as the consumption of brand extensions. Chapter 4 discusses the methodology of the empirical study and also the empirical context. In chapter 5 and Chapter 6, I present my research findings. Finally, in Chapter 7, I discuss the contributions of my research and outline issues that can be further explored in future studies.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING**

#### **History and Theoretical Foundations of Transmedia Storytelling**

Transmedia storytelling is the overarching framework that guides this dissertation. The transmedia concept provides a conceptual lens and also positions this dissertation at the intersection of marketing, consumer behavior, and media studies. Citing literary theory, television studies, and semiology, this chapter provides an overview of the transmedia storytelling literature, which is very recent, and therefore not very extensive. This section predominantly seeks to explore what transmedia is, what it is not, how it has been studied, and its existing conceptual foundations.

To date, narratology and literary theory are the most heavily used theoretical resources used to understand transmedia storytelling (Long 2007, 29). Guided by these theoretical frameworks, existing studies on the topic focus on the interconnectedness, structure, and aesthetics of the transmedia narrative (text) via questions such as: How should the transmedia text be told? What is the role of each medium involved in transmedia storytelling? What is the structure of the transmedia narrative that leads and moves consumers across media? Granted that the narrative (text) is a very prominent and distinguishing feature of the transmedia storytelling concept, consumers and their consumption practices, patterns, and strategies also “migrate” across media. Consumption of narratives (texts), specifically the reading and making meanings of text, has already been of interest to consumer behavior and marketing scholars, particularly in advertising and branding studies.

Furthermore, convergence is the social, cultural, political, and technological context (Jenkins 2006) through which the transmedia framework should be comprehended. Convergence

has become a “natural part of new media where it is used to describe the ways in which previously discrete media forms and processes are drawn together and combined through digital technologies” (Lister et al., 2003, 385). Henry Jenkins’ recent book titled *Convergence Culture* has been the guidebook for the scholars interested in the topic. Jenkins introduces the condition of cultural convergence as the “paradigm shift” in our understanding of media, culture, and society and their interaction (Jenkins 2006, 5). Jenkins conceptualizes transmedia storytelling as both aesthetics and a product of convergence. Following the publication of this popular book, three or four dissertations and master theses on transmedia storytelling have been written by MIT graduate students, namely Ivan Askwith, Geoffrey Long, Sam Ford, and Alec Austin. This chapter relies heavily on these studies, particularly the first two, to explain the conceptual foundations of the transmedia storytelling concept. Although Jenkins introduces the transmedia storytelling concept as well as the social, cultural, and economical contexts that led to this narrative technique and aesthetics, his book is mostly a constellation of case studies - such as *The Matrix* — that clarifies the way the transmedia concept is implemented in the media industry. Furthermore, it explores related consumption practices such as collaborative authorship and collective intelligence. The theoretical foundations of the transmedia storytelling concept are iterated more comprehensively in these Convergence Culture Consortium (C3) dissertations.

Despite the lack of agreement on the definitions of the transmedia storytelling concept, this chapter tries to identify characteristics of the term and distinguish the idiosyncratic aspects that set this narrative aesthetics aside from similar terms in business and communication. The chapter concludes with a short evaluation of the existing status of the transmedia literature and re-states how this dissertation will broaden the way transmediation is studied.

*Origins of Transmedia Storytelling.* Due to these fuzzy boundaries and multiple terms<sup>2</sup> used to refer to what transmediation implies, it is difficult to accurately identify the “start” of transmedia studies. Ito prefers the term “media-mix,” Dena (2007) uses “cross-sited narratives,” and Hanson (2003) favors “screen bleed.” Dena (2007, 27) sets the pivotal year for cross-media production as 1999. At that time, according to Dena, the technological advances, specifically the widespread availability of the Internet and computers, were advanced enough to enable consumers to easily copy, paste, move, alter, and remediate content across a growing number of apparatuses. She states: “Such transmedia forms emerged when the awareness and penetration of a large range of technologies and art forms reached a pivotal point . . . That moment was, quite poetically, the penultimate year of the 20th century: 1999.”

Despite the widely presumed correlation between the proliferation of transmediation and escalating digitalization, Jenkins and other transmedia scholars like Long (2007) and Askwith (2007) agree that transmedia is not a new practice that is unique to digital media. Although the interest in transmedia and convergence peaked correspondingly with that in “new media,” transmediation can be traced back to the pre-Internet era. The Internet may have accelerated the wider application and practice, but it was not necessary for transmedia narratives to flourish, as evidenced by the “Netless” development of complex narrative franchises like *Star Wars*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Blair Witch Project*, or *Star Trek*. Notions of narrative complexity were realized by authors, audiences, and literary critics alike before the digital turn. However, it is clear that the characteristics of “new media,” as the term refers to a wide range of changes in media production, distribution, and use, made transmediation a more profitable and easily

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<sup>2</sup> Multimedia storytelling, cross-sited narratives, distributed narrative, polymorphic fiction, deep media, persistent narrative, and immersive storytelling are some examples of terms that are used to refer to the similar practices transmedia storytelling concept suggests.

applicable practice. New media, as a concept, implies more than technological changes but changes that are also textual, conventional, and cultural. New media are ephemeral, digital, variable, modular, interactive, dispersal, and hypertextual (e.g., non-linear textuality; Bolter and Grusin 1999; Castells 1996; Lister et al. 2003; Lunenfeld 1993; Manovich 2001). Nevertheless, this is neither an exclusive list of new media characteristics nor a sign of technological essentialism that will dictate the role of technology in the contemporary nature of media. Due to these characteristics of new media, transmediation became a more lucrative and pertinent alternative for this mediascape.

Tracing transmedia before the new media era, Long (2007, 24) details a controversial example of transmedia storytelling — The Bible:

In the Middle Ages, to compensate for widespread illiteracy the church provided parishioners with multiple ways to experience the stories in the Bible. These took the form of hymns, sermons, artifacts, and, perhaps most spectacularly, enormous stained-glass windows. Are these transmedia extensions? One might argue that since a parishioner could first experience the story of Genesis through a rose window, then Exodus through a sermon, then Leviticus through hymns, and then Deuteronomy through paintings, the Bible has always been a transmedia franchise — but this teeters on the precipice of subjectivism. There is a difference between how one person chooses to experience a narrative and how the narrative was designed to be experienced. If Genesis only existed as stained glass, Exodus as spoken words, Leviticus as music and Deuteronomy as brushstrokes on canvas, then the Bible would objectively be a transmedial franchise.

Dena (2007) also lists multiple early transmediation cases from 1999, beginning with the work of Paul Serman and Andrea Zapp on the Nokia Game, which followed the adventures of the fictional snowboarder Sisu across mobile phones, magazines and TV advertisements. She agrees with Jenkins' consideration of *The Matrix* as "the first major implementation of the transmedia approach," but also highlights *The Blair Witch Project* as one of the first transmedia storytelling examples:

*The Blair Witch Project* instory website chronicles the story of three film students who have gone missing after trudging through a forest investigating stories of a witch. To further solidify the fiction in reality, a mockumentary, *Curse of the Blair Witch*, was aired on the Sci-Fi Channel just before the release of the film *The Blair Witch Project*: a horror film produced by Haxan Films, also delivered as a documentary. (27)

Jenkins (2006, 103) also agrees that *The Blair Witch Project* was one of the first examples where the transmedia storytelling is practiced and quotes Sanchez, one of the members of the producer team for the series: "It was the kind of marketing which I would have gotten into as a consumer. We ended up exploiting the web in ways that as far as movies concerned, nobody had ever done before."

Dena concludes: (as cited in Long 2007, 29):

Since this pivotal year [1999], transmedia forms have flourished. We've seen enhanced television, locative arts, pervasive gaming, alternate reality games, interactive dramas and more being produced by corporations and individuals, experienced in small local groups and by millions internationally...the Net was a strong facilitating force in this emergence. Indeed, irrespective of the platform,

audiences are often referred to the Net with a URL in the credits of a film or show, SMS or on a cereal box. Sometimes a URL is enough to motivate a cross-platform traversal and sometimes not; and of course not all referrals are directed towards the Net.

Almost a decade after Dena's "pivotal year," the discussions about convergence and transmedia are more structured and conceptually resonant. Without a doubt, Jenkins' prominent book provides the necessary framework for scholars and practitioners and also maps this new territory of media, business, and consumers. The Convergence Culture Consortium (C3) in Comparative Media Studies in MIT is one of the first institutions organized around the topic. C3 takes both its name and impetus from Jenkins' book. Via qualitative research strategies, C3 seeks to explore media change, the cultural factors influencing consumer behavior, and changing sites for audience experiences with media properties. The C3 homepage<sup>3</sup> explains its mission as follows:

C3 explores the ways the business landscape is changing in response to the growing integration of content and brands across media platforms and the increasingly prominent roles consumers are playing in shaping the flow of media. C3 connects researchers and thinkers from MIT's Comparative Media Studies program with companies looking to understand new ways to relate to consumers, manage brands, and develop engaging experiences, strategies to cut through an increasingly cluttered media environment and benefit from emerging cultural and technological trends.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.convergenceculture.org/aboutc3/thebook.php>

Likewise, The Futures of Entertainment (Foe) conference organized by C3 is a space that enables the engagement of academia and industry leaders to discuss the present and future of transmediation. The panels discuss transmedia, franchising, digital extensions, world building, comics, convergence and commerce, valuing audiences, social media and spreadability, global distribution systems and the challenges of moving content across borders. The C3 initiative places heavy emphasis on the collaboration among academics and practitioners and “Futures of Entertainment” annual conference series are good evidences of that effort. The conference hosts producers or creative teams actively implementing transmedia storytelling in real-time projects.

### **WHAT IS TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING?**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, transmedia storytelling is a unique product of cultural and economic convergence — a process of narrative convergence (Ruppel 2005). Although there is still a lack of consensus over the terminology regarding what transmedia actually is and how it can be defined, simply, transmedia storytelling is the telling of a story in various media types. The term is used to refer to a practice and aesthetics where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience (Jenkins 2006). Similarly, an owner of a transmedia production agency that creates transmedia projects defines transmedia storytelling as the technique of “conveying messages, concepts, themes, and storylines to a mass audience through systemic and concerted use of multiple media platforms” (Starlight Runner, 2009).

Transmedia storytelling has been defined in multiple ways. A review of the very recent and limited literature of transmedia storytelling reveals that existing working definitions of the



construct can be grouped into four categories: as intertextuality, as extension, as process, and as aesthetics. Each of these labels draws from different conceptual frameworks to illuminate a distinctive aspect of transmediation. A basic understanding of the totality of these characteristics helps establish the conceptual bases on which the transmedia storytelling concept is constructed. In effect, each characteristic discussed in this chapter can be understood as a paradigm or lens that reveals various aspects of transmedia storytelling. However, it is important to note that they are not mutually exclusive. Transmedia scholars often mention one, multiple, or all of these characteristics in the same study. The relations between these labels make it very difficult and counterproductive to separate them. Thus, in articulating these four characteristics of transmedia storytelling, the goal is not to establish a comprehensive picture that explains the concept, but to introduce a series of conceptual labels that reflect varying theoretical roots of transmedia, as well as illuminating its amorphous nature.

### **Transmedia as Intertextuality**

As stated above, transmedia is about the movement and dispersion of the narrative across media. This basic definition of transmedia storytelling that stresses the existence of multiple texts in relation to each other brings in intertextuality as one of the ways to understand transmedia storytelling. In its very basic meaning, intertextuality is used to refer to the connection between texts. Intertextuality has acquired a renewed importance due to the spread of digital and distributed forms of communication. Intertextuality offers a conceptual base (definition and specific parameters) that is grounded in the French intellectual scene of the late 1960s and in the contexts of Saussurian linguistics, semiotics, and post-structuralism (Orr 2003). In so doing, intertextuality provides a pertinent and rich framework to study the structure and transcendence

of the transmedia narrative (text). Long (2007), for example, defines transmedia storytelling as “intertextuality writ large” (10). The theoretical framework of intertextuality is very similar to semiology (connection of signs) but, rather than the connection between signs, the term stresses the connection between texts at the level of content, form, and style (Casey and Casey, 2002). Intertextuality emphasizes that texts do not exist in isolation but that any text is understood in terms of its relation to other texts. Thus, our understanding of any one text will be informed by the existence of or our experience with other texts.

*The Concept.* The term intertextuality was first coined by Kristeva in late 1960s by translating Bakhtin’s notion of “dialogism.” In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Bakhtin [1930] (1981) differentiates between the “dialogic” and the “monologic” work of literature. Dialogic work carries on a continual dialogue with other works of literature and also other authors. According to Bakhtin, any literature piece is not simply a response, correction or an extension of the previous work. Rather, it informs and is continually informed by the previous work. Similarly, Kristeva’s (1986) conception of intertextuality suggests that any text evokes boundless references and associations. Thus, every text exists not in isolation, but in a complex web of interconnectedness with other texts that influence it or are influenced by it. To explain the interconnections between texts, Kristeva (1986) defines a three-dimensional textual space with three “coordinates of dialogue,” which are the writing subject (or author), the addressee (or ideal reader), and exterior texts. As she observes:

The word’s status is thus defined horizontally (the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee) as well as vertically (the word in the text is oriented towards an anterior or synchronic literary corpus) . . . each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read

*...any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another* (Kristeva 1986, 66; Italics added).

Kristeva's intertextuality stresses the relation between texts and also foregrounds the importance of text, context, and audience. Addressing the meaning making process, Kristeva (1980) argues that "the notion of intertextuality makes us realize that meaning is not transferred directly from writer to reader but instead is mediated through, or filtered by, 'codes' imparted to the writer and reader by other texts" (66). Kristeva's ideas are perceived to be very similar to the Barthesian notion of the "death of the author," a version of the Derridean referral of text, or the larger theoretical framework of deconstruction and postmodernism (Orr 2003, 22). Roland Barthes echoes that the meaning of an artistic work does not reside in that work, but in the viewers. In his prominent work "Death of the Author," Barthes criticizes the perspective that favors the reader's tendency to interpret a text based on biographical, personal, ethnic, or political characteristics of the author. In the Barthesian framework, while our intention to communicate and what we intend to convey are both important to us as individuals, meaning cannot be or should not be reduced to "authorial intention," and the real meaning of text can only be attained when it is freed from its creator. Barthes explains his ideas in very famous quote reproduced below:

A text is...a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. *The text is a tissue of quotations...*The writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them (Barthes 1977, 146; Italics added)

Like Kristeva and Barthes, Riffaterre belongs to the recognized theorists of the canon who establishes the basic tenets of the intertextuality framework. As Orr (2003, 32) states: “If Kristeva opened intertextuality up to all its borders and permutations, Barthes and Riffaterre directly address its blind spots as theory of text as productivity.” Intertextuality, as defined by Riffaterre (1994), “depends on [a system of] limitations in our freedom of choice, of exclusions, since it is by renouncing incompatible associations within the text that we come to identify in the intertext their compatible counterparts” (779). Riffaterre’s understanding of intertextuality is broader than that of Kristeva and Barthes. Riffaterre, stressing the role of the reader, suggests that the intertext is determined by the reader’s perception of the relationship between a work and others that have either preceded or followed it.

Riffaterre’s broad definition, however, is accompanied by a genuine restriction, as he is concerned about the intertextual relationships at the level of sentence, a fragment, or a short, generally poetic, text (Genette 1998). According to Riffaterre (Worton and Still, 1991) all the reader needs to do to sufficiently interpret a text is to assume that some intertext is being transformed by the text in question. He states:

Intertextual reading is the perception of similar comparabilities from text to text; or it is the assumption that such comparing must be done if there is no intertext at hand wherein to find comparabilities. In the latter case, the text holds clues (such as formal and semantic gaps) to a complementary intertext lying in wait somewhere (As cited in Worton and Still 1991, 626).

Although the concept of intertextuality implies an intersubjective understanding among scholars, the methodological questions such as how to examine intertextual structures and social structures shaping them are still unresolved. The French literary theorist Gérard Genette (1998)

introduced notions of hypertexts and hypotexts, which are refinements of Kristeva's aforementioned model of intertextuality. Any text is hypertext, grafting itself onto a hypotext, an earlier text that it imitates or transforms. An example of Genette's framework would be the hypertextual connection between James Joyce's *Ulysses* and its hypotext, the original Homeric poems. A reader can understand Joyce's *Ulysses* without Homer's help but probably would not enjoy it as much without understanding the references to its hypotext. Genette (1998) proposes a complex framework that captures five types of transtextual relations<sup>4</sup>, yet his framework is too detailed to go into for the purposes of this dissertation.

Long (2007) follows up on Genette's notion of hypotexts and hypertexts:

Under Genette's theoretical model of 'second-degree' hypertexts and hypotexts, it's possible to classify the primary media components of a transmedia franchise (the six *Star Wars* films) as hypotexts and the secondary media components (the books, comics, TV shows and so on) as hypertexts. Similarly, what serve as hypotexts within these franchises are also hypertextually linked to earlier influences external to the franchises, such as how Akira Kurosawa's *The Hidden Fortress*, Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, and the film serials of *Flash Gordon* all served as well-known hypotextual inspirations for George Lucas as he was creating *Star Wars* (29).

*Types of Intertextuality.* Fiske (1987), another prominent media scholar, defines intertextuality in two forms: horizontal and vertical. According to Fiske, intertextuality exists in spaces between texts across three forms of text: primary, secondary, and tertiary. The primary

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<sup>4</sup> Genette (1998) defines five types of transtextual relations: intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality, and architextuality

text is the individual program — for example, a TV program or series. Secondary texts make explicit references to primary texts and may take the form of reviews, publicity, advertising features and so on. Tertiary texts are the meanings produced at the level of audience and can take a variety of forms, from conversation and gossip between family, friends, and workmates, to fan club membership and writing fan mail to communicate with other fans via the Internet.

Horizontal intertextuality exists between the primary texts, and the connections happen along the lines of genre, character, or content.

Vertical intertextuality, on the other hand, pertains to the explicit references *between* primary texts and secondary or tertiary texts. The term emphasizes that process by which texts communicate meaning to audiences through reference to other texts, genres, discourses, themes, or media (Casey and Casey 2002). The meanings generated by any one text are products of the combination of these systems of signification with other texts. However, Fiske's (1987) terminology still privileges media texts as the primary source of meaning (Jensen 1995, 61). As Askwith (2007) argues, media are not the main sources of meaning in social life but rather, meaning flows from society to media.

Still, the relevant question in this dissertation is how intertextuality as a conceptual framework contributes to our understanding of transmedia storytelling. As Askwith (2007) points out, in the past several years, several media scholars have re-evaluated and revised Fiske's intertextual model to better reflect the patterns of media consumption emerging in the post-broadcast era of television. In particular, John Caldwell (2006) suggests that the distinction between the textual levels is breaking down, as the television industry begins to tap these secondary and tertiary forms, recycling them as additional "primary" content to satisfy the audience's growing demand for related content. In addition, Caldwell proposes that the modern

industrial practices of repackaging and repurposing content for coordinated distribution across multiple platforms have transformed Fiske's three-tier model of television textuality, as once-inferior secondary (show-related) and tertiary (socially-produced) texts migrate toward primary textual status through a process of industrial appropriation and redistribution (Askwith 2007).

Building on Fiske's classification of texts, Askwith (2007) suggests that what Fiske describes as horizontal intertextuality — the relationship between two explicitly linked texts — can be more accurately described as “horizontal *intratextuality*,” (italics adapted) since it refers to the link between two *related* textual units. Thus, horizontal intratextuality occurs when, for example, one episode of a television program references another episode of the same program. Askwith's revised definition also allows transmedia scholars to articulate a relationship between a television program and a second text developed (often across media) to extend the narrative events or settings of the first — as “vertical intratextuality.” In turn, Askwith labels what Fiske described as vertical intertextuality — the relationship between a text and something that has been written about that text - as “extratextuality.” Thus, an extratextual relationship describes the link between, for example, a television program and a review of that program, or an interview with a performer from the program's cast. Finally, this still leaves the question of intertextuality, which Askwith uses to describe the relationship linking any two or more distinct texts or bodies of knowledge. Thus, when an episode of one television program makes an explicit or implicit reference to another television program, a movie, a book, or current events, all of these constitute intertextual relationships — that is, links between two or more otherwise unrelated texts.

In short, there is a general agreement among scholars as to what intertextuality is, but disagreement on the working definitions and structures that directly affect the way intertextuality is employed in transmedia contexts. The intertextuality of the same transmedia franchise can be

explained both by Genette's hypotext and hypertext framework, as well as Fiske's three-tier model. Intertextuality as a theoretical lens helps to identify the connections between transmedia texts but does not help illuminate the nature of these connections. Transmedia storytelling is a special case of intertextuality, where the interconnectedness of texts across media is a crucial but not sufficient feature of the transmedia narrative. Long (2007) clarifies this point: "While all transmedia stories have intertextual connections, not all intertextually (or hypertextually) connected stories are transmedia storytelling" (30).

### **Transmedia as Extension**

Transmedia storytelling expands the potential market for a media franchise by creating different points of entry and touchpoints for different audience segments and also by enhancing the experience of existing consumers. Similarly, extensions work to draw viewers who are comfortable in a particular medium to experiment with alternative media platforms. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Long (2007) offers the example of DC's strategies of producing comic books that tell the *Batman* story in ways the firm thinks will be particularly attractive to female or younger readers (e.g., coloring books or picture book versions of the classic comic book stories).

*Extensions Creating Touchpoints.* Touchpoints are used to operationalize the amorphous and problematic concept of viewer engagement. A touchpoint is used as something of a catch-all, describing any content, activity, or strategic offering that allows the media consumer to engage with a television brand in any manner other than watching the core program content through real time or time-shifted DVR viewing (Askwith 2007). The existing models that seek to define and measure viewer engagement implicitly assume that the engagement is limited to the actual time



viewers are consuming the media, especially television programs. However, the increasing convergence of media and proliferation of delivery technologies requires a comprehensive model of engagement that considers transmedia touchpoints as part of the engagement equation.

Askwith (2007) explains that the engagement concept should be about “not just how viewers perceive and relate to the television shows they watch, but how they construct and develop their relationship with a program through their use — or non-use — of the various initiatives that allow them to deepen and expand their interaction with it” (35). This revised version of engagement could provide a new means to understand consumer practices related to transmedia storytelling.

*Types of Touchpoints.* The AD\*VIZR New Media Audit (2006) was one of the first practices to operationalize this new comprehensive version of engagement by auditing the entire range of existing digital extensions that had been developed to encourage viewer engagement with television programming. Reviewing 49 cable networks and 2,233 individual television shows (entertainment, news, and sports programming), the audit identifies a list of 33 different possible “digital touchpoints” that are used to engage audiences with the TV shows. This audit is one of the first attempts that try to operationalize the content extensions that characterize the transmedia text (See Figure 1 on Ad\*VIZR New Media Audit — Engagement Touchpoints by Askwith 2007).

Askwith (2007) criticizes the audit for focusing on industry statistics rather than on the user experience. Specifically, he criticizes the AD\*VIZR approach on six grounds. To cite a few of these critiques, the first one pertains to the model’s use of inconsistent logic in the formulation of touchpoints. Most of the statistics calculated in the model are based on simple quantitative measures of how many of these 33 touchpoints are utilized by a TV program. However, in

theory, some of these touchpoints cannot be simultaneously utilized, as they are either mutually exclusive (e.g., HDTV and HD radio) or redundant (IP delivered video, streaming media, VOD broadband).

Figure 1: Ad\*VIZR New Media Audit – Engagement Touchpoints (Askwith 2007)

<p><b><i>Ad*VIZR New Media Audit</i></b> <b><i>33 Engagement Touchpoints</i></b></p> <p>I) Linear Broadcast Enhancements</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Synchronous PC Application</li><li>2. Addressable Targeting</li><li>3. HD Television</li><li>4. HD Radio</li><li>5. Satellite Radio</li><li>6. IP-delivered video</li></ol> <p>II) Internet Program Enhancements</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>7. Rich e-mail reminders</li><li>8. Streaming media capability</li><li>9. Wallpapers</li><li>10. Avatars/Icons</li><li>11. Live Chat</li><li>12. Message Boards</li><li>13. Outtakes</li><li>14. Blogs</li><li>15. Synchronous Games/Trivia</li></ol> <p>III) Wireless</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>16. SMS Polling</li><li>17. Voice Reminders</li><li>18. Wallpapers</li><li>19. Ringtones</li><li>20. Mobisodes</li><li>21. Synchronous Mobile Apps</li><li>22. Video Reminders</li><li>23. M (Mobile) Coupons</li><li>24. Avatars</li></ol> <p>IV) Video on Demand</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>25. MSO FVOD Channel Distribution</li><li>26. Cable Walled Garden Distribution</li></ol> <p>V) Other Portal Distribution</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>27. VOD distributed via Broadband</li></ol> <p>VI) Digital OuterNet Extensions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>28. POS Networks</li><li>29. POP Kiosks</li><li>30. Digital OOH Networks</li></ol> <p>VII) Apple (Ad-Supported)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>31. iTunes Audio Podcasts</li><li>32. iTunes Video</li><li>33. iTunes Webisodes</li></ol>
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Secondly, the audit model uses inconsistent logic in its grouping of touchpoints, and the governing logic for seven categories that groups the 33 touchpoints is not clarified. Askwith states that it is not clear what this breakdown is intended to accomplish, or how such a breakdown lends itself to the development of useful data. A third shortcoming of the model pertains to its scope, as the model only considers digital extensions that are produced by the programmers but does not include consumer-generated ones. Furthermore, Ad\*VIZR fails to acknowledge any non-digital engagement (e.g., purchasing non-branded apparel, discussing the show with friends and family). The model also leaves out some important digital offerings like games and trivia, interactive contests, episode summaries, and the sale of show-related merchandise.

Fourth, the model treats each touchpoint as equal in value. Clearly, different touchpoints engage the audience in different manners, for different purposes, and with different consequences. Thus, one touchpoint is not as good as the other, and they are not interchangeable. Fifth, the model assumes all implementations of a touchpoint are equal. Yet, there might be a range of existing implementations for any individual touchpoint. And the implementation of the touchpoint might change the meanings, range of consequences, and values: “To assume that such diverse touchpoints have equivalent — or even comparable — consequences for the viewer’s experience, simply because they use the same format, is as grave a mistake as assuming that all television programs are equal by merit of appearing on television” (Askwith 2007, 39). Last, the AD\*VIZR model assumes each show will benefit similarly from the same extensions. Yet, the evening news is unlikely to benefit from mobile ringtones or wallpapers. Which extensions are effective, meaningful and relevant will depend on a range of factors, including the composition of the target audience and the nature of the specific pleasures inherent in each touchpoint.

AD\*VIZR is an important initiative for thinking about a new form of engagement as a function of the textual extensions. Although the AD\*VIZR model adds value to the discussion about engagement, the execution of the idea has several flaws, as Askwith explicates. In addition to Askwith's list of critiques, the fact that the model takes the television text as the central medium might be another limitation for explaining some of the transmedia cases that are offshoots from other primary media such as video games or comic books.

Acknowledging the additional value of these new steps in terms of understanding engagement, Askwith (2007) offers the critique that these efforts still describe and measure engagement in more traditional terms — through the accumulation and interpretation of behavioral and attitudinal data. Askwith suggests:

Rather than continuing to formalize engagement with models that reduce the audience's complex behaviors and context-specific attitudes into oversimplified, over-generalized and decontextualized algorithmic assumptions, researchers who wish to understand how engagement works should be looking at specific sites of engagement. (51)

Thus, rather than grouping touchpoints according to a distribution platform, Askwith proposes a framework that organizes touchpoints by their value propositions. As such, his framework describes what kinds of content and opportunities these touchpoints extend to the viewer. Please refer to Appendix A for Askwith's list of touchpoints that are used to expand the modern television text.

*Evaluating Touchpoints.* Transmedia storytelling is a form of extension, but so is adaptation or cross-platform distribution. Each extension might not have transmedial qualities, but each transmediation is a form of extension. Long (2007, 16) uses Jenkins' "distinctive and valuable

contribution” criterion to distinguish transmedial extensions from any other form. Long (2007, 92-96) develops four key questions to evaluate “the distinctive and valuable” contribution of each text, and to assess the transmedial qualities of a narrative that unfolds across media: 1) Is the extension canonical? (Does it ‘officially’ enrich the story?), 2) Does the extension maintain the character of the world? (Does the tone match, or is it jarring?), 3) Does the extension answer questions left unanswered by the preceding text(s)? (Do we add knowledge to our mental encyclopedias with this extension?), and 4) Does the extension raise new questions? (Does it open up new avenues for additional expansion?).

### **Transmedia as Process.**

Although articulated differently, the existing definitions agree that transmedia storytelling is a process of extending and telling narratives using multiple media. Stressing the procedural aspects of this multimedia deployment, Dahlen (2001) explicates transmedia storytelling as a process whereby one story, in one medium, expands into other media and other stories, and eventually into an entire world told across many platforms, with many points of entry and participation for the audience. Along similar lines, Jenkins (2006) states that transmedia is a process that exhibits the following characteristics:

*Transmedia storytelling is a systematic and coordinated process.* Transmedia storytelling is not simply about redistributing the same content in different media. (That process is called adaptation, which will be explained in more detail later in this chapter.) Rather, transmedia storytelling supports a narrative with multiple narratives in other media. The involvement of multiple media necessitates a high degree of coordination across the different platforms. In an ideal scenario, movie producers, scenario writers, game developers, the director, and all other

influential agents in the process should be aware of what the others are doing, and adopt a similar vision of the franchise. So far, transmedia works best either in independent projects where there is a single coordinator of the production activity who shapes the story across all of the media involved, or in projects where strong collaboration is encouraged across different divisions of the same company (Jenkins 2006). Thus, transmedia storytelling benefits from this “singular auteur behind the franchise” (Long 2007, 38). Christy Dena (2009) acknowledges the required holistic perspective for the coordination of the transmediation practice and points to the “combinatorial skills” needed for the concept, strategy, writing, and design level. Yet, the common practice of licensing in media companies makes this coordination more difficult to sustain. In licensing, as I will explain later, the story originates in one medium and subsequent media remain subordinate to the original master text (Jenkins 2006).

*Transmedia storytelling is a unified narrative system (meta-text).* The story that is told across media extends the story but, but on the macro level, all of the stories told across different media also are in agreement with each other. The single driver, if there is one, behind the franchise or other coordinating activities makes sure that the franchise is in harmony as a whole. Thus, transmedia narratives are about a universe rather than a character or specific plots. These fictional worlds are composed of several interrelated characters and their stories. This meta-narrative construction is called “worldbuilding” (Jenkins 2006). Characteristics of the transmedia meta-narrative and worldbuilding practices will be discussed in later sections while reviewing the structural characteristics of transmedia narratives.

*Each medium involved has a partial and distinct role.* Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story. Each medium extends the story and contributes to the meta-text, which is told across different media. In *The Matrix* franchise, for example, content is

conveyed through three live action films, a series of animated shorts, two collections of comic book stories, and several video games (Jenkins 2006). There is no one single source or text where one can turn to gain all of the information needed to comprehend *The Matrix* universe. To understand *The Matrix* world, all of these media forms should be utilized.

*In transmedia storytelling, there is a distinct role of each medium involved.* Ideally, the text in each medium must be accessible on its own terms even as it makes a unique contribution to the narrative system. Game designer Neil Young (2006) coined the term "additive comprehension," to refer to the ways each new narrative adds a new piece of information that forces the audience to revise his or her understanding of the fiction as a whole. Additive comprehension is quite challenging for the producers of transmedia content because the individual episodes and extensions must be designed and produced in such a way that they attract and keep first-time viewers, but also enhance the experience of existing consumers engaged with multiple media.

### **Transmedia as Aesthetics.**

Transmediation is deemed as an aesthetics that focuses on the particular structure of the transmedia narrative and that displays, complicates, and formalizes intertextuality. Jenkins (2006) conceptualizes transmedia storytelling in the convergence culture framework as an aesthetic that is a product of convergence. The existing literature argues that transmedia narratives share distinct characteristics compared to the narratives that are produced for and consumed via only a single medium. Although there has been more discussion on how to define transmedia storytelling, pioneers in this field argue that much research is still required to understand the structural and aesthetic characteristics of transmedia narratives. Jenkins (2007) stresses this point on his website blog:

We are still groping to find an aesthetic language to describe and evaluate these kinds of stories; this needs to be understood by all involved as an artistic experiment, an attempt to understand how storytellers can more fully exploit the potentials of convergence culture.

*Aesthetic Elements of Transmedia Narratives*. Long's dissertation is one of the first comprehensive transmedia studies that seeks to explore the aesthetics of transmedia storytelling by exploring its structural characteristics. Adopting a production perspective, Long focuses on the interconnectedness of media to explain the aesthetics of the transmedia narrative. Long (2007, 9) identifies negative capability, migratory cues, and hermeneutic codes to "elucidate a rough aesthetics of transmedia storytelling." Below, these structural elements will be described in detail. He utilized two cases from the Jim Henson Company — *The Dark Crystal* and *Labyrinth* — to illustrate how these structural elements can be implemented with varying results. From Long's perspective, these structural elements are supposed to guide audiences across multiple media platforms.

Negative capability is "the art of building strategic gaps into a narrative to evoke a delicious sense of uncertainties, mysteries, and doubts in the audience" (Long 2007). Negative capability is closely attached to the concept of worldbuilding in transmedia storytelling. It is implemented in a narrative as a reference to the people, places or events external to the current narrative that provides hints to the past of the characters, or to the world that has been built by the franchise. Negative capability is considered to be a fundamental element of transmediation as it provides hooks for the storyteller to return later for another attention-grabbing tale. The unanswered questions, mysteries, and uncertainties in a narrative create opportunities for new stories to be told.



According to Long (2007), these type of references “empower individuals to fill in the gaps of their own imaginations while leaving them curious to find out more” (53). Along these lines, he compares reader-response theory — another literary theory that will be explained in detail later in this chapter — and negative capability in terms of the roles they assign to the reader. Simply put, reader-response theory posits that reading is not a passive activity. Similarly, according to Long, negative capability is based on the active role and engagement of the consumer with the consumption of content.

Long (2007) links negative capability directly to the concept of migratory cues (Ruppel, 2005) and defines the structural element as “signals towards another medium — the means through which various narrative paths are marked by an author and located by the user through activation patterns.” The letter handed to the “kid” at the beginning of second *Matrix* movie is referred to frequently as an example of a successful migratory cue. When it is mentioned at the beginning of the second *Matrix* film, Ruppel argues it exists as a hint for viewers to look for more information on the letter in *The Animatrix* and *Enter The Matrix*. Yet, the second *Matrix* movie can be understood without knowing where that letter came from and without consuming either of those two pieces of media. According to Ruppel, the audience can imagine where it came from, or track the other media for a richer experience (as cited by Long 2007, 60). Migratory cues are actually intentional spaces for consumer co-creation and consumer intelligence “pockets” in the narrative. They point out to consumers where there might be more “candies” (Jenkins 2006, 9) — gifts and rewards in the text to be discovered. Simply, migratory cues are about “utilizing negative capability (references to people or external events) to craft potential migratory cues” (Long 2007, 59). Negative capability becomes actualized as migratory

cues when those extensions are made available. Long discusses the aesthetics of transmedia storytelling using these two structural elements:

A storyteller looking to craft a potential transmedia narrative should carefully craft the world in which that story exists, and then make passing references to elements in that world during the course of the narrative to simultaneously spark audience imaginations through negative capability and provide potential openings for future migratory cues (60).

To refine the aesthetics of transmedia storytelling, Long (2007) uses the Barthesian classification system to develop six categories of hermeneutic codes. Barthes (1970) uses six categories of codes — hermeneutic, semantic, proairetic, symbolic, character, and cultural — to explain what actually happens when readers experience Balzac’s readerly short story “Sarsin.” In other words, these are the parts of a text that keep an audience turning the pages by continually posing and answering new questions, opening and closing gaps in the narrative structure. Because of its similarity to negative capability, Long focuses on the hermeneutic code — which are the “texts in a text” that introduce and conclude the mysterious elements running throughout the narrative — to conduct his analysis. Long uses hermeneutic codes to understand how transmedia stories work, rather than focusing on their semiotic value. (In semiotics, the value of a sign depends on its position and relations in the system of signification and on the particular codes being used.)

### **The Distinction of Transmedia Storytelling from Related Constructs**

In short, transmediation as a media aesthetic can be summarized as the “unfolding of meta-narrative across multiple media platforms with each new text making a distinctive and

valuable contribution to the whole” (Jenkins 2006, 95). As such, it is distinct from other processes where media content appears in different platforms such as cross-platform distribution or adaptation. For example, cross-platform distribution is simply the reappearance of content from one platform in another, such as making broadcast television shows available in VOD, cable shows available on YouTube, movies in DVD, TV, iPod, and so on (C3 website, Sam Ford blog). Extension, synergy, and franchising are pushing media industries to embrace convergence (Jenkins 2006). Transmediation is an aesthetics that became more and more common in the convergence culture framework that explains the space characterized by all of these aforementioned processes and terms.

Another related concept, licensing, refers to a contractual arrangement where one organization gives another the rights to produce, sell, or use something in return for payment.

Jenkins criticizes the practice of licensing:

The current licensing system typically generates works that are redundant (allowing no new character background or plot development), watered down (asking the new media to slavishly duplicate experiences better achieved through the old), or riddled with sloppy contradictions (failing to respect the core consistency audiences expect within a franchise). These failures account for why sequels and franchises have a bad reputation.

Likewise, adaptation, another very common media practice that involves narratives and multiple media platforms, is often confused with transmedia storytelling. At this point, it is important to define adaptation and to distinguish it from transmediation, to help provide a clear understanding of the distinctive characteristics of transmediation. Retelling a story in a different media type is adaptation, while using multiple media types to craft a single story is

transmediation (Long 2007, 22). Adaptation shares some of the same benefits of transmedia storytelling, primarily the creation of new access points to a narrative world through alternative media types. However, according to Long, adaptation possesses one key difference from transmedia storytelling — namely, distinction. That is, while adaptations may bring new audiences to a story and may serve as components of a branded franchise that stretches across multiple media forms, adaptations do not stand as distinct components of some larger shared narrative arc. Long (2007, 22) explains the difference between adaptation and transmediation:

Jackson's trilogy adapted Tolkien's existing story while *Enter The Matrix* contributed an original chapter to the Wachowski brothers' story. . . . Adaptations of a work are never identical to the original work. Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, for example, had many fans screaming "There were no elves at Helm's Deep!" Tom Bombadil never graced the screen in Jackson's film, and the ghost army never fought at Minas Tirith in Tolkien's book. These changes often reflect both the benefits and disadvantages inherent in particular media types — Tom Bombadil was excised from the film due to time constraints, whereas the battles with the elves and ghost army were most likely added to take advantage of the opportunity for spectacle provided by the film medium (and a healthy budget for special effects).

Transmediation assumes extension, whereas adaptation assumes reinterpretation (Long 2007). It is important to note that adaptations of a work are never identical to the original work. In adaptation, a “genetic link” (Elliott 2002) is constructed by the same characters, who are depicted following the same storyline, and speaking essentially the same dialogue in essentially the same places, although they are “deformed” by the varying inherent characteristics of each

form. More forcefully, Elliott (2002) argues that adaptation is essentially a divorce of form from content, in much the same way as a spirit might be separated from its body.

### **The Literature on Transmediation: An Evaluation**

This chapter groups the extant working definitions of transmedia storytelling into four categories: as intertextuality, as extension, as process, and as aesthetics. Intertextuality elucidates the connections between and boundaries of text across media and in the vast community of texts in various genres. In the case of transmedia, intertextuality helps to question where the text begins and ends. The boundaries of a transmedia narrative are permeable, and that characteristic challenges the ways both scholars and practitioners think about the content-form relationship. Askwith (2007) explains how the fuzzy boundaries of the text challenge the ways producers used to think about content<sup>5</sup>-form relation and states; “what viewers once described as television shows are now being subsumed under the broader title of content, a term that reflects industry’s growing interest in creating media programming that can be distributed and accessed on a range of platforms” (16).

The extension framework helps transmedia scholars identify the possible media through which the transmedia narrative unfolds, and also the contribution of each additional medium to the transmedia meta-narrative. Although media scholars agree on the increasing expandability and spreadability of the media content, Jenkins (2006) and Long (2007) are among the first who develop relevant criteria to differentiate transmedial extensions. The unfolding of a transmedia narrative across media increases the number of possible access points that enable consumers to

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<sup>5</sup> Askwith (2007, 17) defines content as “a unit of information or entertainment product that can be sold or sponsored, and distributed through a diverse range of channels and platforms.”

engage with content. The technological developments that pertain to the media platforms will definitely increase and challenge the possible type of extensions Askwith lists (Appendix A).

The comprehension of transmedia storytelling as a process is mostly concerned with the unfolding of transmedia narratives across media. Although there is not much theory emerging under this conceptualization, a process understanding of the role of each medium to be integrated in transmedial deployment is essential and complementary to the narrative theories mentioned. The focus should not be only on how texts are interconnected, but also on how the interconnection between texts is molded by the type of the media that contain the textual content.

Finally, the aesthetic aspect is one of the most theory-rich characteristics of transmedia storytelling. An aesthetic analysis clarifies the structural elements of the transmedia text that sets it apart from similar practices, and addresses the following questions: What makes the transmedia narrative unique? What is it about the text that leads consumers to different media? How can transmedial qualities be built into text? Along these lines, this section details the understanding of transmedia by defining the structural qualities of text that would initiate or sustain the connection with the other text. In a sense, Long (2007) tries to explain how intertextuality is not random, but woven into the transmedia narrative.

Taken together, the four components of transmedia discussed in this chapter — intertextuality, extension, process, and aesthetics — detail the existing conceptual and operational frameworks that are utilized to understand transmedia storytelling. As stated above, these four categories are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are used to communicate the conceptual origins of the transmedia concept and illuminate its amorphous nature. The lack of consensus on how transmedia storytelling should be defined and how it is different from similar media practices also contributes to the fuzzy boundaries of the term and its scope.

On the theoretical level, semiology and literary theory are the most salient theoretical resources through which to understand transmedia storytelling. Most of the scholarly studies on the topic focus on the structure and aesthetics of the narrative (text), either on a single medium or on the meta-narrative across media. Although a very literal delineation, it would not be wrong to think that the existing studies of transmedia split the transmedia storytelling as a term into sub-units (trans-, media, story (text), and telling) and try to conceptualize each of them individually. The “telling” part, for example, is mostly addressed by scholars interested in the process; that is, how to tell the story and what the role of each medium should be. The text part pertains to aesthetics, or how the text should be structured so consumers are led to other media platforms and encouraged or intrigued to consume narratives in different media. “Trans-”, on the other hand, looks at the connections between text across media, and that boundaries are studied by scholars interested in intertextuality. Admittedly, this is a very rough representation of the existing theoretical frameworks about transmedia storytelling. But, my main point is that the focus is about text and how it is told travels across several media. There needs to be a more holistic approach to transmedia storytelling that iterates and theorizes transmedia as an adjective in other contexts such as transmedia consumption, transmedia branding, or transmedia consumer. Similarly, Long (2007, 32) agrees that “the term ‘transmedia’ should be considered an adjective, not a noun.” Yet, Long discusses transmedia as an adjective in a more limited sense — to refer to fictional storytelling. He asserts:

During my time in the Convergence Culture Consortium at MIT, we frequently made the mistake of shortening “transmedia storytelling” to “transmedia.” This is a mistake...By the same token, continuing a news story from television onto mobile devices and into print is a form of transmedia storytelling.

This understanding of transmedia only in relation to storytelling and text limits the ways transmedia storytelling could be studied. The focus on the text is a very solid starting point and has revealed great insights. The transmedia narrative is a very prominent characteristic of the transmedia storytelling concept. It is distinguishing and has a certain structure. Yet, this focus should be expanded to explore the other important agents and practices related to transmedia storytelling, such as transmedia consumption and transmedia branding. Although this dissertation will focus on unpacking the consumer perspective, I will return to the implications for transmedia branding that emerge from this dissertation Chapter 7. In the next chapter, however, , I will provide an overview and evaluating summary of the literature that emanates primarily from consumer behavior and that could prove to be useful and illuminating when pursuing the study of transmedia consumption.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **TRANSMEDIA CONSUMPTION**

Ultimately, it's really not about corporate behemoths, mergers, or finances, or the box on top of the TV set. It's about stories that move us, characters we can root for, ideas that transform the cultural landscape, special effects that take us to a world we've never seen before, situations and lines that make us laugh, and ideas that are universal, they forever change the way we live...Humanity makes it impossible not to take notice of great stories, whether they are told around a Neolithic campfire or in the cathode-ray-glow of the digital hearth. It all starts with a well-told "Once upon a time..." (Wolf 1999, 295-6)

As the above quote implies, around a campfire or via digital means, people enjoy the experience of good stories. With the intensifying digitalization and proliferation of media forms, and with new forms complementing the old ones, the ways consumers can access and experience stories have experienced a seismic change. This study focuses on the consumption of stories told across a multitude of media platforms, namely transmedia consumption experiences. In so doing, I will explore how consumers experience and co-create transmedia consumption experiences, and their migratory behavior across media during these consumption experiences. This approach will provide a synthesizing theoretical perspective on consumption and multi-media that draws together prior research on transmedia storytelling, the consumption of media and entertainment, subcultures of consumption and fan studies, and socio-cultural branding.

In what follows, I communicate my research questions in further detail, drawing heavily from consumer behavior studies regarding the phenomenology of media consumption, fan studies, and communications. By doing so, I aim to provide a critical reading of related research in an attempt to create an intelligible understanding of the field that will provide a roadmap for my dissertation. In this section, I unpack the relevant existing consumer behavior and marketing research that establishes the theoretical foundations to understand transmedia consumption

(hereafter; TMC). I organize this research under two sub-heads: TMC as experience and TMC as extension. I begin by reviewing the consumption of media and entertainment studies that assist our understanding of TMC as experiences. Then, I will briefly review the branding literature to explore the consumption of brand narratives and of brand extensions to understand TMC as extensions. Thus, this section details how studies pertaining to transmedia storytelling and consumption of media in marketing and consumer behavior could enlighten and expand upon each other.

## **TMC AS EXPERIENCE**

The consumption of entertainment and of media has been of interest to many scholars in disciplines such as popular culture, media studies, law, anthropology, sociology — and similarly, to those in marketing and consumer behavior. Consumer scholars have studied media and entertainment consumption as an individual hedonic experience (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982) or as a communal consumption around brand(s) (Kozinets 2001, Schau and Muniz 2004). This section will review the studies on the consumption of entertainment and media conducted in the field of consumer behavior and marketing. Then, the section will provide a brief overview of the consumer behavior studies that elaborate how consumer experiences deviated from what the producer has intended.

### **Media Consumption as a Hedonic Experience**

Consumer scholars have studied media and entertainment consumption as an individual hedonic experience (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982) focusing on pleasure and engagement (Holbrook 1999, Deighton 1992) or as a communal consumption around brand(s) (Kozinets

2001) focusing on social and cultural consumption (e.g., bonding, identity, value practices) (Brown 2007; Schau and Muniz 2004). In so doing, scholars draw from and adopt several theoretical frameworks: economic, psychological, critical, phenomenological, identity politics, and literary perspectives.

*The Economic Perspective.* The economic approach focuses on the financial performance of entertainment products, and also on identifying variables that determine or drive their performance. Studies in this stream focus on individual consumer experiences and are more interested in the strategic aspects of the entertainment products or the drivers of the entertainment industry as a whole. New product introductions, adoption rates, timing of releases, distribution of entertainment products, and performance measures of entertainment products are some of the topics that receive attention from marketing scholars. Aligned with the scope of this paper, I only refer to studies that also incorporate the consumer as an agent.

The motion picture industry is commonly selected as a context by scholars who conduct studies in this stream. This attention is granted due to the peculiar characteristics of the motion picture industry when compared with other entertainment-based industries. Insights from the motion picture industry may also help us to advance our knowledge and insights about the industries that share certain characteristics, as well as to examine the interface between technology and media products in the digital age (Schmitt 1999, Wolf 1999). The motion picture industry exerts a huge economic impact on the national, and also in the global, economy. Spending on movie tickets was approximately \$10.5 billion in the United States (Standard & Poor's 2009). Movies are a key driver of the market for entertainment products. The impact of Hollywood on American and world culture is disproportional when compared with other type of cultural products. However, these studies regard the consumption of movies in terms of movie-

going or buying behavior. Consumption is reduced to the buying of the product or to the choice made at the movie theater counter. Studies in this stream do not use the term “consumption,” but rather focus on the concept of “movie-going behavior.” This scant attention may result from the primary interest among marketing scholars in the economic dimensions of movie consumption, where the focus is often limited to box-office performances or the sales and rentals of DVDs in specified markets (Hennig-Thurau Walsh, and Bode 2004). To forecast or evaluate the success of movies, studies in this stream typically utilize aggregate data on movie-going behavior collected by industry trade sources. Some examples of scholarly studies adopting economic perspective include, but are not limited to: De Vany and Walls (2000), Dodds and Holbrook (1988), Elberse and Eliashberg (2003), Eliashberg and Shugan (1997), Hennig-Thurau et al. (2001), Jedidi et al. (1998), Moul (2004), and Simonoff and Sparrow (2000).

In a recent study in this stream, Eliashberg (2000) develops a prerelease market evaluation model for the motion picture industry and assists in generating box office forecasts and supporting marketing decisions for a new movie that has not been released, but has been produced. MOVIEMOD, the forecasting model, is based on a behavioral representation of the consumer adoption process for movies. This study incorporates the role of the consumers in generating forecasts. For a specific movie of interest, at any given point in time, the consumer is at either one of these stages: undecided, considerer, rejecter, positive spreader, negative spreader, inactive. The progression of consumers through these stages depends on a set of movie-specific factors that are related to the marketing mix, as well as on a set of more general behavioral factors that characterize movie-going behavior in the population of interest. Marketing variables that influence the transitions among the states are movie theme acceptability, promotion strategy, distribution strategy, and movie experience. The model produces forecasts of the awareness,

adoption intention, and cumulative penetration for a new movie within the population of interest for a given base marketing plan. MOVIEMOD incorporates word of mouth and other influences such as critics and reviews into consideration while generating forecasts. Using a different context, Ready, Swaminathan, and Motley (1998) identify the determinants of Broadway show success. The authors conclude that the success of a show — the length of a show's run and attendance — is determined by the previews, newspaper advertising, ticket pricing, show type, talent characteristics, and timing of the movie opening.

*The Psychological Perspective.* Researchers in this stream focus on the causal relationship between some behavioral variables and consumers' attitudes and choices. They aim to relate such variables as opinions, needs, values, attitudes, moods, and personality traits to consumers' decision-making processes regarding media consumption. The psychological approach focuses on individual decisions of consumers to choose media from among the vast array of entertainment options and, more critically, to choose a particular product (e.g., a movie; Litman and Ahn 1998, as cited in Eliashberg et. al 2006). Such studies generally use data collected via surveys or experiments. Examples include Austin (1986, 1989), Becker et al. (1985), Cuadrado and Frasquet (1999), D'Astous and Touil (1999), De Silva (1998), Eliashberg and Sawhney (1994), and Sood and Dreze (2006).

Eliashberg and Sawhney (1994) develop a model of the movie-going experience that enables the researcher to predict an individual moviegoer's enjoyment level for a movie prior to watching it. The model relies on matching personality characteristics (such as the desire to seek sensational stimulation) with the emotional content of the movie, which they analyze on a scene-by-scene basis. Their model also takes into account a person's tendency to undergo mood changes, which influence the desire for excitement and arousal at any point in time during the

movie experience. Although the model can predict the individual moviegoer's enjoyment prior to watching a movie, it was tested only in a laboratory setting. Another study in this stream focuses on the consumer behavior after the actual entertainment experience. Specifically, Hui, Eliashberg, and George (2008) develop a behaviorally motivated model to estimate the aggregate DVD preorder/sales. Studies in this stream generally elucidate the psychological variables that impact consumers' choice or enjoyment of the media product.

*The Critical Perspective.* The critical perspective perceives entertainment and media products as vehicles of popular culture that can communicate consumption ideologies. These studies adopt Marxist or feminist approaches to explore the role of entertainment and media products, and the ways these impact consumers' identities and representations. Hirschman and Stern (1994), for example, analyze three movies (*The Blue Angel*, *Pretty Baby*, and *Pretty Woman*) to examine cultural attitudes toward the commoditization of women as prostitutes as depicted in these movies. Stern (2005), as another example, studies the vulnerability of women in the context of soap opera consumption. She describes the vulnerability of this demographic:

The power of soaps to reach viewers across the globe rests on their continued appeal to women. Soaps provide emotional release, personal gratification, companionship, and an escape from reality. But however benign the motivations may appear, they reveal a vulnerability system in which industry profits flow from a genre that specializes in conveying images of vulnerable women living in luxury to downscale viewers living in constrained circumstances and repeatedly exposed to unrealistic and inappropriate role models (27).

Quellette and Hay (2008), in their attempt to politically, economically, and ideologically contextualize the reality-TV genre, draw from Foucault's discussions of governmentality to

explain the processes “through which the conduct of subjects is regulated and regularized” (9). The authors assert that reality-TV provides consumers with norms regarding “how to conduct and empower themselves as enterprising citizens.” According to Quellette and Hay (2008, 102), “the medium's capacity to enter the home brings the practice of 'makeover' deeply into daily life and for that reason, they claim, is able to circulate its logic and its rules more broadly than books, magazines, and the Internet” (102). Despite this educational role, the authors also problematize the idea of choice in a system where the choice is a right only among the presented limited alternatives. Along those lines, despite its empowering capabilities within the drawn boundaries, reality TV does not provide any means or choices for people who are seeking alternative styles and step out of conventional zones. The critical perspective has helped consumer scholars to reflect on the sometimes not-so-visible ideological elements in the media products, and their impact on the consumers as well as on the marketplace.

*The Phenomenological Perspective.* Phenomenology studies the structures of conscious experience as experienced from the first-person point of view, along with relevant conditions of experience (Husserl 1963). In the field of consumer behavior, phenomenology focuses on the subjective experiences of consumption as experienced by the consumers. As a theoretical perspective, phenomenology provides alternative methods and a set of assumptions that allow for experiences to exist, and thus for researchers to obtain an in-depth understanding of consumers' experiences. Consumer researchers employ different understandings of phenomenology to study consumer experience.

Existential-phenomenology also seeks to describe experience as it emerges in some context(s) or, to use phenomenological terms, as it is "lived" (Thompson, Loccander, and Polio 1990, 144). As such, existential-phenomenology seeks to develop and use methods that allow for

a first-person description of lived experience. In an attempt to “put consumer experience back into consumer research,” Thompson et al. (1989, 133) introduce existential phenomenology as a paradigm and methodology to understand consumer experience. According to existential phenomenology, “a person's life-world is a socially contextualized totality in which experiences interrelate coherently and meaningfully” (Thompson et al 1990, 347). The meanings fundamentally emerge from the social context, yet the perspective of the experiencing individual is privileged over the third-person view of the cultural setting. The existential phenomenological description is experiential, not objective, that remains at the level of the respondent's lived-world.

Another lens through which to study consumer experience is the experiential perspective. The experiential view is also “phenomenological in spirit and regards consumption as a phenomenon directed towards the pursuit of fantasies, feelings, and fun” (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982, 132). The experiential perspective involves studying the consequences of consumption in terms of the fun, enjoyment, and pleasure obtained from the experience. This view regards consumption as “a primarily subjective state of consciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses, and aesthetic criteria” (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982, 132). Movies, novels, video games, comic books, and Broadway shows are primarily consumed for the hedonic pleasure value they provide (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). Other experiential products studied in consumer behavior are but not limited to: movies (Holbrook 1999, Sood and Dreze 2006), soap operas (Holbrook and Hirschman 1997), and the arts (Deighton 1992, Joy and Sherry 2003).

Consumers’ responses to an entertainment product or certain media content, such as a TV show or a movie can be complex. Entertaining, informative, emotionally or intellectually



demanding, humorous, gripping, boring, or slow are some examples of possible consumer responses to an entertainment product. A consumer's engagement with and subsequent enjoyment of entertainment and media can vary from mere short-term entertainment to the experience of complete immersion into the movie narrative (Green, Brock, and Kaufman 2004) and identification with the narrative elements (such as movie characters, Cohen 2001). Wohlfeil and Whelan (2006, 64) define movie consumption "as a holistic consumption experience that depends on a complex tapestry of interconnected factors through which the consumer can restore his/her emotional well-being by being momentarily immersed into an imaginative world."

*Identity Politics: Fandom and Subcultures of Consumption.* Consumer behavior scholars emphasize that mass media products play an important role in the lives of consumers. As Kozinets (2001) asserts, "understanding the interrelationship of mass media consumption, subcultures, and wider cultural practices enhances our knowledge of important elements of contemporary consumer behavior" (68). Subcultures of consumption is one framework consumer behavior scholars have applied when studying fans. They also focus on the effects of media texts and media consumption on consumers' lives, and on their identity (e.g., Mountain Men; Belk and Costa 1998; Sky Diving; Celsi et. al. 1993; *Star Trek* Fans; Kozinets 2001). Schouten and McAlexander (1995, 43) define a subculture of consumption "as a distinct subgroup of society that self-selects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular product class, brand, or consumption activity." Studies of brand and consumption communities tap into the collective acts of negotiation and creation of, for example, Harley riders or *Star Trek* fan identities, and co-creations of meaning within the community.

Kozinets (2001), for example, examines the cultural and subcultural construction of negotiated consumption meanings and practices from mass media images and objects. His

netnographic study reveals that the consumption meanings and practices pertaining to *Star Trek* are structured by social and institutional forces such as consumers' own social situations, the articulations of subculture members, institutional practices, and cultural producers. Studies of active fan communities and consumption subcultures like *Star Trek*, *X-Files*, *Xena*, *Harry Potter*, or any other similar context introduce a unique aspect of entertainment consumption. In these contexts, the consumption of entertainment is an interactive and very much involved activity and fans are very involved consumers who rely on media-generated content for identity construction. In a netnographic study about *X-Files* fans, Kozinets (1997, 470) explains how studying fan cultures such as the *X-Files* as subcultures of consumption allows researchers to achieve a better grasp of contemporary consumer behavior:

(1) exploring the relationship between mass media programming and consumption (see Hirschman 1988, Holbrook and Hirschman 1993), (2) adding to our understanding of the ways in which social values and attitudes are created, expressed and maintained through subcultures of consumption, and mediated by popular culture, and (3) understanding how these cultures are created and maintained, particularly using new communications technologies such as the Internet.

In early studies of entertainment consumption, consumers are regarded as passive targets of marketing communications, where entertainment or media experience is bound up with the product during the actual consumption. However, contemporary entertainment space and related consumption activities have become more complex. Consumption of the product is only a small part of contemporary media consumption practices. Moreover, in today's mediascape, consumers' roles are not limited to watching, listening, or reading. Consumers of entertainment

and media today watch movies, read books, go to art shows, and entertain themselves in many ways. Beyond this actual consumption of the product, they write blogs, move between different media platforms, or involve themselves in brand communities. In other words, they do not only consume but annotate, archive, teach, and learn (Jenkins 2006). Jenkins (1995, 23) describes fans as active participants within a fandom that is a social, cultural, and interpretive institution.

Kozinets, Hemetsberger, and Schau (2008, 344) identify some of the activities in which fans engage:

Writing new texts; refining, altering, and designing products, creating original artwork and music; distributing podcasts and vlogs [video blogs] writing reviews; rating others' reviews; rating products; programming and debugging software; taking, editing, tagging, and posting photographs; maintaining specialized blogs and vlogs (see Kozinets 2007)

Kozinets (1999) outlines the modes of engagement in the online communities according to a consumers' level of involvement with the online community and/or consumption activity. According to Kozinets (1999), there are four categories of consumers in terms of their level of involvement. *Tourists* lack strong social ties and deep interest in the activity (e.g., they often post casual questions). *Minglers* have strong social ties but minimal interest in the consumption activity. *Devotees* have strong consumption interests but few attachments to the online group. Finally, *insiders* have strong ties to the online group and to the consumption activity and tend to be long standing and frequently referenced members.

The activities of these fans develop into a collaborative effort, especially in the conducive environment of Internet. These communal communities have been recently recognized for their innovative behavior (Kozinets 2002; Prhalad and Ramaswamy 2004; von Hippel 2005),

consumer creativity (Kozinets et al 2008), immaterial labor (Terranova 2000), and collaborative efforts (Jenkins 2006; Levy 1997; Tapscott and Williams 2006). In their very recent article, Kozinets et al (2008) seeks to explore the nature of collective consumer creativity and processes of collective consumer creativity. The authors identify four different types of online consumer communities — *Crowds*, *Hives*, *Mobs*, and *Swarms* — in terms of their orientation and concentration of innovation.

*The Literary Perspective.* As re-iterated several times in this dissertation, transmedia storytelling is about the deployment of narratives across various media. The scope of this chapter calls for a literature review of studies that focus on text-based analysis in consumer behavior field.

Consumer researchers have demonstrated an increasing interest in text-based analysis, both as an investigative method and a theoretical approach. In so doing, they draw from literary theories and literary criticism frameworks. There have been some discussions about the difference between literary theory and literary criticism, although it seems consumer behavior scholars are not very interested in this distinction. Furthermore, this distinction between literary theory and literary criticism is beyond the scope of this research. In short, literary criticism is the “overall term for studies concerned with defining, classifying, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating works of literature” (Abrams 1988, 28). Literary criticism as a mode of inquiry can be applied to any document read as a text that is a part of the author, the text, and the reader triangle (Quilligan 1979, as cited in Stern 1989, 322). Literary criticism pertains to the judgment value about a literary work or groups of work and detailing what constitutes value. In contrast, literary theory encompasses the philosophical discussion of methods, styles and goals of literary criticism. Literary theory informs, shapes, and guides literary criticism (Lye 1998). Literary theory is not judgment, but understanding of the frames of judgment. In this chapter, I will focus on literary

criticism as explained by literary theory, consistent with Stern's explanation of how consumer behavior became interested in literary criticism.

Stern (1989) introduced literary criticism — the systematic and organized study of creative fiction (Frye 1973) — as a source of insight into consumer behavior. Literary criticism tries to “explicate the relationship between language, meaning, and consumption” (Stern 1989, 323). Literary criticism can contribute to an understanding of consumer behavior processes by identifying, categorizing, and analyzing unexplored textual elements likely to reflect and affect audiences (Holbrook and Bartra 1987). The addition of literary criticism to consumer research extended existing studies on language-based approaches in linguistics, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistic works in the late 1980s (e.g., Harris et al 1986; Percy 1982; Percy and Rossiter 1980; Sherry 1988; Thomson and Snyder 1984; as cited in Stern 1989, 322). Connecting the two disciplines — consumer behavior and literary criticism — enriched the field of consumer research by focusing on how consumers read ads and on how ads can be used to “read” consumers. According to Stern (1996), the influence of literary theory in marketing and consumer behavior occurred in three waves. The first wave was characterized by a text-centered approach based on structural principles (e.g., Hirschman 1988; Stern 1995; Arnold et al 2001), whereas the second wave was oriented towards the reader involving reader-response theory (e.g. Hirschman 1998).

Literary criticism has developed methodologies for textual analysis (Stern 1996). Advertising is one of the focal texts for the textual analysis in consumer behavior and marketing. The advertising text is defined as the “media artifact designed to persuade consumers, and generated, composed, recorded, and analyzed by sponsorial agents and/or researchers” (Stern 1989, 322). Analysis of advertising text helps consumer scholars learn about the consumer, as

advertising texts reflect and influence behavior. They reflect the values of and include information about consumers as well as brands, firms, and producers (Stern 1990).

### **Consumption of Media: Text, Consumption, and Reader.**

Before it was embraced by consumer behavior scholars, literary theory had evolved through several stages of popularity and evolution. The focus on the formal features of a text, such as poetic devices, structure, and language, dates back to the 1920s and 1930s in Eastern Europe (see Erlich 1965; Steiner 1984). Text-centered criticism was refined and disseminated widely by the New Critics in the United States in 1940s and 1950s (see Lentricchia 1980). After the 1960s, textual analysis fell out of favor. New Criticism was attacked by reader-response critics for its exclusion of readers and by sociological critics for its exclusion of socio-cultural influences.

*Text as Focus of Analysis.* Semiotics, as textual analysis, focuses on the structural qualities of the text, particularly on the sign structure as inherent in the text. In 1986, two articles (Holbrook and Grayson 1986; Mick 1986) introduced semiotics to the consumer behavior field. Since that time, several articles (Hirschman 1988, 1990; Holbrook 1988, Holbrook, Bell and Grayson 1989; McCracken 1989; Scott 1990; Stem 1989) and conference presentations or programs (Umiker-Sebeok 1987; 1993) have broadened the application of semiotics to a wide variety of cultural texts (Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy 1988) including movies (e.g., Holbrook and Grayson 1986), television shows (Hirschman 1988), Broadway plays (Holbrook, Bell, and Grayson 1989), and advertisements (e.g., McQuarrie and Mick 1992; Mick and Politi 1989). In semiotics, language is conceptualized as a tool to unlock the meaning encoded in consumption (Sherry 1988), and advertising text is read as one way of construing the world (Sherry 1987).

Formalism, another form of text analysis, refers to the concentration on the formal features of a text in terms of images, metaphors, irony, allusions, and personae (Stern 1990, 1991, 1993). Formalism systematizes the textual analysis by devising replicable procedures for answering the question, "What kind of text is it?" This method focuses on identifying attributes and classifying different combinations into genres (Fowler 1982). Formalism privileges the perfected the method of "close reading" or "explication" (Stern 1988, 1989a, 1990) aimed at providing a "detailed and subtle analysis of the complex interrelations and ambiguities (multiple meanings) of the components" within the work (Abrams 1988, p. 223) by tracing its verbal organization, sounds and rhythms, and structural patterns. In marketing, this method is used by advertising researchers to establish categories of advertisements, just as marketing researchers establish categories of brands (Alba and Hutchinson 1987; Cohen and Basu 1987). Consumer behavior scholars also employ formalism to disentangle the words in ads so their effects can be studied (Stern 1988a, 1988c, 1989).

*Reader as Focus of Textual Analysis.* Reader-Response Theory. Reader-response theory focuses on the experiences of the reader, act of reading, and the reader's role in creating and re-creating the meaning of the text (Scott 1994). Transmedia consumption experiences are basically the reading of narratives (text) across several media. With its focus on the reader and the act of reading, reader-response theory and the way this framework is grounded in the consumer behavior field would be an appropriate lens through which to understand transmedia consumption experiences. Reader-response theory marks a shift of agenda that focuses on the primacy of the text as the only legitimate object of inquiry, to the theories of readers and the study of reading. In so doing, the reader is repositioned as "the dominant partner in the literary triad —author, text, and reader" (Holland 1975; Iser 1978, as cited in Scott 1994b, 462).

Rejecting the formalist assumption of one universal right reading of the text that is led by authorial intention, reader-response critics posit a multiplicity of individual interpretations. Reading from a reader-response perspective is “based on a collection of conventions, shared strategies, and processes readers use to create meaning” (Scott 1994, 463). Yet, reader-response theorists do not dismiss authorial intention completely. Authorial intention binds with the “shared knowledge of cultural conventions and the invocation of probable strategies for reading” to produce the anticipated response (Scott 1994, 463). The multiplicity of readings surrounding the authorial intention is due to the actual differences among readers and their reading situations. The intended reading is “resisted, frustrated, uncompleted, or interpreted in a way not expected (or desired) by the author” because of the diversity between the readers and the reading situations (Scott 1994, 463). Empirical studies establish the existence of multiple reading strategies and multiple readings (Brownstein 1982; Fish 1980; Leenhardt 1980; Radway 1984). So, in reader-response theory, no one reading is more correct or better than the other — where authorial intention is only a factor but is not privileged.

Three seminal articles mark the use of reader-response theory in the consumer behavior field: Mick and Buhl (1992), Scott (1990), and Stern (1993). In her later paper, Scott (1994, 462) criticizes these early works as mere applications of the theory and as not “introducing reader-response theory per se”. According to Scott, these early works need some additional theories of text (particularly when studying advertising text) and more empirical research to group individual differences into theories of audience response. Through this synthesis of the characteristics of the text and the psychology of consumers (Deighton 1989), she seeks to develop “consumer response theory” within the advertising context (Scott 1994, 462). Scott’s (1994) study in advertising helps re-focus attention on the response side of ads. Although



identifying formal qualities is an important first step in identifying the advertisements as texts, the formal features of the ads should be evaluated within the larger research project of consumer behavior. Consumer response theory goes beyond the assumption that certain formal characteristics will lead to certain mental processes and formulate certain responses.

Second, consumer response theory seeks to reorient textual interpretation within a theoretical framework that acknowledges the peculiarities of advertising. Reading an ad is different than reading a novel or any other genre. A theory of consumer response to ads as text would need to reflect those differences. Reader response theory asserts that the reader's recognition of the genre of a given text frames and guides the reading experience. The act of reading is highly dependent on the characteristics of the textual genre in question. For example, a theory of reading for advertising should begin by identifying characteristics of that textual genre (Scott 1994, 463). Reading an ad as a consumer means understanding the text as an effort to sell and to convince, which in turn implies issues of brand awareness, product attribute beliefs, and also the reader's skepticism and resistance to the message conveyed. In creating an ad and its message, advertisers employ specific formal properties that imply a style of reading. Scott (1994) identifies these properties for the case of ads as: "trade characters that charm announcer-experts pushing 'patented processes' or 'secret ingredients' banners shouting 'new, improved' and calls to 'have your Visa or MasterCard ready.'" These eventually become the common conventions of ads-as-text. Readers learn them, know them, and eventually resist them (Fish 1980b, 1989; Turner 1987).

According to Scott (1994), the reader's recognition of the genre of a text calls to the occasion three requirements. First, the readers should have a notion of what to expect from that text — a frame for it. Knowledge of the genre thus acts as a schema for reading. For example,

the schema for ads would be how each ad visually places several elements that consumers could easily identify as the headline, the visual, the body copy, the logo, and the tagline. Indeed, it is partly the suggestion and presence of these elements that enables consumers to know they are dealing with an ad, instead of a poem, which would look different. Second, the readers should have past experiences with format conventions typical of that genre. The presence of advertising elements such as the headline, tagline, and logo and their spatial relationships to each other invokes past experiences with ads. In so doing, consumers will expect certain types of information to be carried by each of these elements. Last but not least, readers should be able to select a reading strategy appropriate to that kind of text (Fish 1980, Iser 1978, Scholes 1982). Readers' expectations for textual-genre specific elements to contain certain information, as well as their culturally informed expectation that someone is trying to persuade them, lead them toward a reading strategy well before any pictures or words in the ad.

Reader-response theory explains how several subject positions are produced by a text for its own consumption. Scott (1994) illustrates these reader profiles in the context of the ads. The design of the text anticipates an *imagined reader*. In advertising, this abstract audience is called the "target audience" and is often also refined into a profile of a *typical reader* (Moriarty 1991). This constructed audience is usually based upon some empirical knowledge of the actual audience and is used to guide the writing of the message. The "reader" to whom an ad is addressed is a fiction, because the process of targeting describes all of the readers in some conceptual sense. In reader-response theory, there are many terms for the *fictionalized reader*: *the ideal reader* (Fish 1980b), *the implied reader* (Iser 1974), *the narratee* (Prince 1980), and *the mock reader* (Gibson 1980). The fictive reader, as described by the textual cues, is used to appeal to smaller groups within the mass audience who share an attitude, a demographic description, a

problem or interest, a consumption habit, a brand loyalty, or a social referent group. The definition may suggest a role for the reader to play while reading, a way of thinking about the proposition, and the nature of the dialogue between the "reader" and the "author" (Bakhtin 1989; Ong 1989).

Transmedia text is a complex and dynamic narrative, which features both structural qualities within the text and intertextual relations with other texts. It would not be an extrapolation to state that reading a complex and dynamic form like a transmedia narrative requires a very creative, active, and involved reader. Far from being a passive absorber of predigested data, the transmedia consumer must be able to actually assemble intratextual and extratextual cues constantly being borrowed or reinvented (Fish 1980b, 1989, Iser 1980). The meanings of transmedia narratives are not contained in words, but unfold over in time as the transmedia works with the text (Fish 1980b). To be able to understand transmedia consumption experiences, we have to elaborate, re-think, alter, and improve the ways we think about transmedia consumers as readers of transmedia narratives. In so doing, we have to explain reading as a transmedia process and explain it in relation to the text and to the transmedia consumer as the reader. To explore transmedia consumption experiences, it is essential to uncover the frames, expectations, and conventions regarding the transmedia narrative. The complex, dynamic and elaborate texts that typify the transmedia as a textual genre imply an imaginative, knowledgeable, and skeptical reader. For example, is it an "average profile" of a fan that is referred to when studying transmedia storytelling? What type of cultural conventions do transmedia texts require from the consumer? How are these conventions and expectations formed? Are they well-established? What does it mean to be "reading as transmedia consumer"? How is that different from reading as "a fan"?

In summary, reader-response studies try to show how a text works with the probable knowledge, expectations, and motives of the reader. These different understandings of the reader pose many interesting questions for studies of transmedia consumption, such as: What might be some collective conventions for consuming transmedia narratives? What are the rules for reading transmedia narratives? What are the imagined, typical, and fictionalized readers for the transmedia text? How can these profiles of readers be used to understand the transmedia consumer? Which profile better explains the transmedia consumer in relation to the transmedia narrative?

### **Co-creation of Experience**

Going beyond their interest in the nature of the media and entertainment consumption, scholars began studying how the experience deviates from what the producer intended. Studies have been conducted to explore the co-creation of meanings and interpretation (Scott 1994), co-creation of communities (Kozinets 2001), co-creation of text and narratives (Brown 2007), and co-creation of exchange value (Humphreys and Grayson 2008). Co-creation is used as an umbrella term to refer to the processes by which consumers create brand and product meanings in order to make sense of and align consumer goods and services within their lives (Fournier 2008). Vargo and Lusch (2004) recognize customer co-creation as a foundational premise underlying marketing's new service-dominant logic. Furthermore, scholars and practitioners argue that an increasing number of consumers are seeking a more active role in the creation of the products they consume (Humphreys and Grayson 2008, Handelman 2006; Roberts, Baker, and Walker 2005).

*Co-creation of meanings and interpretation.* Consumers' interpretation of media is an intrinsically social and interactive process where they act not as passive consumers of media

persuasion, but rather as active producers of meaning (Iser 1978, Hall 1980, Scott 1994). This active and productive understanding of consumer-media relationships (Fiske and Hartley 1978; Hall 1980; Turner 1992, Hirschman and Thompson 1997) challenges the passive model that portrays the media consumer as a mere receptor of producer-derived messages, or as a consumer exploited by an ideological system (Croteau and Hoynes 1997). Fiske (1987, 286) defends this active perspective against the passive model: “Despite the power of [media] ideology to reproduce itself in its subjects...the people still manage to make their own meanings and to construct their own culture within, and often against, that which the industry provides them.” Reader-response theory for instance, focuses on the experiences of the reader, the act of reading, and the reader’s role in creating and re-creating the meaning of the text (Scott 1994). In so doing, reader-response theory positions the reader as “the dominant partner in the literary triad – author, text, and reader” (Holland 1975; Iser 1978, as cited in Scott 1994, 462).

*Co-creation of communities.* Consumers’ co-creation activities in communities — online and offline — have been of interest to marketing and consumer behavior scholars. Consumers in the communities collaborate to create new media content (Kozinets 2007), create and facilitate word of mouth conversations (Kozinets et al 2008), or collaboratively innovate new products (O’Hern and Rindfleish 2010). Co-creation occurs in consumer communities in different contexts: such as Salomon snowboarders (Cova and Cova, 2002), Apple computer users (Schau and Muniz, 2002). and Star Trek fan groups (Kozinets, 2001). In an effort to organize consumer co-creation practices, Cova et. al (2007) identify consumer tribes four categories based on to which degree consumers play within the norms of the marketplace, and to which degree they become producers more than consumers. In a similar effort, Kozinets et al. (2008) identify different types of creative communities with respect to how many individuals are taking part in the production

and whether the innovation is a result of goal-oriented work or can be seen as a by-product of other activities.

*Co-creation of text and narratives.* Jenkins (1992) calls those fans that actively transform the meanings of cultural texts and use them for their own purposes “textual poachers”. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) also agree on fans as culturally productive. They suggest that “fans are: skilled and competent in different modes of production and consumption; active in their interaction with texts and in their production of new texts; and communal in that they construct different communities based on their links to the programmes they like”. Wirman (2007) identifies productivity, participation, discrimination and distinction and capital accumulation as main characteristics of fandom. Fiske (1992, 35) states, that “fans are particularly productive”, and asserts that in addition to engaging in the production of new texts, textual productivity can be about reworking the original text. According to these authors, fans are deemed as these highly involved consumers who not only create meaning and pleasure but also engage with textual productivity. In other words, all popular audiences take part in the production of meanings and pleasures related to the products of the culture industries, but fans are the ones who take it from the semiotic productivity of meaning and pleasure production to textual production (Fiske 1992). Consumer behavior scholars also point out this textual co-creation practices in the fandom literature (Brown 2007, Lanier et al 2007, Schau and Muniz 2004).

### **Evaluation of the Media Consumption Literature**

As evident from the extensive literature review provided, media and entertainment consumption are popular topics for consumer behavior scholars. The economic prospects of the topic as well as its dynamic nature sustain the intense interest in the field. Despite the extensive

literature, the existing frameworks or the studies fall short to understand and describe transmedia consumption. Below, I list the assumptions and limitations of this comprehensive literature — analyzed in light of the transmediation framework — that falls short of explaining transmedia consumption.

*Unbounded Transmedia Text with Permeable Boundaries.* Existing studies on the consumption of text, semiotics or reader-response theory alike assume that the text is a coherent and bounded unity. The consumption of text or act of reading as detailed by reader-response theory is based on this definable and bounded nature of the text within a particular medium or form, such as a particular ad (Scott 1994, Stern 1990) or a novel (Radaway 1983). Similarly, the semiotic analysis of a text aligns with similar assumptions. However, this assumption does not lend itself to the exploration of transmedia consumption experiences. As explained in Chapter 2, transmedia narratives are interconnected with other texts — in other words, they are intertextual. The boundaries of transmedia texts are permeable and are not clearly defined due to their emphasized interconnectedness. The permeability allows texts to diffuse through each other via links such as characters, story arcs, and other forms of intertextuality discussed in Chapter 2. For example, narrative capability and migratory cues (Long 2007), as elements of transmedia aesthetics, help sustain intertextual relations between transmedia narratives and allow the diffusion of other texts into the transmedia consumption experience. The permeable boundaries lead to unbounded texts and to varying degrees of how much texts permit transmission. As such, the unbounded transmedia text with permeable boundaries challenges the application of literary theories to comprehend the reading of transmedia texts or transmedia consumption experiences.

Explaining the interrelatedness of commercial texts and other texts and discourses has been of interest to scholars (e.g., Cassinger 2006, Gould and Wong 1997, Hirschman 2000,

Jansson 2004, Stern 1995; O'Donohoe 1997). In a study of how consumers use intertextuality to interpret advertising, O'Donohoe (1997) argues that referencing to other commercial texts may be more important to advertisers than the actual brand promoted. She further suggests that intertextuality could offer consumers more freedom in interpreting advertisements. In a more recent study, Hirschman (2000) examines the consumption of intertextuality in the context of two specific types of consumer-generated discourse that are constructed in response to two specific examples of television shows and motion pictures: intertextuality and archetypes. She demonstrates three forms of intertextuality used by consumers to connect their own personal narratives to the larger cultural discourse surrounding them. Cross-text intertextuality describes consumers' mental linkages across similar narratives/texts they have encountered, such as the linking of a TV show, movie, or character to the earlier shows, or to movies. Out-of-text intertextuality describes the mental linkages between characters/narratives in a fictional text and actual people or life events in the real world. Nostalgic intertextuality refers to consumers' mental linkages between a narrative/text and their ideas of a nostalgic past. The aim of this study is to learn how consumers incorporate these cultural narratives into their lives, and to gain understanding of cultural norms and alternative paths of self development (see e.g., Campbell 1973, 1974, 1988). However, the study still uses two specific contexts, which are bounded and definable within a particular media (movies), to understand intertextuality. Hirschman does not elaborate on the processes of the intertextual consumption. The transmedia narrative entails several intertextual characteristics that are intentionally integrated into the narrative. This specific aesthetic structure leads consumers from one medium to the other. Thus, the migratory behavior during transmedia consumption experiences is more complex and more scripted than the ones Hirschman details.



In sum, consumption of text or media text has been of interest to literary criticism scholars in consumer behavior. Their studies try to understand consumers response to media texts through the synthesis of the characteristics of the text and psychology of the consumers (Deighton 1989, Scott 1994). Literary criticism tries to “explicate the relationship between language, meaning, and consumption” (Stern 1989, 323). Literary theories vary in terms of their focus: a text-centered approach based on structural qualities of the narrative\text (e.g., Hirschman 1988; Stern 1995; Arnold et al 2001), whereas the reader-centered approach focused on the readers and the act of reading (e.g. Scott 1994).

*Integrating Content and Experience.* In general, studies that examine communication, as well as integrated marketing communication studies in consumer behavior, focus on a single message in each medium. The proliferation of types of media and cross-media tools challenges the “one media-one content-one message” framework. As Jenkins (2006) discusses, convergence culture represents a paradigm shift from media-specific content toward content that flows across multiple media channels. The decisions regarding a marketing campaign or similarly, a cultural and entertainment product, should entail those about the story (content) as well as the media platform (form). Interactions between form and content are important because “consumers learn how to consume not simply by what is shown and where, but also by how the message is structured” (Stern 1989, 322). The strategies are developed to exploit the unique strengths of each medium and story across media platforms by sustaining consistency and avoiding redundancy. Yet the existing studies on consumption of media or consumption of texts focus on either the media (e.g., movies, cartoons, novels) or the content (e.g., *Dallas*, *Out of Africa*). Studies on fandom and subcultures of consumption are an exception as they look at consumption across several touchpoints (e.g., *Star Trek*, Kozinets 2001; *Harry Potter*, Brown 2001). This

dissertation conceptualizes the transmedia consumption practices across media and across different stories. In so doing, it seeks to conceptualize the migratory behavior of consumers across media. Thus, the focus extends beyond acts of reading, meaning creation processes, or reading conventions, to the strategies consumers employ utilizing different media platforms and various consumer texts to make sense of the story.

*Time and Order of Transmedia Consumption.* As explained in the above critique, the majority of entertainment and media studies either focus on the consumption within a medium or within a story. Yet, as cross-mediation and transmediation becomes more and more common, consumers are faced with many choices of media and entry points to experience a franchise. Brown and Patterson (2006) criticize the taken-for-granted fan acquisition process in their article about Harry Potter fans:

The idea that consumers follow a preordained HP [*Harry Potter*] progression—what economists term path dependency—which starts with the books, continues with the movies and culminates with the merchandise is completely at odds with reality. Some are drawn in by the movies, others by watching the videos, others by catching a trailer, others by encounters with the tie-ins (being asked to buy a present for someone), others by a family connection (reading bedtime stories to a nephew), others by gifts or prizes or sales promotions (free tickets to a premiere courtesy of Coca-Cola), others by the phenomenon itself (what’s all the fuss about?) and yet others by default (there’s nothing else to read). Harry Potter is a brand smorgasbord. People pick and mix. Some pile their plates high, others are content to nibble. Many suck at it and see. Brand fans are not an undifferentiated mass of wide-eyed enthusiasts.

Although the authors (2006) bring up a very important point about the acknowledged and assumed linear order of consumption of *Harry Potter*, there are some other franchises that are commonly consumed in particular order so that consumers can have a meaningful experience of the story. For some of the stories, the order of the consumption matters. Below is a quote about the proper order of Star Wars consumption that makes much sense for many Star Wars fans. “I plan to force my children to watch 4-6 first. Problem solved. On second thought, why ruin the experience, I won't let them watch 1-3 at all.” The first Star Wars trilogy (original trilogy) includes Star Wars 4-6, with each released between 1977 and 1983. The prequel trilogy includes the episodes from 1-3. In other words, the right order of consumption for Star Wars is accepted to be the order of production, not the number of each sequel. One of the Star Wars fans explains the rationale behind this order:

I would definitely watch them 4,5,6,1,2,3. They were made in that order, so what will happen is you'll get all the surprises in 4,5,6. Then when you watch 1,2,3, it will answer certain questions that were left unexplained in the originals. I always feel you should watch anything the way they were made, if Lucas would have made 1,2,3,4,5,6, then I'd probably say watch it in that order. Plus 4,5,6 are way better, so you won't say after watching Episode I, "what is all the fuss about?"

[http://digg.com/educational/100\\_Things\\_Your\\_Kids\\_May\\_Never\\_Know\\_About](http://digg.com/educational/100_Things_Your_Kids_May_Never_Know_About)

Transmedia scholars also try to understand the connections between different media platforms and stories in a transmedia franchise. Long illustrates the connections between transmedia narratives in the below figure (Figure 2)

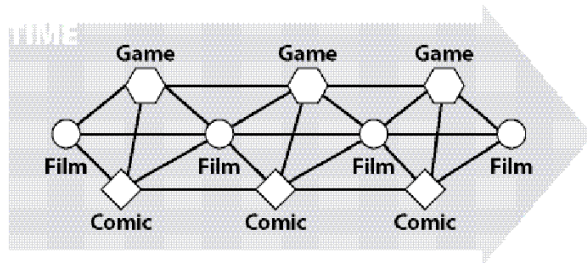


Figure 2: Long (2007, 15) — Transmedia Storytelling (Transmedia Narratives)

Long's illustration of transmedia storytelling is mostly based on the time of the production. That is, Long assumes that the direction of transmedia content consumption is linear and progressive, which in turn assumes a certain consumption pattern in terms of time and order. The temporary direction reflects the order in which the transmedia narratives are launched or produced. This illustration assumes that consumers experience and engage with transmedia narratives: a) as soon as they are launched/produced, b) in the order they are launched/produced, c) once (No repeat consumption or no going back and forth), d) entirely before they start with the new one. Dena (2004), also a transmedia scholar, focuses on the idea of transfiction, which is what Dena calls interrelated narratives across media. Long illustrates Dena's idea of transfiction as shown in the below figure (Figure 3).

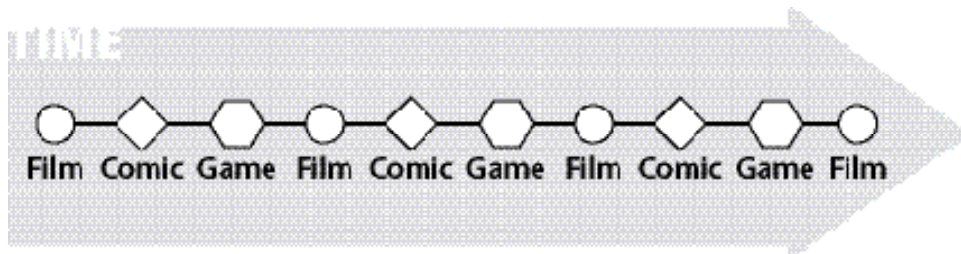


Figure 3: Long (2007, 15) — Long's Illustration of Dena's Transfiction Concept

This illustration seems to point to a more linear and directional transmedia consumption compared to Long's graph. Yet, Dena also emphasizes the simultaneous and sequential consumption of the transmedia narratives that have not been embodied in this graph. Dena

argues that each type of content is not autonomous, but is dependent on all the pieces of each medium. Consumers might go back and forth between media, switch to a different narrative before they finish the one with they are engaged, or might consume two media forms simultaneously.

## **TMC AS EXTENSION**

The brand extension concept in marketing is very similar to the concept of transmediation, which is the deployment of narratives across various media. Brand extensions<sup>6</sup> – that is, use of established brand names to launch new products (Keller 1993, 1998) — represent one of the most frequently used new product and growth strategies in the marketing literature (Aaker 1991; Farquar 1989; Leutheusser 1988; Tauber 1988). On the very basic level, both of the practices detail stretching the franchise and leveraging the brand equity from one medium or product to the other. Both practices are also driven by similar motivations such as economic prospects, risk management, and cost leveraging. Extending brands both within and beyond the original product category is deemed to be profitable because, in general, it is believed brands that are already known and recognized require lower new product introduction expenses, such as advertising, trade deals, or price promotions (Collins-Dodd and Louviere 1999; Tauber 1988). Aside from leveraging the equity in established brands and developing profitable products (Morein 1975), companies are motivated to affect the image of the parent brand, which thereby favorably influences sales in other categories. Similarly, as detailed in Chapter 1, transmediation

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<sup>6</sup> Brand extensions are called line extensions when they are in the same product category as the parent brand, and they are termed category extensions when they are in a different category than the parent brand (Braig and Tybout, 2005)

reduces risk of new content, lowers production costs of new products, and expands the brand (Aarseth 2006; Alpert and Jacobs 2004; Jenkins 2006; Lemke 2004).

The parallel between extension and transmediation concepts has also been acknowledged by academic studies. Sood and Dreze (2006) define movie sequels, a form of transmediation, as brand extensions and studies consumer evaluations of these extensions. Likewise, Askwith (2007) describes the expanded and multi-platform concept of modern television text as “extensions” that create several entry points for audience engagement. Although all of the touchpoints Askwith mentions can be considered as promotional extension strategies, not all possess transmedial qualities. In other words, all transmediation is an extension, but not vice versa. Long (2007) relies on the criterion of “distinctive and valuable contribution” (Jenkins 2006) to evaluate the transmedial qualities of an extension — that is, its contribution to the overarching story and the world created.

### **Consumer Evaluations of Brand Extensions**

Led by Aaker and Keller’s (1990) study, the field’s interest in consumers’ evaluations of brand extensions has been consistent. As the research stream has matured, the emphasis has shifted from examining individual extensions to studying the effect of each additional extension on the image of the parent brand (John, Loken, and Joiner 1998; Millberg, Park, and McCarthy 1997) and on the future extendability of the brand (Boush and Loken 1991; Keller and Aaker 1992; as cited in Meyvis and Janiszewski 2004, 346).

A fundamental role of brand extension research has been to assess the attractiveness and/or success of a brand extension opportunity. Given the high risk and low success rate of brand extensions, the potential determinants of brand extension success — e.g., their success

factors — have emerged as an important focus of research inquiry (e.g., Bottomley and Doyle 1996; Dacin and Smith 1994; Swaminathan, Fox, and Reddy 2001). Although many variables and concepts have been recognized as drivers of extension success, this short review only includes the ones that are heavily cited and more relevant for the purposes of this study.

*Similarity/Fit.* Fit, agreed to be a very central success factor, is the similarity between the two involved product classes in the formation of brand extension evaluations (Aaker and Keller 1990). It has been conceptualized as the extension's perceived similarity to the parent brand primarily on dimensions such as the product category and/or attributes (e.g., benefits, image; Broniarczyk and Alba 1994; Keller 2002; Park, et al. 1991). Before Aaker and Keller's (1990) study, fit was considered as a success factor as a measure of similarity (Fry 1967; Neuhaus and Taylor 1972) or consistency (Tauber 1988).

Aaker and Keller (1990) develop an operational definition for the concept and identify the bases for similarity and consistency between the brand and its extension. In so doing, they develop a means to measure the role of fit in consumers' assessment of brand extensions.

Although product pairs can be perceived to fit in various ways, Aaker and Keller (1990) identify three bases of fit between two product categories: complement, substitute, and transfer. The first fit measure, COMPLEMENT, indicates the extent to which consumers view two product classes as complements. Products are considered complements if both are consumed jointly to satisfy some particular need (Henderson and Quandt 1980). The second fit measure, SUBSTITUTE, is the extent to which consumers view two product classes as substitutes. Substitute products tend to have a common application and use context, such that one product can replace the other in usage and satisfy the same needs. The other fit measure, TRANSFER, pertains not to how consumers view the relationships in product usage, but to how consumers view relationships in

product manufacturing. Specifically, TRANSFER reflects the perceived ability of any firm operating in the first product class to make a product in the second product class. Aaker and Keller (1990) find that the attitude toward the extension is more positive when there is a perception of fit between the two product classes along one of the three dimensions of fit and when the extension is not regarded as too easy to make. In general, following Aaker and Keller (1990), the extension studies are consistent in finding that the higher the perceived fit of the extension with its parent brand, the more positive is the extension evaluation and the greater is the gain from introducing the new product as a brand extension, rather than under a new brand name (Keller 2002; Loken and John 1993). Thus, extensions with lower levels of fit are thought to have lower likelihood of succeeding in the marketplace.

After the direct relation between fit and extension success was established, scholars became interested in identifying the variables that moderate or mediate the relation between fit and extension assessments. Park et al. (1991) point out to product type as a moderator and show that “prestige” brands are more successful at introducing far extensions than “functional” brands, provided that the positioning of the extension corresponds to that used in marketing the core brand. Keller and Aaker (1992), in their follow-up study, acknowledge that the perceived credibility of the company as a factor, in addition to fit, appears to mediate the effects of sequentially introduced extensions. The authors observe that high-quality brands engender more favorable evaluations for dissimilar extensions than do core brands of average quality. Likewise, Broniarczyk and Alba (1994) consider the role of brand associations and report more favorable evaluations of dissimilar extensions for which brand associations (e.g., reliability) are relevant than for similar extensions for which the associations are irrelevant.



Brand breadth — or the range or variability among product types offered by a parent brand — is introduced as another factor that enhances perceptions of fit between the core brand and the extension (Boush and Loken 1991; Meyvis and Janiszewski 2004). The category of *Star Trek* products would be extremely narrow if the only product type were movies, but would be extremely broad if it also included cars and dishwashers. Brand breadth appears to be a result of perceptions about the typicality of brand extension. As more products are added to the brand in the form of extensions, people's beliefs about what is typical for the category of *Star Trek* products is expected to be revised. Boush and Loken (1991) observe greater perceived similarity for far extensions offered by broad versus narrow core brands. Knowledge about an earlier successful extension for a core brand has also been shown to enhance perceptions of the fit of the subsequent extension (Keller and Aaker 1992), as has a consumer's ability to retrieve relevant brand associations from memory (Dawar 1996).

The concept of fit is deemed to be very central to the discussion of consumer evaluations of brand extensions. The importance of the fit concept to the brand extension assessments is supported by several theoretical perspectives such as cognitive consistency (Heider 1958; Osgood and Tannenbaum 1955), stimulus generalization (Bierley, McSweeney, and Vannieuwkerk 1985; McSweeney and Bierley 1984), affect transfer (Wright 1975), and categorization theory (Cohen and Basu 1987; Fiske 1982; Fiske and Pavelchak 1986; Sujan 1985).

Categorization theory, for instance, conceptualizes the brand as a category in memory (e.g., Aaker and Keller 1990; Boush and Loken 1991). Customers divide the products around them into categories to process their environment more efficiently (Rosch and Mervis 1975; Sujan and Dekleva 1987). According to this framework, if a brand extension (new instance) is

identified as belonging to the core brand (previously identified category), the attitude associated with the old category can be transferred to the new one. Several studies apply categorization theory and find that brand extension evaluations are moderated by the perceived similarity between the parent-brand category in memory and the extension category (Gurhan-Canli and Maheshwaran 1998; Keller and Aaker 1992). In other words, extensions in similar categories (e.g., line extensions) are expected to be rated higher than extensions in dissimilar categories (e.g., category extensions). The opposite of the categorization perspective would be “computational” (Brooks 1978), “analytical” (Cohen 1982), or “piecemeal” (Fiske 1982) processing. Then, the attitude toward the extension is computed by consumers from specific attributes of the extension rather than those of the category.

Categorization theory also helps identify some variables that impact the success of the extension, one of which is brand affect<sup>7</sup>. General affect can be transferred from one object to another (Gilovich 1981; Read 1983). Relevant to the study of extension assessments is the way in which the affect associated with the parent brand generalizes to the brand extension. An affect-transfer process is invoked to describe how consumers evaluate brand extensions (Broniarczyk and Alba 1994). When perceived similarity is high, extensions are assimilated with the parent brand and affect is transferred from the parent brand to the extension. Consumers who are exposed to a brand in the context of a brand extension may use the affect it appears to elicit as an indication of their feelings toward both the brand itself and the extension, and in turn, their liking for them (Schwarz and Clore 1996; Wyer, Clore and Isbell 1999). Yeung and Wyer (2005), for example, conduct three studies to examine the influence of brand-elicited affect on

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<sup>7</sup> The use of fictitious brands in some studies prevented scholars to acknowledge the role of this variable to the fullest.

consumers' evaluations of brand extensions. Their results reveal that when a brand spontaneously elicits affective reactions, consumers appear to form an initial impression of the brand's new extension based on these reactions. The affect that they experience for other reasons and attribute to the brand can influence this impression as well. Their later evaluations of the extension are then based on that impression, regardless of the similarity between the extension and the core brand. Yeung and Wyer's (2005) results contrast with evidence that affect influences brand extension evaluations through its mediating impact on perceptions of core-extension similarity.

*Number of Extensions.* Following Aaker and Keller's footsteps, many brand extension studies focus on brands with a single extension or do not acknowledge the impact of multiple brand extensions on consumer evaluations (Boush and Loken 1991; Bridges 1990; Herr, Farquar, and Fazio 1990; Park et al.1991). Aaker and Keller's (1990) seminal piece on consumer evaluations of brands includes 20 brand extensions from six well-known brand names. Although one brand name is used with multiple product categories in the experiments, these were designed so that each brand extension was evaluated independently by the subjects. Although the real-life cases on the topic generally include more than one extension, the effects of multiple extensions have been overlooked in the early stages of brand extension literature.

In their second paper on the topic, Keller and Aaker (1992) study the effects of sequential introduction of brand extensions and compare the extension evaluations for single and sequential extensions. The authors seek to identify factors affecting evaluations of proposed extensions from a core brand that has or has not been already extended into other product categories. The studies on the sequential introduction of extensions have mostly been interested in questions like: How do consumers evaluate a proposed extension for a brand that has already been extended into

other product categories? How does knowledge about the core brand and any previous extensions, and the perceptions about the fit between those products and the proposed extension, affect extension evaluations? Can the introduction of a brand extension increase the likelihood of acceptance of subsequent brand extensions? (e.g., Keller and Aaker 1992)

Keller and Aaker (1992) identify the moderating effect of three variables: the original quality of the core brand, the number of intervening extensions, and the relative similarity between the intervening and proposed new extension categories. To distinguish between past and prospective extensions, they call the extension that will be evaluated “the proposed extension” and the one that has already been introduced the “intervening extension.” Their findings indicate that the effects of intervening extensions on evaluations of a proposed extension depend on the success or failure of the intervening extensions in relation to the original quality of the core brand. A successful intervening extension increases evaluations of an average quality core brand, but an unsuccessful intervening extension does not affect evaluations of the core brand. The relative similarity of intervening extensions has little differential impact but multiple intervening extensions have some different effects than a single intervening extension.

In Keller and Aaker (1992), the number of intervening extensions was limited to two. Yet, the interest in multiple extensions calls for a follow-up question on the number of extensions and the effects of extending a brand into a wide array of product categories. However, the existing studies offer mixed findings in terms of the effect of broad brands (e.g., brands offering a portfolio of diverse products) on the assessment of brand extensions. Whereas some argue that a broad set of extensions will create more diffuse associations and weaken the image of the parent brand (e.g., Keller and Aaker 1992; Loken and John 1993), others state it will

increase the range of categories suitable for future extensions (Bousch and Loken 1991; Dacin and Smith 1994).

The substantial interest in consumer evaluations of brand extensions has produced much research and several special issues in the *International Journal of Research in Marketing* and the *Journal of Marketing Research*. To organize this big literature, several scholars performed secondary analyses of the results either by performing replication studies on seminal pieces (Bottomley and Holden 2001) or by identifying the relative importance of the success factors (Volckner and Sattler 2006). Bottomley and Holden (2001) investigate the empirical generalizability of the results of Aaker and Keller's (1990) seminal piece. Motivated by the different results reported by various replications on Aaker and Keller's study, the authors perform a secondary analysis with a comprehensive data set from the original study and seven replications conducted around the world. Aaker and Keller's model hypothesizes that brand extension evaluations are based on the quality of the original brand, the fit between the parent and extension categories, and the interaction of the two. The results of this secondary analysis reveal that the level of contribution of each of these components varies by brand and culture.

Seeking to organize the literature on consumer assessment of brand evaluations and to provide an overview of success factors, Volchner and Sattler (2006) try to understand the relative importance of the determinants of extension success. The analysis considers the direct relationship between success factors and extension success, moderating factors, and the structural relationships among all. Volchner and Sattler's study is the first attempt to investigate success factors holistically and simultaneously. Taking into account the possibility that some success factors might constitute dependent variables in other relations, the authors apply a structural equation analysis to test several conceptual models of the determinants of success.

Considering brand extensions within a comprehensive nomological net, their study reveals that the relative importance of success factors or the incremental influence of each factor on the performance of extension product varies. Their results confirm the concept of fit as the most important driver of brand extension success. Reviewing their study, it is clear that the success factors included in this chapter almost cover the ones that have been mentioned in the structural equation. Studies pertaining to retailer acceptance and marketing support have been omitted from this analysis as they are not relevant to the scope of this study.

### **The Narrative View of Brands**

The narrative view of the brand, as opposed to the “cognitive and structural enterprise” (Sherry 2005; 40), is comparably a recent topic of study for marketing scholars (Brown 2005; Brown et al. 2003; Holt 2004; Sherry 2005). “Marketing mytopheia” (Sherry 2005, 44) — or the idea of creating and perpetuating deep brand meaning through narrative — is both a strategic branding concept and a communication tool and focuses on the identification and creation of narratives to tell the stories of brands. As Stern (199, 68) indicates, since we are all familiar with the stories and storytelling, which is considered a “cultural staple and universally engaged by all communities,” the term narrative and story “appears to be so easily mastered as hardly to seem a problematic region” (Miller 1990, 66).

A story is primarily an ordering — “a cohesive and logical sequence of events that demonstrate the change in the state of a subject” (Vincent 2002, 58). Stories are important resources for brands as they communicate values and essence of brands in a way that everyone can understand. For example, when the ugly duckling becomes a beautiful swan and is finally

accepted into the flock of swans, Hans Christian Andersen “succeeds in showing that heritage is more important than environment in shaping our personalities” (Fog et al., 2005, 34).

Story is an overarching concept used in the branding context to refer to the literary forms that help get the message across through its elements. Storytelling in branding entails the use of various literary forms, such as beat, narratives, legends, and myths. The beat, also called an event, a phrase, an episode, a scene, an anecdote, a statement, or a chapter, is the smallest part of a story that retains the essence of the story itself (Vincent 2002). In the marketing context, every outdoor advertisement is a stand-alone beat that communicates a cause and effect. In the *Absolut* Vodka ads, the set-up initiates the question of: What if the Absolut bottle was set in Rome? The effect: it would be a small *Vespa* bike. Story, as a linear sequence of events and characters’ reactions to those events, is the continuation or collection of beats (Vincent 2002). In a story, multiple beats are used to increase the dramatic tension and then resolve it. Fog et al.(2005) identifies four elements of a story: message, conflict, characters, and plot. The stories are structured so that the tension is resolved at the end and the audience is left with no unanswered questions.

Although story and narrative are by and large used interchangeably, narrative is a story with a point of view, message, or a theme (Vincent 2002, 59)<sup>8</sup>. Marketing scholars prefer the term “narrative” as marketing communications seeks to convey a point of view that differentiates the company’s brand from the competition and try to persuade the consumer. One story could have multiple narratives depending on the voice recounting it. *Rashomon*, Kurasowa’s famous movie, illustrates how one story of a murder in the forest could be told from four different perspectives of four witnesses. That means four different narratives.

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<sup>8</sup> Vincent (2002, 58) states that narrative is the tool of the marketer; story is the tool of the reporter.

Several marketing scholars identify the role of myth as a way of creating brand equity (Holt 2004; Mark and Pearson 2001; Vincent 2002). Vincent (2002) and Holt (2005) describe the brands that leverage myths to establish brand meaning and brand equity. Brand mythology uses narratives to create emotions and convey a worldview, a set of sacred beliefs that transcend functional and epistemic product attributes (Vincent 2002). The mythic storyline — timeless and familiar — underlining the brand is the foundation of the strength, muscle, permanence, and strong consumer connection of these brands. Holt (2005) argues that the iconic brands get their power not only from the emotional contexts provided by the mythic brand narratives, but also from their potential to resolve cultural contradictions people feel between their own lives and society's prevailing ideology.

Advertising also plays an important role in the development and sustenance of a brand's narrative — be it myth or any other story form. Ads and commercials have been early marketing communication tools that create and communicate myths and other narratives in constructing competitively advantageous brand images (Boller and Olson 1991; Johar, Holbrook, and Stern 2001; Leiss, Kline, and Jhally 1986; Randazzo 1993), facilitating the self-brand connections (Escalas 1997) and providing templates for consumers' lives (Hirschman 1988; Stern 1995). McCracken and Pollay (1981) compare advertising to myth and Sherry (1987) defines advertising as a form of meta communication for myth and ritual. The role of narratives in this context is considered within the persuasion framework (Grayson 1997).

Boller and Olson (1991), on the other hand, discuss the way narratives change how advertisements are created and brand meaning is communicated. Earlier information processing and advertising response models assume that ads contain an argumentative form where “ads are treated as the purveyors of objective brand meanings that contain structured systems of attribute



—benefit logic designed to convince audiences of the validity of specific brand claims” (Boller and Olson 1991, 172). Ads in a narrative form, on the other hand, contain the plotline of a story and portray experiential meaning (meanings about the self-relevant consequences associated with brand use) by telling stories about one or more character’s experiences with the advertised brand. In these stories, narratives are generally interacting with or consuming the advertised brand (Boller and Olson 1991). The authors find the ways viewers process the ad characters and their empathy with these characters determine consumers’ responses to narrative ads.

Before its prominent role was discussed in the branding literature, myth was also of interest to consumer behavior scholars (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989; Hirschman 1987; Hirschman 2000; Levy 1981; Rook 1985; Sherry 1987; Stern 1995; Thompson 2004). Myths are considered to exert a significance influence on the stories consumers tell and the meanings they ascribe to their experiences (Arnould, Price, and Tierney 1998; Levy 1981; Stern 1995). Levy’s seminal work (1981) on consumer myths draws from Levi-Strauss’s structuralist study to analyze the binary oppositions in consumer stories to that reflect a universal meta-language acted out in everyday culture. In the context of consumption, Levy (1981) defines myths as “stories in consumer protocols that use a socio-cultural vocabulary” (60). In a later study, Stern (1995) unpacks consumer myths via a structural analysis of consumption texts using Frye’s taxonomy. This taxonomy classifies myth narratives into four great categories associated with nature’s seasons and the human life cycle: comedy/spring (birth), romance/summer (growth/gestation), tragedy/autumn (maturity), and irony/winter (death). Stern (1995) develops a taxonomy of mythic patterns in consumer text and traces the way that those patterns are used to convey product benefits and values in ads.

*Consumer Narratives of Brands.* The narrative view of the brand can be explored from multiple narrators; that is, from the perspective of marketers or consumers. Acknowledging the interconnectedness of these perspectives, Sherry (2005) describes branding as a holistic combination of marketers' intentions, consumers' interpretations, and numerous socio-cultural networks' associations, a co-creation and co-production of stakeholders from start to finish. Consumers' narratives of the brands are important to address as well as producers' creation of the brand narrative. Consumers' interpretations of the brand may not have been intended or anticipated by the marketer but they must be thoroughly understood, if not embraced. Technological developments and digital possibilities have increased consumers' abilities and opportunities to exchange stories with the producers of the brands (Fog et al.2005). Thus, consumers became an important and active part of brand stories. Establishing a dialogue with the consumers and incorporating their perspectives into the brand stories help marketers develop more powerful brands that resonate with consumers.

Marketers and consumer behavior scholars have analyzed the consumer narratives of brands (to explore diverse consumer behavior phenomena) among such cohorts as Harley Davidson bikers (Schouten and McAlexander 1995); Star Trek fans (Kozinets 2001); Salomon snowboarders (Cova and Cova 2002); Apple computer users (Schau and Muniz 2002); Volkswagen Beetle and Star Wars (Brown et al. 2003). Consumer narratives of these brands were studied for what they do for individual consumers (Penaloza and Venkatesh 2006) and how symbolic meanings are created and shared among brands (e.g., Harley riders; McSchouten and Alexander 1995; Muniz and O'Guinn 2001) or consumption communities (e.g., sky diving; Celsi et. al. 1993; Mountain Men; Belk and Costa 1998; Star Trek fans; Kozinets 2001).

Using consumer narratives that pertain to Volkswagen Beetle and Star Wars Episode I, for example, Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry (2003) acknowledge the brand narrative as one of the themes of retro brands, defined as the revision and re-launch of long-abandoned brands (Franklin 2002, Mitchell 1999, Wansink 1997). The authors identify allegory as one of the elements of retro brands. Brand allegories are essentially symbolic stories, narratives or extended metaphors. Allegories convey didactic messages that invoke and then offer solutions for consumer states of moral conflict. The brand is “regarded as an allegory, suffused with aura and touched by paradox that lives in the oral tradition of interpretive communities to the extent that the brand remains relevant to the consumers’ core cultural concerns” (Sherry 2005, 44).

Luedicke and Giesler (2008) emphasize that consumers’ brand narratives are interrelated and socially constructed within a particular social environment. This idea is very similar to the concept of intertextuality (Kristeva 1969) — the interconnectedness of texts — that sets up the conceptual basis for the transmedia storytelling framework. The authors develop the concept of brand narratology that seeks to elicit, examine, and synthesize the contents, compositions, and contexts of consumers’ brand narratives. Using concepts of Genette (1988) and Stanzel (1984), the authors perform a brand narratological analysis that consists of the analysis of consumer brand narratives and the synthesis of a meta brand narrative map. Luedicke and Giesler’s (2008) study is an important step that acknowledges that consumers’ narratives of a brand do not stand alone but in complex relation with other narratives.

*Brands as Products of Multiple Narratives.* Recent studies acknowledge that brands are complex systems (Berthon et al. 2007; Diamond et al. 2009; Holt 2004; Sherry 2005) that are developed and sustained by a multitude of constituencies and variety of narratives (Berthon et al. 2006, Diamond et al. 2009). In recent publications, scholars have introduced several new brand

concepts to address this complex nature of contemporary brands and branding practices. Berthon and colleagues (2007), for example, develop the concept of “brand manifold” to explicate the dynamic nature of the brand meanings. Similarly, Diamond et al., (2009) adopt a holistic approach and introduce the concept of “brand gestalt” — the interplay of component parts constituting a whole greater than their sum — to explore the meaning creation processes enacted by the various adherents of the brand. Vincent (2002) also hints at the necessary holistic approach to study contemporary brands where brand narratives are told through many channels, “some of them much more intimate and experiential than the traditional 30-second broadcast spot” (165).

Brand narratives of complex and powerful brands are created and communicated via “multiple sources authoring multiple narrative representations in multiple venues” (Diamond et al. 2009, 130). The holistic approach to the brand assists in identifying and studying various creators, representations, forms, and venues as possible and also their interactions. Via this multifaceted approach, Diamond et al. (2009) analyze the multiple brand narratives and identify multiple narrative resources that are accommodated by the American Girl brand: the culture at large, the founder’s brand creation myth, the company’s stewards, adult women, and the girls who represent the brand’s primary target market and core franchise. Thus, the “gestalt” of the American Girl brand is established via narratives of material environments (the retail store, the café, the theater), consumers (adult women, girls), and marketer (dolls, books, cards). The authors encompass these multiple perspectives and the connections among these narratives to apprehend the American Girl brand meanings in its “gestalt.” The textual narratives are communicated via printed books or conversation cards at the tables in the American Girl Café or are enacted from scripts, as in the musical revue that can be experienced at the American Girl

Place Theater or the American Girl movies. The textural narratives, on the other hand, are embedded in the material culture of the enterprise (merchandising and merchandise) and are recovered in reverie and (re)telling as consumers interact with product and components of the retail environment. Diamond et al. (2009) make it very clear how brand stories are delivered via multiple narratives and through various media:

If brands come to life through stories, this brand is animated, grows and gains vigor through the multimedia chronicling of tales that are woven into the lives of its users and its large population of its engaged fans. As we show constellations of meaning from these sources have different foci and, in many ways distinct from one another; yet all are easily accommodated by the brand. A broad focus capable of encompassing these multiple perspectives and the connections among them is critical to apprehending the American Girl gestalt. (122)

Narrative view of brands as studied in marketing and consumer behavior. Extending the mainstream understanding of brands as a collection of abstract associations, the narrative view focuses on the stories of brands. Although it is comparably a recent perspective on branding, this view has helped scholars to explore and explain the complex and emotionally resonant brands that drive the contemporary marketplace and shape consumption practices. Yet, these two literatures on the narrative view of brands and brand extensions are not speaking to each other. Particularly addressing two issues at the intersection of transmedia storytelling, brand extensions and the narrative view of brands can help broaden and advance the way we study brands.

## Evaluation of Brand Extension Literature

In the field of marketing, brand extension is a topic that receives substantial attention for its relevancy to the contemporary market problems and also for its strategic implications. Yet, there are several assumptions and limitations of this comprehensive literature, especially when analyzed in light of the transmediation framework. The existing conceptualizations of brand extensions do fall short of explaining and conceptualizing transmedia consumption as consumption of brand extensions.

*Web of narrative brand extensions.* To date, brand extension studies have also assumed that the brand is a collective of associations (Keller 1993), which is defined simply as an attribute or benefit that differentiates a brand from competing brands (MacInnis and Nakamoto 1990). For example, the *Apple iPhone* is associated with user friendliness, but this association is not strongly associated with other cell phone brands or with the product class as a whole. Marketers invest heavily in establishing and reinforcing these associations for enhancing brand equity and setting a platform for successful possible entry into another product class (Broniarczyk and Alba 1994; Park et al., 1994). To the extent that these brand associations are linked to important benefits customers seek through purchase, they can influence extension success (Myers and Alpert 1968). This assumption about brands establishes the backbone of the extension literature and influences the choice of variables, theoretical frameworks, and conceptualizations of problems. Holt (2004) calls this the axiom of branding, where the brand is considered as a set of abstract associations as “mind-share branding.” According to Holt (2004), mind-share branding dates back to the 1950s and to the unique selling proposition that each product must tirelessly communicate a single distinctive benefit to its consumers. In this axiom a successful brand is supposed to offer a consistent expression of associations. Holt (2004, 16) asserts:

Brand strategy, in the mind-share model, begins with identifying the brand's distinctive constellation of these abstract concepts in the consumer's mind.

Managers must ensure that this brand essence is consistently evoked in every activity that carries the brand mark and remains consistent over time. Experts encourage managers to act as stewards of the brand's timeless identity.

However, in the context of transmedia consumption, the understanding of brands as collections of associations and brands extending to other brands via transfer of these associations does not help much. To illuminate our understanding of the transmedia consumption as consumption of extensions, there needs to be a framework that considers brands as collections of narratives. How would we conceptualize brand extensions when a brand is developed and sustained through narratives rather than the associations? What is the narrative view of brand extensions? The existing literature on extensions — with all of its vocabulary — does not provide answers to these questions — which are central to understating transmedia consumption experiences.

*Extensions as web of relations.* The existing brand extension literature focuses on the parent brand/extension dyad. Both in category and line extension frameworks, the connection between the parent brand and the single extension is the only relation of interest. Although there have been studies on multiple extensions and the synergistic effects of multiple extensions in close temporal proximity (Shine et al. 2007), it is generally assumed that extensions stand alone with no connection to other extensions — possible or existing. When a parent brand (e.g.,  $P_1$ ) introduces an extension (e.g.,  $E_1$ ), the equity and associations of the parent brand ( $P_1$ ) is transferred to the extension ( $E_1$ ). Depending on the success or failure of the extension ( $E_1$ ), the equity of the parent brand changes ( $P_2$ ) — in a more positive or negative way. The subsequent

extension for the same brand starts with this updated equity ( $P_2$ ) of the parent brand. And the process is repeated for each future extension of the same parent brand. In so doing, the parent brand is considered as the “hub” of equity and brand associations. The existence of the prior extensions and their potential impact on the prospective extensions are only acknowledged through their impact on the equity of the parent brand. This process can be illustrated as in Figure 4.

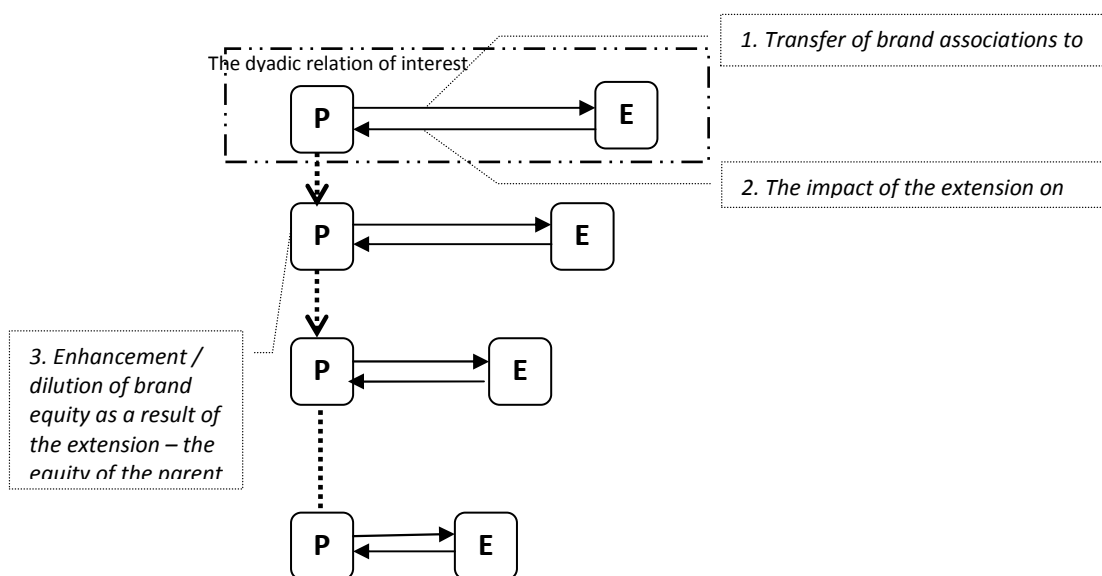


Figure 4: The existing conceptualization of parent brand — extension relation

In contrast, transmedia storytelling, as a conceptual framework, helps us to think about extensions in a bigger web of relations. Long (2007) illustrates the transmedia narratives as shown in the Figure 2 where all the narratives in each media are somehow linked to each other. Using Long’s (2007) graph (Figure 2), it can be suggested that transmedia extensions are collections of category and line extensions where extensions are not only related to the parent brand, but to each other as well. The extant brand extension studies in marketing that conceptualize brand extensions in a dyadic relation (between the parent brand and the extension)



fall short of explaining such an interwoven structure of relations. In this interwoven web of extensions, it is difficult to identify and isolate the parent brand. Either the parent brand does not exist or there might be multiple hubs that act a parent brand in terms of providing associations and leveraging equity. Also, the existing variables developed in this stream of research, like fit, similarity, or brand strength, are all conceptualized and operationalized based on the focal role of the parent brand and also its relation with the extension(s). If the parent brand cannot be identified and extensions are considered in a bigger web of relations with each other, it becomes problematic to use the existing conceptualizations of variables like fit, similarity, or brand strength to understand transmedia consumption practices as consumption of extensions.

Although lacking a satisfactory answer to these questions, Sood and Dreze (2006) point out to the particularity of extension in some product categories where the existing knowledge of similarity might not hold. Examining brand sequels as brand extensions of experiential goods, they challenge the empirically validated finding about the positive correlation between similarity and favorable consumer assessment of extensions in traditional product contexts. They discover that dissimilar extensions are rated higher than similar extensions. According to the authors, consumers may prefer that experiential attributes such as the storyline of the sequel include different genres from the original because people do not want to see the parent movie again in the sequel. This study might lend some support to the discussion above.

Now that I have reviewed that establishes the foundations from which to study transmedia consumption, the next chapter will re-state the research questions that guide this study, and also the methods used to respond to those research questions.

## **CHAPTER 4 METHOD**

This research aims to explore, analyze, and understand consumers' transmedia consumption practices as social phenomena, and as experienced by consumers. My research approach is qualitative and uses the *Lost* franchise as a context to explicate the migratory practices of the *Lost* consumers across media, and the ways they make sense of a *Lost* universe that is stretched across a multitude of media platforms. The chapter begins with restating the research questions that guide this dissertation. Next, I will explain my empirical context, *Lost*, as the transmedia franchise. After I detail my data collection methods, I will conclude the chapter with a section that elucidates my data analysis processes.

### **Research Questions**

This study is guided by the research questions: How do consumers consume and co-create consumption experiences? What constitutes transmedia consumption experiences? How and why do consumers move across media?

### **THE EMPIRICAL CONTEXT: *LOST***

I explore transmedia consumption practices as realized in the empirical context of *Lost*, a popular television series that premiered on ABC between September 2004 and May 2010. The series was created by J.J. Abrams and written by Carlton Cuse, Damon Lindelof, and team of writers. *Lost* is about the lives of the plane crash survivors on a mysterious island in Pacific

Ocean. The show was “pitched” to reflect the basic premise and “conceptualized” as the fictional version of *Survivor*, a popular reality show (Askwith 2007, 117).

*Lost* applies a distinctive narrative formula where each episode details a main character, whose story is revealed with flashbacks and flash forwards during the episode. The mysteries of the island — the monsters killing people, the re-appearance of dead people, the inhabitants of the island who call themselves “Others,” or the research institution “Dharma Initiative” that is based on the island — are woven into the bigger narrative. With multiple storylines, nonlinear progressions of events, and gaps in the television text, *Lost* is labeled as a “complex narrative.” In fact, Mittell (2005, as cited in Askwith 2007, 117) distinguish *Lost* as one of the most complex (and as such, potentially one of the most satisfying) narratives ever featured on broadcast television. According to Mittell (ibid.) “the genius of *Lost* is that its mysteries are fractal; at every scale—from the macro to the micro—the series delivers a constant payload of confusion.”

*Lost* attracts millions of viewers across the globe, appealing to ordinary viewers who only engage with the TV show, as well as to devoted fans who stretch their engagement across several media platforms. The show offers different levels of narrative complexities for its viewers. The “optional complexity” attracts a wide audience where each audience member finds his or her own show in the series (Askwith 2007, 118). The *Lost* narrative provides its viewers with different stories to focus on — such as love relations, science and religion-related issues, or mysteries — and allows each viewer to perpetually engage with the show at any desired level of participation, ranging from the passive TV viewer who sits back and enjoys the program, to the highly active fandom participant.

## The Lost Text and its Extensions

In addition to the television show, which is the most common and “prominent point of entry” into the *Lost* world, *Lost*’s official expanded text includes approximately 50 items that extend across a wide range of media platforms, branded merchandise, and activities (Askwith 2007, 122). The *Lost* narrative has expanded to multiple platforms such as Wikipedia entries (*LostWiki*), ARGs (e.g., *The Lost Experience*, *Find 815*, *The Dharma Recruitment Project* ), novels (e.g., *Bad Twin*), video games (*Via Domus*), podcasts, comic books, websites (ABC official *Lost* website), branded products from the virtual world (e.g., Apollo chocolate bars), and various merchandise. DVDs, iTunes, and streaming videos from ABC’s website provide additional touchpoints to access the franchise, assist viewers in catching up with the show and enable fans to review and microscopically analyze the show for deeper insights and clues. These “expanded-access” forms do not provide new content (Askwith 2007, 56). Nevertheless, expanded-access materials are important tools for the producers as these touchpoints facilitate and sustain deep and prolonged engagement with the show. As *Publish* magazine observes:

Being platform-agnostic allows *Lost* to compete for your time no matter where you are or what you're doing. ABC knows you can't maintain a business with just television. Or just video. You need to be everywhere. In being everywhere, you let your product, whatever it may be, have a social life (2006)

To guide viewers through the complex multiple storylines woven into each other, the show’s producers “re-organize, streamline, and pre-process *Lost*’s most important narrative threads, making them accessible even to viewers who have not been watching since the show began” (Askwith 2007, 124). The repackaged content includes web episode guides, summaries, character descriptions, histories, clip shows, recap specials, and video clips. In addition to the

five-minute summaries at the beginning of each show, *Lost* producers have developed more sophisticated versions of these recaps that include montages, several short clips from previous episodes, and summaries of important details pertaining to a particular narrative thread. These efforts help devoted viewers further engage with the stories and extend their pleasure, and also assist newcomers in catching up with the important details of a storyline or an episode. However, repackaged content would not be considered transmedial extensions as they do not provide new storylines or new narratives to the viewers.

The textual extensions of the basic *Lost* text are targeted more to the devoted viewers. Producers of the series have a difficult task in attracting the largest possible audience for the TV show on one hand, and providing rich and deeper experiences to the devoted viewers on the other. In such a scenario, the TV show is used as the primary medium where the basics of the *Lost* world are provided, whereas textual extensions across other media platforms expand this basic and central TV text. The “mobisodes” (episodes released for mobile phone users) and licensed novels are examples of narrative extensions, which provide new material that contributes to the larger *Lost* story. Therefore, these mobisodes could be considered as transmedia storytelling. The *Lost* producers have invested more in diegetic types of textual extensions rather than narrative ones. (In the literary field, diegetic is used to refer to the elements of the fictional world. Similarly, Askwith (2007) uses “diegetic extensions” to describe transmedia extensions that originate in the fictional universe, but are available to explore in the actual world.) The Oceanic Airlines Website, *Bad Twins* novel, and *The Lost Experience* (TLE) ARG (Alternate Reality Game) are successful transmedial extensions to the *Lost* text that seek to deepen the immersive pleasure of the show. Oceanic 815 is the flight name and number of the crashed plane that was flying from Sydney to Los Angeles. A glimpse of the Oceanic Airlines

website (oceanic-air.com) during one of the final episodes of the first season leads viewers to a website that includes some announcements about delayed and cancelled flights, where several links on the page lead to error messages. The success of this diegetic website among the *Lost* fans has encouraged producers and writers to develop future similar trials. Askwith explains the diegetic effort behind the website (130):

Undeterred, viewers quickly discovered unusual comments and hints hidden in the site's source code, and uncovered additional URLs and passwords which revealed a series of Easter eggs and provocative clues hidden in the various pages of the site, many of which seemed to directly support or refute several of the most popular theories being circulated in the show's online communities.

ARGs (Alternative Reality Games) are interactive narratives that are distributed across various platforms where the story may be affected by participants' ideas or actions. Popular ARGs of *Lost* are *The Dharma Recruitment Project*, *Find 815*, and *The Lost Experience*. ARGs use the real world as its platform where players are led between the fictional narrative and the real world to make sense of the story. Thompson (2009) explains the interactive nature of ARGs:

“Alternate Reality Games are, essentially, a big collaborative story. Pieces of the story can be found online or off. They may be websites or email or video clips (maybe on YouTube or television) or audio clips (possibly as podcasts or voicemail messages). You might find them at payphones or libraries or city monuments or, even, cemeteries. The possibilities are endless.”

The *Lost* text extensively uses intertextual references from the outside literature and other popular culture titles. *Lost* fans employ the smallest details, from the meaning of character names

to the book names shown on a library shelf in one of the episodes, to scrutinize the narrative and deepen their understanding of the *Lost* world. Viewers catch “significant references to more than forty different works of literature, including significant works of fiction (e.g. *Alice in Wonderland*, *Watership Down*), mythology (e.g. the *Bible*, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*), and science (e.g., *A Brief History of Time*)” (Askwith 2007, 137). The show leads devoted *Lost* viewers to refer to and acquire knowledge in disciplines ranging from quantum physics, to mythology, to religious studies. “Almost anything counts as a clue” (Jenkins 1995, 56) and in that case “all information becomes relevant” (Askwith 2007, 136). The efforts of the viewers are very significant in tracing the references placed by the producers, and may include taking the lead and co-creating some gaps in the story, and communicating and disseminating these gaps within the fan communities.

DVD Bonus materials, official *Lost* Podcasts, and the official magazine provide extra information to the show. Some of the information offered on the show’s official website, like biographical information about the show’s cast, their interests, and *The Lost Chronicle* (the official companion book) provide means for *Lost* viewers to prolong their engagement and their pleasure with the show. The branded products (e.g., apparel, drinkware, posters, and calendars), collectible merchandise (e.g., action figures, trading cards), experiential activities (board games, mobile games, and video games) and themed activities (e.g., puzzles) display the range and extent of engagement the viewers have or desire to have with the show.

In addition to the engagement with extensions created by the producers, millions of fans also experience the show via other activities such as building up fan websites, organizing conventions, and creating fan fiction. For the viewers who find pleasure in scrutinizing the mysteries of the *Lost* world, there are abundant resources that they can turn to debate, discuss

critique, learn, teach, or further engage with the show. *Lost* fan communities (e.g., *Losties* and *Lostaways*) take the initiative to develop and sustain elaborate online activities. *Lostpedia* and *LostWiki* are the products of these ambitious efforts. Some of these communities also act as "collective intelligence communities" where fans "leverage the combined expertise of their members" (Jenkins 2006, 27). Jenkins (2006, 54) further explains the role of these communities:

What holds the collective intelligence together is not the possession of knowledge — which is relatively static, but the social process of acquiring knowledge — which is dynamic and participatory, continually testing and reaffirming the group's social ties.

### ***Lost* as Transmedia Narrative.**

My decision to study *Lost* as the empirical context to explore transmedia consumption is based on several reasons. First, I want to use an empirical context that has been widely acknowledged as a transmedia narrative. *Lost* has been acknowledged as such by media practitioners and academic scholars. *Lost* represents a new generation of convergence-era television texts: complex narratives that encourage viewers to experience the show across different platforms programs and in a microscopic fashion that requires repeat viewing and careful analysis (Askwith 2007). Similarly, Hill (2006, as cited in Askwith 2007, 121) explains *Lost* as the best available example of a complex, engaging, multiplatform text:

*Lost* episodes are famously laden with arcana to pore over, deconstruct and even construct in the first place, such is the collective-imagination-run-wild of the show's fans. For instance, [one fan site] supplies transcripts of the eerie "whispers;" character names are opportunities for anagrams ('Ethan Rom' = 'Other



Man'); there are numbers, codes everywhere; hieroglyphics; mystical allusions; references to philosophy (Locke, Rousseau); [and] the constant casual appearance of literary works, and so on.

Second, the recent scholarly work on *Lost* as a transmedia storytelling case reveals the interdisciplinary nature of the transmediation phenomenon. In his dissertation positioned in the communications field, Askwith (2007) employs *Lost* as the empirical context through which to re-conceptualize TV as an engagement medium. Studying *Lost* to explore transmedia consumption experiences helps build on Askwith's findings from a communication perspective and broadens the bigger picture of scholarship pertaining to transmedia storytelling, by offering additional findings on transmedia consumption experiences.

Third, *Lost* has a very wide audience base that can reveal the differences across transmedia consumption practices for varying levels of consumer engagement. The show is targeted for a wide non-homogenous audience, from the less to the more engaged viewer (Askwith 2007, 118). The storyline of *Lost* also offers different levels of narrative complexities to its more engaged fans. Thus, *Lost* as the empirical context might help access different types of consumers based on their type and intensity of media use, engagement levels, or their varying levels of association with the franchise. Last but not least, *Lost* is often described as a more "interactive" form of television, due to the unusual nature of the relationship between the show's creative team (i.e., writers and producers) and the audience (Askwith 2007, 119). This interactive format also affects the participation, co-creativity, and entrepreneurship of the *Lost* fans.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

### Data Collection

My data is composed of textual data from netnography and in-depth interviews. Both methods produce verbal accounts of transmedia consumption experiences and therefore enable me to focus on consumers' processes of reading and co-creating texts, as well as on the shared discourses among consumers that comprise the subjective construction of the *Lost* experience. *Netnography*. I employ netnography as one of the major data collection methods in this study. Netnography (Kozinets 2002) is ethnography adapted to the study of online communities. Kozinets (2010, 1) describes netnography as follows: "Nethnography [is] a form of ethnographic research adapted to include the Internet's influence on contemporary social worlds." As a marketing research technique, netnography uses the information publicly available in online forums to identify and understand the symbolism, meanings and consumption patterns of these online communities. Applying netnographic procedures, I focus on the on-line blogs, discussion forums, and fan communities of *Lost* to identify some of the transmedia consumption practices and discourses that *Lost* viewers employ and portray. My preliminary research revealed a rich source of online information on the transmedia consumption experiences of *Lost* viewers on two particular web sites: "*Lostpedia.com*" and "*Lostblog.net*." There are many other websites, blogs, and discussion forums that engage *Lost* viewers in terms of their visiting, reading, participation, and contribution. The official website on ABC.com, as well as Dark UFO, Doc Jensen on Entertainment Weekly ( ew.com), Erika Elson's blog at Longlivelocke.com, and *Lost* Easter Eggs at blogspot.com are an incomplete list of high-traffic *Lost* websites.

*Lostpedia* is an online database that includes user-created information about the show. It is a Wiki page created by fans and devoted to *Lost*. As the name of the site suggests, the website is like an encyclopedia of *Lost*. The cryptic storyline of the series leads and encourages viewers to switch between media and try to uncover the holes and the mysteries in the narrative. The site creates a public space for *Lost* viewers where they share their experiences, challenge what they learn from each other, debate their theories, and communicate their stories about the *Lost* world. This website hosts blogs, twitter links, forums, interviews, episode summaries, cultural references, transcripts, and many other types of user-generated content. *Lostpedia* hosts two versions of blogs: the *Lostpedia* blog and the community blogs. The *Lostpedia* blog is written by the operators of the website to communicate some of the major issues in the *Lost* world and their own perspectives and ideas on the show. The community blog is a space provided for the fans and their ideas and theories. As of June 12<sup>th</sup> 2010, *Lostpedia* had 6,929 articles posted on the site and 44,146 threads, 2,551,770 posts, 42,268 members (5,459 of them are active members) in the discussion forums. But, more importantly, *Lostpedia* serves to facilitate a very detailed and accessible explanation of cross-media practices. The site hosts forums on several *Lost* extensions such as ARGs, Book Clubs, and video games. The comprehensive online conversations on *Lost* extensions at *Lostpedia* make the website appealing to different types of *Lost* consumers who have different levels of engagement with the show.

In addition, the *Lostblog* is an unofficial site of *Lost* that publishes user blogs. The blogs contain rich information regarding the theories produced by fans and their engagement with different media platforms. Some of the blogs also contain videos posted by members to support their point of view. The blogs on this website date back to December 2005. One of the reasons I chose the *Lostblog* website is the high response rate to each blog from the members. Each blog

facilitates a long discussion. So, although not all of the media extensions of *Lost* are mentioned on this website and the content is not as extensive as in *Lostpedia*, consumers' uses of various media to support their theories are more visible.

I created an online account to allow me to participate in both of these websites in January 2009. Although the content of these websites is publicly available and can be accessed as RSS<sup>9</sup> feed by non-members, only members are allowed to comment on the forum discussions and blog posts. As an aca-fan (academic fan)/participant-observer, I read the blogs and forums on both of these websites, yet my structured archiving started immediately after my proposal defense in August 2009. I archived the consumer-to-consumer conversations of *Lost* consumers on these particular websites. My netnographic data is composed of all the blog entries and associated comments on *Lostblog* since the website was established in December 2005. My means of data collection from these sites is as follows: I have an RSS feed of the blogs and comments (websites typically establish separate RSS feeds for the content and the comments section) delivered to my Google Reader. I then copy and paste these blogs and comments to the Word files. For *Lostpedia* forums, I use a simple program developed by an associate to convert the .html extensions to .doc [Word] formatted documents. I simply copy and paste the address link of the forums on this program to convert the html files to textual files. I archive these files in their .doc format. On the other hand, I use Google reader to keep the RSS feeds from the *Lostblog*.

During the hiatus of the *Lost* series between May 2009 and January 2010, there was not much viewer traffic on either website; nor was there much traffic on most of the other *Lost*-related websites, forums, or blogs until mid-December 2009. The decreased traffic on the

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<sup>9</sup> RSS (Rich Site Summary) is a format for delivering regularly changing web content. Many news-related sites, weblogs and other online publishers syndicate their content as an RSS Feed to whoever wants it. (<http://www.whatisrss.com/>)

websites helped me catch up with my netnographic data collection for the older episodes and other extensions (e.g. ARGs, novels, video games). Around mid-December 2009, both websites started to experience acceleration in context from the fans, due to the approaching premiere of Season 6 in January 2010. I collected most of my netnographic data for the previous five seasons before the final season (Season 6) started. I still receive an email alert when a new post is added to these older episode forums. Yet none of these later posts or comments blogs initiated further discussion among the members until the show ended on May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Rather, they mostly include one or more viewer's questions or emotions about the episode. But, I also have added these sporadic late posts and comments to my data archive. After the final episode of the show on May 24<sup>th</sup> 2010, most of the forums on *Lostpedia* started to receive attention from the members. To include these new comments in my data set, I have gone over all the forums where I previously collected data and copied and pasted the new posts in my data set. Although *Lostpedia* forums experienced some traffic after the final episode, the blogging basically stopped on the *Lostblog* website right after the final episode aired. Yet, the very last blog on this website still sporadically receives some comments. Please refer to Table 1 for the details of the netnographic data.

The *Lostpedia* website includes several topics ranging from theories and discussions about the TV episodes, spoilers, and comments on the novels, ARG (alternative reality games), and video games. The episode discussions on the *Lostpedia* forum began in the third season of the show. Granted, the exclusion of first and second season discussions could be regarded as problematic with respect to being useful in exploring the process of becoming a transmedia consumer or learning the specifics of the genre. However, the data from the other netnographic

site, *Lostblog*, begins earlier than the forums of *Lostpedia*, and compensates for the absence of two first seasons from the *Lostpedia* part of the data.

My netnographic data from both of these sites help me identify issues and meanings that are shared and that resonate among a broader group of the *Lost* fans. The high traffic on both of these netnographic sites has enabled me to access several different types of *Lost* viewers and their diverse practices regarding the consumption of the show. Some of the discussion threads are used solely for the “during episode” posts. In these threads, viewers reveal their excitements, frustrations, and other emotions about the live episode as it unfolds in real-time television. The detailed accounts and posts from the participants reveal various consumption practices related to the *Lost* franchise. For example, viewers use several aids like flash, videos, or charts to lay out their point of view that cannot be explicated via face-to-face interviews.

Consequently, netnography elicits more hidden practices related to textual extensions and the ways they are experienced that may not arise in the face-to-face interviews. Particularly for the consumption of transmedia narratives that are often intertextually linked with other texts or other online links, a data collection technique that is capable of accessing all these media practices is very important. Thus, my netnographic data lends itself more to the exploration of the reasons and patterns of the migratory practices across media. In summary, the number of posts and the diversity of consumers on these websites provide very rich data.

Table 3 summarizes the number of threads and posts in each forum for both *Lostpedia* and *Lostblog* netnographic sites. *Lostpedia* website hosts the forums under subheadings like: Main Forum, ARG, and Via Domus, Re-Watch, and so on. Each subheading includes multiple folders. For example, the Main Forum subheading is composed of “Episode Discussions,”

“Older Episodes,” and “Book Club” folders. My data entails all forums except non-English ones, spoiler discussions, and off-topic discussions.

As with any ethnographic research, there are ethical guidelines when collecting data through online sources. As suggested by Kozinets (2002), when monitoring these blogs and collecting my data, I (1) fully disclosed my presence, affiliations and intentions to online community members; (2) ensured confidentiality and anonymity to informants; (3) sought and incorporated feedback from members of the online bloggers at the web site; and (4) contacted and obtained informed consent to use postings that are directly quoted in the research. The AoIR (Association of Internet Research) ethics working committee (2002) also provides a very detailed account of the ethical guidelines for Internet Research in their publicly available document, “Ethical Decision-Making and Internet research: Recommendations from the AoIR Ethics Working Committee.”<sup>10</sup>

*In-depth interviews.* Besides netnography, I conducted face-to-face (when possible) or online in-depth interviews with *Lost* fans. In-depth interviews are used to capture the emic, lived transmedia consumption experiences of *Lost* viewers. The interviews focused on viewers’ consumption experiences of *Lost*. I started the interviews with a few screening questions that probed informants for any type of familiarity and engagement with the show. Second, I probed their consumption practices during, before, and after the weekly airing of the show on TV, and also their cross-media consumption practices. The structured interview guide (McCracken 1988) includes questions regarding informants’ routines and rituals about the consumption of the show, their engagement with the particular extensions, their perceived relationship with the show, whether they consider themselves as fans, and their co-creation activities. And, with my

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<sup>10</sup> [www.aoir.org/reports/ethics.pdf](http://www.aoir.org/reports/ethics.pdf)

informants, I review the list of existing *Lost* extensions to probe their familiarity, use, frequency of use, or possession of those extensions. I try to understand not only the engagement with or preference for some extensions, but also strove to link these preferences to their profile and activity level as a fan. I also asked some general media consumption questions on their media use, media preferences, time allocation, or their subjective experiences. Therefore, in my interviews I sought to understand both how *Lost* fans experience various transmedia extensions and also how they migrate between these media platforms. (Please refer to Appendix B for the in-depth interview guide).

I recruited my informants for the in-depth interviews in two stages. During the first stage, I mostly relied on snowball sampling and my close networks to find informants. I also recruited informants that I met at some of the *Lost* parties I have attended over the two years. During this first stage, I interviewed twelve informants who engage with the *Lost* franchise in varying levels. As indicated in the previous section, *Lost* viewers range from passive TV users to very involved mystery solvers who scrutinize any possible resource to extend their engagement and pleasure with the show. Yet, this first informant set did not provide enough detailed information on how *Lost* viewers engage with all the possible media platforms related to *Lost*. In short, there was not enough diversity among my initial informant set to cover all the possible media use and consumption practices possible in the *Lost* universe that is very prominent in my netnographic data. Simply put, the consumption practices of the informants in this first set were limited to consumption of the TV show (the primary text for *Lost*) and some limited non-participant online activities. Although I recruited informants without any pre-screening criteria other than the fact that they must be engaged with the *Lost* franchise, I ended up having no informants in my initial



interview set that engage in the variety of media to consume *Lost* such as games, ARGs (Alternative Reality Games), books, fan fiction and other activities.

As my objective was to uncover the differences of transmedia consumption practices among informants with different levels of cross-media practices and co-creation activities, I decided to collect additional data, seeking informants who are engaged with the *Lost* franchise across several media such as blogs, games, podcasts, and so on in addition to watching the program. My netnographic data help me to explore these possible consumption practices in the *Lost* universe. Guided by those insights, I started my second stage of interviews. I recruited informants from online resources with additional pre-screening criteria that probe for the variety of media used for *Lost*. I posted an ad on Facebook *Lost* fan pages, Twitter lists gathered for *Lost*, Craig's List (Chicago and Champaign), local news portals that feature an entertainment section, various *Lostpedia* forums, and a university e-weekly newsletter to access these consumers. (See Appendix C for the copy of this ad). The popularity of the show is a big advantage in terms of recruiting informants. Although I was unable to pay to my informants for the interviews, many people volunteered their time and shared their stories of consuming *Lost*. Informants find participating in the study and have the opportunity to talk about their *Lost* experiences fun and cathartic (McCracken 1988). For this second stage of in-depth interviews, I recruited three informants from Twitter, fourteen informants from my university's e-weekly newsletter, and two informants from the online local news portal. Overall, I conducted thirty one in-depth interviews. Please see Appendix D for detailed information about informants.

## **Data Analysis**

*Data Set.* My data set consists of verbatim transcriptions of the in-depth interviews and the textual netnographic data collected and saved from blogs. I assigned all of my informants pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. After transcription, my interviews produced 632 pages of single-spaced text. As of Sept 2010, my twenty-two months of netnography produced approximately 6000+ pages single-spaced of data. Although the majority of this netnographic data is textual (that is, composed of words), it also entails my own field notes, cultural material such as blog postings, forum discussions that include screen shots, video excerpts, and photos provided by the blog members. This section highlights how the textual and non-textual data analysis has been conducted in this dissertation.

*Data Analysis with CAQDAS.* For my data analysis, I used Atlas.ti 6.0, computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). Atlas.ti is a software program that helps with the handling of large bodies of qualitative textual, graphical, audio, and video data. There are other very powerful qualitative software analysis packages on the market such as NVivo8, MAXqda2, HypeRESEARCH 2.8, QDA Miner3.1 and such. Almost all of these packages are capable of performing all the necessary data analysis activities needed for a qualitative project; e.g., handling distinct types of data, handling large amounts of data, and so on. I chose Atlas.ti 6.0 for two reasons. The first reason is for convenience. Most of these CAQDAS packages are very high-priced, as they are mostly targeted for the use of market research firms. Atlas.ti offers a student copy price which is significantly lower than the original product price. And, unlike other brands' versions, the student copy of Atlas.ti is the same product as the full-priced version. The only disadvantage is that the student copy cannot be updated. Second, I chose Atlas.ti 6.0

because of its capability to handle various forms of data text, graphics, pdf files, html files, and also sound files.

*Analytic Data Analysis Processes.* As one of the first stages of data analysis, I uploaded my textual and non-textual data (both interview transcriptions and textual netnographic data) into Atlas.ti 6.0. Atlas.ti 6.0 can display and process four different media types: text, graphic, audio, and data. My textual data was saved as Microsoft Office Word documents. Once my interviews were transcribed and my netnographic data were converted into Word documents, I uploaded both of them on the Atlas.ti program. My non-textual data is composed of some screen shots and photos that are in JPG form and some video excerpts in WAV form. These forms are highly compatible with Atlas.ti 6.0.

After uploading the data, my data analysis proceeded with the close reading of the data. A close reading is performed to initiate the coding or naming procedure. Coding, in its very simple terms, is putting a label on a set of data (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Lincoln and Guba 1985). Codes serve as handles for specific occurrences in the data that cannot be found with simple text-based search techniques (Atlas.ti Version 5). Coding attempts to conceptualize and develop abstract meanings for the observations or incidents in the data documents by articulating what informants perceive is happening or is being expressed in those incidents (Miles and Huberman 1994). They are typically short pieces of text referencing other pieces of text. I identified these reoccurrences in the data set and labeled each of these codes with a name that represents my interpretation of what is happening in that incident. For example, consuming transmedia narratives and learning to be a transmedia consumer are two important categories inherent in my research questions that guided my coding procedure.

The data analysis procedure on CAQDAS is very similar to that of the manual qualitative data analysis. Kozinets (2010, p 127) describes the parallelism between manual and software qualitative data analysis: “The CAQDAS interprets data like any other form of qualitative analysis, by identifying and coding recurrent themes, concepts, ideas, processes, contexts, or other relevant constructs.” Compared to manual techniques, CAQDAS provides some more control over the coding process with data that are large in size. For example, the Code Manager in Atlas.ti 6.0 provides a display of the entire list codes created during analysis.

Another activity in tandem with coding is comparing (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Strauss and Corbin 1990). Comparing also helps creating conceptual categories. Comparing — or the constant comparison method as Glaser and Strauss (1967) call it — assists in developing a common name or category for multiple observations or incidents in the data. The process of looking at what is similar and different in the data incidents, and of examining the categories I created, helped me clarify what I perceive as uniform and stable patterns in the data. My coding and comparing activities are accompanied by taking notes, which is also known as memoing about my reflections on the data (Kozinets 2002). The rationale for coding, comparing, and noting in CAQDAS is similar to the manual coding, yet all of them can simultaneously be performed on the main Atlas editor.

Kozinets (2010) explicates two different analytic processes for analyzing netnographic data — analytic coding and hermeneutic interpretation. According to Kozinets, skilled netnographers use both of these methods. Throughout my analysis, I also used both of these analytic procedures. Aligned with them, I adopt the approach of using inductive logic to analyze my data, focusing on how individual observations would allow me to make more general statements about the data. Kozinets (2010, 118) explains netnographic data analysis:

... an inductive approach to the analysis of qualitative data. Analysis means the detailed examination of a whole by breaking in into its constituent parts and comparing them in different ways. Generally speaking, data analysis encompasses the entire process of turning the collected products of netnographic participation and observation...into a finished research representation be it an article, a book, a presentation, or a report.

The objective of my data analysis process is to interpret the findings and build theory that is grounded in data, namely grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). As Spiggle (1994, 497) asserts: “Analytical procedures manipulate data; interpretation makes sense of data through more abstract conceptualizations.” Along these lines, I adopted an iterative process between the data and the theory to develop more abstract and theoretically relevant patterns from the codes I marked. Atlas.ti 6.0 also provides help to group codes and to use them for more abstract, conceptual-level work such as figures, conceptual maps and so on. The program provides features that allowed me to visually connect the selected quotations, codes, and memos into diagrams that graphically outline the relations between the codes. This graphical depiction of the data provides a bird’s eye view and assists in facilitating theory development ideas.

Furthermore, I simultaneously analyzed both my interview and netnographic data on Atlas.ti. As I mention above, after my interviews were transcribed and my netnographic data were converted into Word documents, both data sets were ready to be analyzed. I employed similar data analysis procedures both for interview and netnographic data. Atlas.ti allows the user to access different types of documents separately. For example, if I want to access interview of a particular informant, I can upload the transcription of that interview and only work on that

interview. The same procedure is salient across different forums of netnographic data. I made use of those features when I wanted to go to a specific forum or interview.

Although I analyzed both the interview and netnographic data at once, they each contributed to slightly different aspects of my final interpretation. Specifically, the interview data was helpful to display the story of informants from the very beginning of their *Lost* consumption to the end. In-depth interviews also helped me see the practices of each consumer, the range of media they use, their escalating or de-escalating engagement with the franchise, and the variety of co-creation practices they adopt. Along these lines, the interview data provided details of *Lost* consumers on a case-by case basis. Netnographic data, on the other hand, helped me capture and gauge a diverse set of consumption practices, and discern how *Lost* consumers use media in detail. For a research method, netnography lends itself more to the study of media as it allows collecting data on Internet. My netnographic data also provided me in-depth information about how consumers collaborate in online communities, how they lead each other across various platforms, and how they engage in multitasking during their transmedia consumption. My netnographic data entailed hyperlinks of the websites, links, videos, and art pieces participants used during their transmedia consumption. Additionally, netnographic data is more detailed with respect to consumers' live reactions to the show. I had the chance to access consumers' emotions while they are engaging with transmedia and at the same time writing on the forums. In contrast, interview data is more reflective, as interviews typically probe informants about their TMC experiences after these consumption acts have concluded.

*Issues with the Data Set.* Kozinets (2010) points to two data analysis issues particular to netnography regardless of the use of CAQDAS or manual techniques. Specifically, the textuality and disembodiment of netnographic data (so that the text cannot be unequivocally associated

with particular people) is considered to be problematic (Kozinets 2010, 130). He poses three questions (suggestions) to understand how these particular aspects of netnography affect the study at hand and can be managed: 1) Are particular aspects of identity important to your particular research study? 2) Does the online community reveal aspect of their identities? 3) Is this an online community where people customarily reveal other aspects of their identities? With respect to the first question, in my netnographic sites of *Lostpedia* and *Lostblog*, the members mostly use avatar pictures and nicknames (generally creatively derived from the *Lost* story). Furthermore, I conducted face-to-face and online interviews to gather more data on the aspects of identity that were not revealed on my netnographic sites. The second question above pertains to the artificiality and the falsification in netnographic research data. Although these concerns should be kept in mind during the data analysis process, a netnography entails a holistic approach to the data that will help ameliorate these concerns. As Kozinets (2010) suggests, not only reading an online post in a forum, but also reading that post and the writer of that post in the broader context of the forum tend to reduce worry among netnographers about any claims pertaining to falsification.

Similarly, there are data analysis issues pertaining to the in-depth interviews. During the interviews, it is not easy to explore the nature of transmedial migration. Informants express the websites or forums they visit, the verbal accounts without any hyperlinks or website navigation makes it difficult to explore transmedial migration in the in-depth interviews. I addressed this issue by looking each informant's interview on a case basis and combining the responses to multiple questions to fully explore the nature of transmedial migration.

The succeeding chapter will detail the findings of my study pertaining to the consumption and co-creation transmedia consumption experiences

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CO-CREATION AND CONSUMPTION OF TMC EXPERIENCES**

Transmedia storytelling not only affects how stories are told, but also changes the production and consumption processes of narratives as it deeply transforms textualities, production logics, and cultural consumption practices. Keenly interested in this transformation, this dissertation emphasizes the discussion of subjects (i.e., consumers) and practices (i.e., consumption practices) in relation to the transmediated story (i.e., transmedia narrative, text). This chapter will respond to the research questions: “What constitutes transmedia consumption (TMC) experiences?” and “How do consumers consume and co-create transmedia consumption experiences?”

As reiterated in the earlier chapters, throughout this dissertation, ‘consumer’ and ‘consumption’ are used in the context of participatory culture and denote a broader set of roles than merely acquiring, depleting, or using economic goods. This study regards all consumers as active in their consumption practices as they exercise their agency and creativity in production of meanings, identities, communities, rituals, and even material culture (Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar 2007). Consumption in “participatory culture” (Jenkins 2006) entails altering the meaning of brands, refining products, appropriating new uses to products, creating new consumer experiences, circulating these new brand meanings, or sharing them with other consumers. Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar (2007, p 5) explain this new perspective on consumer and consumption:

“This perspective rejects an atomistic, and overly individualistic, information processor view of people as individuals who are to some extent sealed off and separated from their experiential worlds, in short, assumptions underlying the type



of research that still dominates the text books, journal articles, and LISREL models of our discipline.”

This chapter unfolds as follows: The first part presents a typology of transmedia narrative consumption patterns using *Lost* as a context. I first introduce the typology and describe both of its dimensions. Before I explain each cell on the typology, I will discuss the nature — the qualities and characteristics — of this typology and elaborate on the social, cultural, and technological factors that shape it. The chapter concludes with the section that identifies how the role of the transmedia narrative changes for different cells of the typology.

### **What Constitutes Transmedia Consumption (TMC) Experiences?**

As reiterated at several parts of my dissertation, transmedia storytelling is the dispersal of a story across media platforms (Jenkins 2006). On the discourse level (the way it is talked about by media scholars and practitioners), transmedia consumption is used very loosely to refer to the consumption of media and entertainment text that are dispersed across various platforms (e.g., watching the TV show, reading the novel, playing the video game). Although this general notion captures the idea of combined media consumption, it does not necessarily entail consumers’ entire range of consumption practices while engaging with transmedia narratives. My data reveal that TMC entails diverse and profuse consumption practices and experiences. *Lost* consumers engage with the franchise in diverse ways; they watch, re-watch, play, read the content provided by the producers, write on blogs, discuss with friends, or convince other friends to watch the show. Also, they create artwork, new texts, new stories, new characters, new brands, new content, and new websites (Wikipedia entries, *Lostpedia*). They make use of the social media platforms to communicate, circulate, and share their experiences with other *Lost* consumers.

They gather, archive, annotate, and hunt for information about the plot, characters, or mysteries. They teach, learn, theorize, and collaborate to make sense of the expanded *Lost* universe. They not only buy branded merchandise but also adopt those products for their lives (e.g., creating office spaces with *Lost* merchandise, organizing *Lost* theme parties) and upload the videos and photos of those life moments on, for example, YouTube or Flickr.com. These are only a small set of examples of consumers' practices regarding *Lost* to attest that transmedia consumption (TMC) experiences and practices are broader than just the consumption of media texts dispersed across a multitude of platforms.

### **TYPOLOGY OF TRANSMEDIA CONSUMPTION PRACTICES**

I sought to create a model that would organize and also adequately represent this mass of diverse behaviors and practices of transmedia consumption (TMC). Based on a close and grounded reading of my netnographic and interview data, I developed a typology of transmedia narrative consumption patterns along two dimensions: variety of media consumed and type of co-creation activity. These dimensions are abstracted from the themes that emerge from my data; yet, they also hybridize the prior transmedia research and my research questions. Transmedia storytelling research already acknowledges that consumers use media in various ways and travel from one medium to the other for a richer experience. The first axis pertaining to the variety of media used integrates this dynamics of transmediation, whereas the second axis on the co-creation levels addresses my research question pertaining to the nature of consumers' co-creative TMC experiences and practices.

Although consumer scholars study different types of co-creation activities (Cova and Cova 2009) and also the consumption of narratives (text) within a contained medium (e.g., print advertising texts, Scott 1994), they do not explore the consumption and co-creation practices regarding connected texts that are dispersed across media platforms. No text stands alone and texts always refer back to other texts (Kristeva 1966, Barthes 1972). So, consumption of one text (narrative) is not independent from that of the intertextually connected texts. Along these lines, these two dimensions of TMC experiences and practices synthesize and extend the extant frameworks that explore the consumption of texts (narratives), to study the relation between the text, the reader, and the consumption practice. The typology in Figure 5 displays nine different narrative consumption practices in transmedia consumption (TMC) along these two axes.

<i>Co-creativity</i>	Textual	<b>Grounding</b>	<b>Meshing</b>	<b>Appropriating</b>
	Communal	<b>Recruiting</b>	<b>Relating</b>	<b>Pooling</b>
	Meaning	<b>Anchoring</b>	<b>Extracting</b>	<b>Patching</b>
		Contained	Social Media	Extensive

*Variety of Media Consumption*

Figure 5: Typology of Narrative Consumption Patterns in Transmedia Consumption

## Dimensions of TMC Typology

### *Variety of Media Consumed.*

Honestly though, TLE was AMAZING while playing it, finding clues in website source code before anyone else on the planet, talking to people halfway across the continent to get the codes on glyphs.. It was truly fun. (mac\_ad, *The Lost Experience*, 2010)

I would, you know that morning I would probably start communicating with people, especially with Facebook and Twitter becoming more prominent as the series progressed. Would wake up and start adding little riddles or little messages or little things that would be from the previous episode and would wait and look for other people to sort of take the bait and they would, you know. And that's how I could actually spot fellow Lostians, you know, people who I knew I could have a conversation about. (Juan)

No I don't, I really don't [engage in any other consumption than the television show]. I don't, any other time other than the show is on, I never read blogs, I typically don't spend time writing to people to exchanging ideas. I don't have much interest in external media, like games, videogames stuff, no. I just access the show in the variety of ways. (Dan)

As evident from the above quotes, *Lost* consumers vary with respect to the types and variety of media they consume. Some consumers engage in more concentrated media use, whereas others spread their consumption of *Lost* across multitude of media platforms. Dan's engagement with the *Lost* franchise is limited with his consumption of the television show, Mac\_ad, on the other hand, extends his consumption to ancillary media like ARGs (Alternate

Reality Games). Whereas Juan likes using the Internet and social media as a part of his consumption of *Lost* franchise. In my data, there are three emergent levels of media use in TMC experiences: contained, social media, and extensive.

Contained. The contained media encloses the vital elements of the transmedia universe. There is a central medium for each transmedia storytelling project that is central for consumers' understanding and making sense of the expanded universe in transmedia projects. For example, the contained medium is the movie for *Star Wars* and *Matrix*, the TV show for *Lost* and *24*, and the video game for *Halo*. Contained media is the common starting point and the shared touchpoint where most consumers enter the franchise. Contained media is consumed by the majority of the consumers who are somehow engaged with that franchise and is generally signaled by the producers of the franchise. TMC experiences start with the activities related to the contained medium. (This will be detailed in the 'Anchoring' subtitle in the Typology Section).

Some transmedia scholars call this media platform that entails the fundamental story elements of the transmedia universe with different labels such as primary media (Long 2007), "the Mothership," or "the driving platform" (Gomez 2010). Building on Genette's (1982) explanations about intertextuality and secondary elements, Long (2007) also distinguishes between the primary and secondary medium for transmedia storytelling and states that: "Possible to classify the primary media components of a transmedia franchise (the six *Star Wars* films) as hypotexts and the secondary media components (the books, comics, TV shows and so on) as hypertexts." (p 29). According to Genette's (1982), hypotext is the earlier text that serves as a source for the current text. Any text is hypertext, grafting itself onto a hypotext, an earlier text that it imitates or transforms. Similarly, Fiske (1987) defines the primary text as the individual

program— for example, a TV program or series — that the other related texts make reference to or draw meaning from. Building on Genette’s (1982) explanations about intertextuality and secondary elements, Long (2007) also stresses the important role of the primary text and states that transmedia franchises focus on successful primary elements, subsequently; secondary extensions build on the primary text.

Due to technological convergence and advancements, the primary text — the story/narrative told via the primary medium — can be accessed via several other media platforms. For instance, consumers can access the story of the *Lost* TV show via DVDs, Internet streaming, episode recaps, Wikipedia entries, or podcasts. Although consumers use different media channels in this case, the consumption of these ‘expanded accesses’<sup>11</sup> (e.g., DVD, The Internet, Digital Hubs like iTunes) (Askwith 2007) are considered in the contained column of the typology.

Social Media. The social media column refers to the use of social media platforms and social networking sites consumers engage with regards to transmedia narratives. Social media can take many forms like blogs, Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, Google Buzz, Foursquare, Gowalla, deviantArt, Blogger, Slide Share, and so on. Although there are studies that classify the types<sup>12</sup> of social media (e.g., Kaplan and Haenlein 2010), relying on my data, for the data-driven typology I develop, I do not distinguish between the consumption of different types of social

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<sup>11</sup>“Expanded access touchpoints do not provide new or original show related content, but instead provide additional points of access to the show’s core content (i.e., full length episodes) through a range of distribution platforms and channels. Expanded access touchpoints empower media consumers to access content whenever and wherever they want, through whatever device or medium is available.” ( Askwith 2007, 56)

<sup>12</sup> Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) categorized social media into six different categories: collaborative projects, blogs and microblogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual communities. Technologies include: blogs, picture-sharing, vlogs, wall-postings, email, instant messaging, music-sharing, crowdsourcing, and voice over IP.

media for TMC. The social media column in the typology encompasses any technologies or social platforms used for social interaction while engaging with transmedia narratives.

Extensive. The extensive media column refers to the consumption of the secondary platforms through which the transmedia narrative is dispersed by the producers of the franchise, as well as any other popular culture title that is intertextually connected to the franchise. *Lost* producers tell the *Lost* story across several media platforms: three tie-in novels (*Endangered Species*, *Signs of Life*, and *Secrets of Identity*), a meta-fictional book (*Bad Twin*), three ARGs (*The Lost Experience*, *Sharma Initiative*, and *Find 815*), mobisodes (*Lost Video Diaries*, *Lost: Missing Pieces*), video games (*Via Domus*), and podcasts. In addition to these secondary platforms, the *Lost* story includes references to other existing popular culture titles (e.g., Star War movies or some literary works of Stephan King or Kurt Vonnegut). These literary works or popular titles are mentioned in the script, shown in the show in a scene on the television show, or sometimes hinted at by the producer during interviews or podcasts. These stories are intertextually-linked to the story of the *Lost* world. The practices in the extensive column entail the consumption of both of these secondary media components and intertextually linked literary titles.

*Types of Consumer Co-creation.* The second axis of the typology pertains to the levels of consumers' co-creation practices in the TMC context. Co-creation, as defined in Chapter 2, is used to describe consumers' active role in producing meaning, value, and experiences. Fournier (2008) defines co-creation as the processes by which consumers create brand and product meanings in order to make sense of and align consumer goods and services within their lives. Participatory culture regards fans as active and culturally productive (Jenkins 1992, Fiske 1992); as 'skilled or competent in different modes of production and consumption; active in their

interactions with texts and in their production of new texts; and *communal* in that they construct different communities based on their links to the programs they like' (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998, 127, emphasis in the original). The co-creation axis entails these active and culturally productive consumption practices and experiences on three different levels: meaning, community, and textual.

Meaning Co-Creation. Consumers' interpretation of media is an intrinsically social and interactive process where they act not as passive consumers of media persuasion, but rather as active producers of meaning (Iser 1978, Hall 1980, Scott 1994). This active and productive understanding of consumer-media relationships (Fiske and Hartley 1978; Hall 1980; Turner 1992, Hirschman and Thompson 1997) challenges the passive model that portrays the media consumer as a mere receptor of producer-derived messages, or as a consumer exploited by an ideological system (Croteau and Hoynes 1997). Fiske (1987, 286) defends this active perspective against the passive model: "Despite the power of [media] ideology to reproduce itself in its subjects...the people still manage to make their own meanings and to construct their own culture within, and often against, that which the industry provides them."

*Lost* consumers bring to their consuming of mass media vehicles "a wide range of unique personal experiences and wealth of socially derived knowledge grounded in their occupation, gender, age, social class, race, and ethnicity" (Hirschman and Thompson 1997, 23). They actively construct meaning of the television shows, alternative reality games, novels, video games and so on from their own vantage points. This pro-active and productive nature of the process blurs the boundary between production and consumption of media, as consumers produce a personalized set of meanings during their consumption acts.



Communal Co-Creation. TMC experiences are created and co-created individually and also communally in consumer networks. (e.g., *Lostpedia*, fan fiction, local *Lost* communities, collective re-watch plans, *Lost* parties, Twitter hashtags, and Twitter trending topics, weekly episode watching rituals). *Lost* consumers also actively build and develop their *Lost* brand communities — “a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships” among consumers of *Lost* (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001, 412). *Lost* consumers recruit (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001), relate (Alexander, Schouten, and Koenig 2002), produce (Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar 2007), appropriate (Schau and Muniz 2004), maintain, manage, and invest in these communities they co-create. *Lost* consumers pool their knowledge and their experience in these communities and work together to unravel some of the mysteries of the show and to enrich their experiences. As Levy (1997) explains, these knowledge communities empower the consumers to know and to do things that they cannot do alone, by harnessing their individual expertise toward shared goals and objectives. Levy (1997, 20) asserts: “no one knows everything, everyone knows something, and all knowledge resides in the humanity.”

Textual Co-Creation. One of the co-creation practices is textual productivity. Textual productivity is regarded as one of the well known and widely accepted characteristics of fandom. In addition to the production of meanings, interpretations, communities, and identities, fans also create new and altered cultural texts. Jenkins (1992) describes fans as textual poachers who actively transform the meanings of cultural texts and use them for their own purposes. Textual productivity has also been studied by consumer behavior scholars (Brown 2007, Lanier and Schau 2007, Schau and Muniz 2004) as well as fan studies and media scholars. These new texts — such as fan fiction, slash fiction, fanzines— or other aesthetic products like pictures,

drawings, photos, and videos are often called fan art. *Lost* consumers create artistic new texts and they also engage in textual production while writing blogs, commenting on forums, or extending the *Lost* story in various ways like preparing *Lost*-themed classes, religious services, and food and so on.

Media consumption is always active as creativity is always involved in the complex processes of reading and interpretation, as well as on the production of any media texts. Some *Lost* consumers are only after the whole hedonic aspect of consuming an entertainment or being a viewer for the TV show, player for the video game and the ARG, or reader for the spin-off novel. These consumers actively choose from the media available to them, and are also active in their uses, interpretations, and decoding of the material that they consume. On the other hand, some *Lost* consumers participate in more communally and textually productive consumption pursuits via creation of Wiki sites, writing fan fiction, or creating communities.

The diversity and the variety of the *Lost* consumers' creation of activities are also affected by the activities of the *Lost* producers and story writers. *Lost* producers provide an experiential platform that spans across multiple media, and which consumers can use to develop and further their own experiences (Caru and Cova 2007). *Lost* creates a participatory culture, one 'with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices' (Jenkins et al 2006, 9)

### **Characteristics of TMC Typology**

Before describing the nine transmedia consumption strategies presented in the Figure 5, I would like to discuss some important and defining characteristics that underlie the developed

typology. In short, the typology presented in Figure 5 as a whole is embedded, hierarchical, and dynamic.

*Embedded.* Transmedia consumption (TMC) experiences, similar to transmedia storytelling, are embedded in the convergence culture that denotes the cultural, technological, industrial, and social changes in media and marketscape. Convergence is “an umbrella term that refers to the new textual practices, branding and marketing strategies, industrial arrangements, technological synergies, and audience behaviors enabled and propelled by the emergence of digital media” (Kackman et al 2010, 1). The technology that enables multiple media functions within the same devices (e.g., mobile phones), consumers’ active participation in the consumption and creation of new content ( i.e., the participatory culture), consumers’ migration across media seeking out pieces of information and richer experiences, and the merging of media conglomerates are all examples of convergence culture (Jenkins 2006). The transmedia consumption experiences detailed in the typology are all integral parts of this convergent and participatory culture. As such, any changes in any one of these forces will change the macro context in which the typology is firmly established.

*Hierarchical.* The typology presented above is hierarchical on both the horizontal and vertical axes. That is, the TMC narrative strategies are inclusive from left to right and bottom up. Along these directions, each row and column of narrative consumption strategies include the strategy beneath it. For instance, the social media column entails all of the strategies of the contained column. Similarly, the extensive column entails all the strategies of social media and contained ones. Correspondingly, communal co-creation includes all the meaning co-creation and textual co-creation entails both meaning and communal co-creation. So, all consumers are, at the very least, engaged in meaning co-creation at the contained media level. The ladder nature of the

typology also suggests that engagement with a transmedia narrative is a staged and inclusive process that comprises several layers of media consumption and co-creation practices. In the context of TMC, increasing engagement leads to increasing involvement with different kinds of co-creative consumption across variety of media platforms

*Dynamic.* The narrative consumption strategies that consumers engage are not static. In other words, consumers might start their transmedia experiences in one cell, but might travel across the typology. But due to the hierarchical nature of the typology, the general pattern is from left to right, bottom to top, or diagonally to the right — that is also the direction of increasing engagement in TMC context. In the succeeding sections of this chapter, I will uncover the factors that determine or shape that lead the consumers to different cells of this typology. But, at this point, I like to stress the dynamic nature of the typology and state that the *Lost* consumers might change their positions across the typology.

Yet, the typology presented does not reflect the dynamic nature of transmedia consumption strategies for the cases where the TMC experiences simultaneously unfold as the transmedia franchise unfolds across media platforms. The *Lost* story has been dispersed across multiple media platforms over the six years. My data collection for this project did not start until January 2009 (and all of my in-depth interviews were conducted in the final season of the show), as the fifth season was airing on ABC television. So, by the time I started my data collection, producers have utilized a set of primary and secondary media platforms for storytelling and consumers have established communities and practices around this transmedia franchise. If I had started collecting data from the very start of the show, I would have uncovered a different type of dynamism across the typology. Then, I would have observed how consumers move from one cell to the other since TMC experiences and practices are very much dependent on the production

pace of the producers, and of the pace of the consumers. As this typology is developed on aggregate data of people's six year long experiences, it is consumers' reflections of this dynamism rather than observing it.

### **Factors Shaping the TMC Typology**

My data analysis and interpretation reveal that the transmedia consumption experiences are complex and multilayered. Due to a range of social, cultural, technological, and contextual elements, the TMC has to be studied in relation to these complex contextual relationships. TMC practices and experiences are influenced by four factors that lead consumers to different types of narrative consumption practices: the focal narrative aspect, community involvement, prior fandom experience, and expectation of the producer. I will describe these factors with some quotes in this section and also provide some explanation for these dimension and how they vary for different typology cells.

*Focal Narrative Aspect.* Across the typology, different consumers focus on different parts of the transmedia story. Good transmedia storytelling provides consumers rich and layered stories that they can find compelling story arcs for a variety of focal narrative aspects. Some consumers focus on the mysteries and plots, the characters, the Easter eggs (hidden content intentionally inserted and concealed by the creators<sup>13</sup>), or the rabbit holes (the strategic gaps that are strategically built into the story) in the story.

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<sup>13</sup> With respect to *Lost*, such content may be hidden inside either the episodes themselves, where they range from personal jokes, to foreshadowing or development of a plotline or integrated within the retail DVD interfaces as hidden functions, interface behaviors, and full videos, where Easter eggs have become an expected part of this product industry ([http://Lostpedia.wikia.com/wiki/Easter\\_egg](http://Lostpedia.wikia.com/wiki/Easter_egg))

The part of the story *Lost* consumers are interested also impacts whether they were satisfied with the final episode of the show. Rather than providing answers to the mysteries and questions pending for six years, *Lost* producers chose to have a very emotional final episode that focused on the characters and audience's emotional closure with the characters. *Lost* consumers who focus on the mysteries and all the story arcs were very dissatisfied with the final episode. On the other hand, consumers who are more interested in the characters love the final episode.

It was never about MIB v. Jacob, the Dharma Initiative, that damn four-toed statue or the crazy mom. It was about the characters. It was about their place among people who accepted them for who they were, everything about them. They went through it all together. That was what was so beautiful about the ending. We were all so focused on finding out the mysteries of the Island that we failed to see the relationships that had formed between our beloved characters and how strong their bonds were. I absolutely adored the ending. (theamaria, Episode Discussions, 2010)

I absolutely loved the finale. To me, the final episode made the entire series be about the characters, not about their adventure. The characters were struggling to find their ways in life, and formed an unlikely group of people. With the help of one another and with the help of the island, they saved themselves and they saved each other. They truly found themselves, found happiness, and found goodness. And, as the final scene seemed to add, at the end of the day, the relationships that make us find ourselves and that make us find happiness are the relationships that matter. It was a beautiful end to a beautiful six years. The plot is still open, but that is a good thing ... we all still have something to debate and discuss.

Emotionally and thematically, however, we were given closure. (Dvial, Episode Discussions, 2010)

Besides this satisfied set of consumers, some other *Lost* consumers who are interested in the mysteries posed by the *Lost* story were seeking answers for the long term pending question about mysteries and were very much unsatisfied with the ending. They described their dissatisfaction with the ending as “Epic Fail,” “terribly disappointed,” “Waste of six years,” or “extra fail.” They have listed several of the unanswered questions to display this discomfort.

Sooooo...Are they all dead then? Is that church heaven? I noticed the poly-religious stained glass window in the background so as not to offend anyone's delicate sensibilities, but is that what we're supposed to gather? They're all dead? And where was everyone else? And why didn't Ben come inside? Is he still in purgatory? Oh, and WTF happened to the people on the PLANE? The one that left? Did they go on in the original timeline? Kate was on the plane AND in the church. Lapidus wasn't. Claire was. Miles wasn't. Was the flash sideways, with which we were absolutely inundated throughout the entire last season, simply some sort of allegorical purgatory in which they all lived (or sleep-walked) until they met their "significant other" and merged into some sort of afterlife?....

Terribly disappointed. (Widmoresux, Episode discussions, 05-24-2010)

Lots of reasons [that it was disappointing]. First, with the exception of the cave scenes and the dialogue between Jack and his dad, pretty much the entire episode was just stupid flashbacks. And these flashbacks are just a complete waste of time and a cheap way for the writers to recap the season. Second, we got only a few breadcrumbs of answers. Primarily (if Jack's dad is to be believed), that Jack

and everyone on 815 were dead all along. Third, . . . (gnosis, Episode Discussions, 2010)

*Community Involvement.* The desire and will to engage in a communal consumption of the show varies across its consumers. Some *Lost* consumers want to watch the show alone, and even if they visit online communities, they are not in a communal consumption yet use those resources to enhance their own experiences. There is also a group of consumers who watch the show alone in their home, but use the online forums and communities as a way to share their experiences and emotions during their live consumption of the show. On the other hand, some consumers like the communal consumption via online communities, *Lost* parties, or fan groups. Level and type of community involvement vary across the typology. In the below quote, Gill explains how she is involved with different types and size of communities for her *Lost* consumption. She has her husband that she watches the show with and also her micro offline communities like her in-laws and couple friends. Also, she participates in conversations with online communities like Lostpedia, Doc Jenson, and EasterEggs.com. I will provide more detail on Gill's use of online communities in the typology section. Here I want to cite a quote where she describes different types of offline communities — from micro offline to big online communities — she likes engaging for her *Lost* consumption.

I watch it with my husband. [and] The couple that we first starting watching it with, they are like our best friends. And I don't think that *Lost* was in no small part due to that. That was our reason for getting together once a week and that led to getting together more frequently. And they live in New Orleans now but that is still something we talk about with them. . . .Kinda weird but something you have in common and you as invested in it as



I am that was a huge huge bonding for me and my in-laws. That was how we got close.

That made memories for us... watching that season of *Lost*. (Gena)

*Prior Fandom Experience.* One of the very prominent underlying factors of TMC narrative consumption practices is about consumers' prior experience as a fan. Fan capital — all the necessary skills, knowledge, genre specifications, and consumption strategies consumers learn due to their previous entertainment consumption — play an important role in shaping the TMC experiences and what type of narrative practices consumers adopt or can adopt while consuming transmedia narratives.

The prior fandom experience might seem as the mere driving force among these four factors or the determining factor which TMC practices consumers would adopt. In other words, if you had been a fan of a franchise before, you will most likely be a fan again for other franchises you engage with and thus will be more engaged communally, know what part of the story to focus on, or your expectations of the producers will be determined by this prior experience. Yet, my data suggests that prior fandom experience is not a stronger factor than the other three in determining ones to determine which cell of the typology the consumers would be. Consumers who engage with TMC experiences for one franchise might not necessarily engage with TMC in other franchises. Erwin compares his consumption practices in two different entertainment brands:

E: I guess I would break *Lost* fans into 3 categories, the real die-hard fans ( he says something like zelig) that are like contributing to say *Lost*pedia, the fans like myself that just like keep watching, and then the fan that kinda gave up and may or may not one day catch up on DVD if it's good. I observed myself in that middle class. ....

I: Are there any other shows that you put the extra effort that you are on that the other fan category?

E: Yea, comedies. For 24, for Justified, for The Wire, I am in the *Lost* category.

But for Archer, Fresky Dingo, King of the Hills, I would kinda put myself more in the zelig kinda nerd category....I blogged about them and I contributed to their Wikipedia pages for couple of them.

*Expectation of the Producer.* Consumers' expectations of the producer also impact their TMC experiences and what type of narrative consumption practices they will adopt. Consumers' expectations of the producer vary across the typology. Their expectations of the producers are diverse: to tell a contained story (one coherent story on one media platform), act as the puppet master, provide means of participation, acknowledge the investment of communities in the show, provide a sandbox/playground with sufficient story elements, or to have tolerance and encouragement for a creative space around the franchise. According to Erwin, for example, the producers are puppet masters and they should act so. Erwin, like other consumers with similar expectations, want the author and the producer to be in control and dictate the nature, direction, and the end of the story:

Like the fan fiction, if the fan had in anyways contact with the actual show producers...the idea of fan fiction is cool for stuff like the Bourne Identity. The Bourne series author died, and the fan wrote additional books ...that was cool because the author is not around to dictate the story. In *Lost*, I don't think fan fiction would contribute anything if the producer is still around. They still have a story to tell, I want it's told like that, because it's their [producers'] story they are telling. I would want it to be from the show's producers, because their head I was

trying to get in. So by consuming any additionally forms of *Lost*, I would want it to be from the show's producers, because their head I was trying to get in. So, the characters are not as interesting, the story is not as interesting as itself, what's interesting is where it is going, if consuming the show's media would have helped me understand that, then I would. What is it the whole story. Why was Hurley told that he will be a good number two, why was there a washer dryer in the hatch that is 30 years newer than everything else. I want, I don't want some fans to explain on that, I want people, I want those a\*\*\*\* to actually tell me why, when they were shooting that scene in Hawaii, they said go to the Sears, and get me two brand new front loaded washer dryers and put it right there, I want the camera there, I want the lights there, we are going to shoot this scene with these washers, why, that's what I want to know. I wanna know why they did that. It's their story; it's not some fans story. (Erwin)

In spite of Erwin, some consumers, like spork-girl, are expecting bigger challenges to enjoy the story. They want the producers to integrate enough challenges in the story so that they will have more opportunity to be active and participating consumers. Many of my informants expressed that they think *Lost* is different than many of the other TV shows on the national television because, unlike others, *Lost* do not spoon-feed them.

So this is just a scavenger hunt, right? There's not a story, I assume? Since we're 2 pics in and no one seems to have any idea? Like a cool, subversive thank-you to the fans obsessive enough (or conveniently located) to show up for these things, and for those not conveniently-located, the limited-edition posters? I'm just kind of used to more obscure hoops to jump through for the prizes. Instead of just flat-

out being told where to show up and when, you know? (Spork-girl, ARG 2009  
Viral, 2009)

### **TMC TYPOLOGY: NARRATIVE CONSUMPTION PRACTICES**

Below, I describe each cell in the typology in detail, offering textual excerpts both from my netnographic and in-depth interview data. These nine narrative consumption practices are summarized in Table 2 (Narrative Consumption Practices of Transmedia Consumption Experiences)

#### **Anchoring**

Anchoring explains how consumers start their consumption of the transmedia narratives. This pattern describes and focuses on the act of attaching to a specific point of entry in an expanded universe. Anchoring, as a term, has been used by consumer behavior scholars before in the context of decision heuristics (e.g., Wansink et al., 1998) or in relation to identity politics (Bardhi 2010). Where there are many texts and stories that are intertextually connected to each other, and when this universe entails multiple stories (or an expanded universe<sup>14</sup>), consumers must attach to this world or enter the story from somewhere. Within transmedia consumption experiences, anchoring to the expanded universe is mostly accomplished by entry through the contained media which contains the fundamental elements of the story. My data reveals that *Lost* consumers anchor the transmediated world in three different ways:

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<sup>14</sup> Expanded universe (or sometimes called Extended Universe) is mostly used to denote the secondary extensions of a media franchise. Expanded universe is very much used for Star Wars to describe all the content produced in addition to the six Star Wars movies produced by Lucas.

*Dabblers.* Dabblers exhibit flighting patterns of consumption, as they come and go to the show. They might start watching, take a hiatus, and then come back again. They are fickle in terms of their commitment, loyalties, or affection with the franchise. Their consumption activities entail watching the show via streaming through Hulu or ABC official *Lost* website or on DVD. Dabblers mostly rent or borrow the DVDs as they do not want to financially invest in the show. It is a common practice for dabblers to read the episode recaps from the ABC website or online resources and to not watch some of the episodes of the show. Dabblers like video clips and recap shows that provides a summary of a season or a story arc and are frequent consumers of these types of condensed content.

I actually watched the first three seasons on DVD and then tried to watch season 4 live. I was really busy and kept forgetting the plot from week to week. I finally gave up and watched the season 4 on DVD when it came out. Then, I watched season 5 live and was able to focus a bit more. (*Mousy Scientist, Lostpedia, Main Forum, 2010*)

*Latecomers.* Heidi starts watching the show when the fourth season was airing on television. To catch up with the show, she watched the episodes from rented DVDs or from ABC's website. She says both she and her fiancé caught up with the live viewing of the show at the beginning of the sixth season. Latecomers, like Heidi, start their consumption of the show in between seasons, mostly after the show became popular and started to gain some buzz and publicity. Thus, when latecomers anchor to the show, there is already a substantial group of people around the show, consuming and talking about it.

According to my data, for the *Lost* franchise, latecomers mostly anchor to the show at the end of third season or later. To catch up with the show, they engage in binge consumption where

they watch multiple episodes of the show, one after another. Some of my informants claim it took them only a weekend or two to catch up with the three to four seasons of the show.

Latecomers rent, borrow DVDs or stream the show from the Internet for their binge consumption activities.

The first season I watched it on a DVD. consecutively, watched it in the entire weekend... Yea I watched it through a friend of mine, I was staying in his house in Boston, and we got snowed in, like 40 inches, so just like that, we just pheww, and watched it all the way through. (Erwin)

Once latecomers catch up with the weekly live viewing of the show, they might continue to engage with it on a weekly basis, or to adopt the practices of dabblers. Latecomers get used to a certain pace and style in storytelling when they engage with binge consumption to catch up with the show. And, once they get used to getting answers and having closure on their own pace, it becomes really difficult for them to deal with the story cliffhangers at the end of each weekly episode. Their “reading strategies” (Scott 1994, p 464) do not adjust to the genre specifications of transmedia storytelling. In that case, they do not like watching the show weekly and live on television but once they catch up, they might switch to practices that dabblers employ.

Specifically, they rely strongly on repackaged content (Askwith 2007) such as DVD, streaming, Hulu, Netflix, ABC website, or illegal downloads.

Heidi expresses how her consumption experience while catching up with the show differed from her experience after she caught up. She expresses the difficulty in adjusting to the weekly consumption of the show where she has to wait a week to see what happens with the end-of-episode cliffhangers or some other story that was unfolding. She strongly conveys that she

does not like watching the show weekly on TV after she got used to the convenience of watching back-to-back episodes at her own convenience and getting answers quickly.

H: I think I prefer DVD... yeah....DVD or streaming video ... it's both is fine for me. This season was the first season that I could watch it on TV. But then I realized that I really didn't like watching it on TV. I prefer watching whenever I want. In bed at night or whatever... whenever... now I am watching it from the ABC's website. I do not watch on the day...usually one or couple of days after the Tuesday night. So I watch whenever I can, usually...[The experience] is a lot different. Because the story is too much... Especially for this sixth season, there are a lot of things to consider and that you have to remember. It got really really complicated. It really makes a difference to watch them back to back compared to watching them like a one week delay, one week break. So I like watching them consequently actually....These last two episodes, I waited on purpose to watch them together. I really didn't watch the last week's episode until this week's episode was online. I watched two of them together. I really like watching them together. Episodes back-to-back. My experience before them was so different. Because I watched all the five seasons in a row. And then now I have to wait for a week for each episode. It is kind of pissing me off. You remember all the details and you get more hold of the story. Like you remember because there are so many little details that show up somewhere that you have to remember to make sense of what's going on right now and when you watch them back to back, it really helps for you to remember and really grasp the story. Because you know after a week of break, I kind of forget what happens and I sometimes go back and watch

some old episodes to remember what's going on and to catch up little bit....Especially because I didn't watch the first five seasons on TV so it was really nice that I could watch all of them together and just see all surprising things in each episode without forgetting the story.

Similar to Heidi, most latecomers have difficulty in adjusting to the consumption practices of the weekly show. They do not learn the specifics of the transmedia storytelling where the "reading" of the story (Scott 1994, 462) becomes a very difficult process for them. In that case, they cope by reverting back to the practices they adopted during their catching-up phase. They delay the consumption of couple of live episodes, like Heidi explains, so they can acquire the pleasure they are used to. Heidi also talks about how it was difficult for her to manage all the information and details in the show. Lack of social media or communal practice prevents Heidi from the benefits of the knowledge communities where people help each other to remind and point out to the details. The communal engagement in the forums, discussions, or maybe even a micro community would have helped Heidi to enjoy the weekly consumption of the show.

*Early Committers.* Early committers start engaging with the franchise from the very beginning (or almost very beginning). Their consumption of the show most of the time starts before the show becomes popular in the mainstream media. In the context of the *Lost* franchise, most early committers anchor with the show before or during the third season. Some of my informants start watching from the pilot episode and take pride in their early engagement with the show.

I started watching from season 1. First season first episode. I am probably rare that... most people watch it on DVD. But I watched it from season one on TV.



And then I got two other people into it. Then I started watching it again on DVD.

And I focused on *Lost* (Larry)

Although some early committers might engage in binge consumption to catch up with the show, their consumption after they catch up with the lively airing of the show is characterized by a weekly schedule to which they 'religiously' commit. Early committer informants convey that they like watching the show weekly and mostly through a TiVo. These consumers stagger the show (i.e., start watching it on TiVo 15-20 minutes later than the actual airing time of the episode, to be able to fast forward through the commercials). Furthermore, early committers consume the show mostly within a day or two after its live weekly airing. My informants express how they were very uncomfortable with these delays that are generally due to their busy schedules. Their discomfort of not being able to watch the episode online by and large stems from their dislike of spoilers. When they cannot watch the weekly episode on its regular time, each day they have to put extra effort to avoid the spoilers that might come from the media as well as from their close circle of friends.

I came a little bit late to the show. I was in law school when it came out. And then a friend of mine gave me the first season on DVD as a graduation present. And, I went through that nonstop. And then I watched season 2 also on DVD. From then on, I watched it religiously. ....Probably I watched the first season within a week. And the second season... I was renting those from Family Video so those probably took me three weeks to get through the second season...I think the third season. I would say within a month of my first episode, I probably caught up somewhere in the third season. .... After the third season, I watched it every week ...the debut. The night of it. I .... Once... maybe once or twice, either I DVRed it

or watched it on ABC dot com the next day. I need to watch it alive because I walk around with my hands over my ears because people are talking about it. Cause I don't want to know anything about it. .... And, I am definitely afraid of spoiler for a show like this. So, I have to watch it on broadcast time every time.

(John)

Moreover, re-watching — episodes or complete seasons — is a common activity for the early committers. When so doing, they rely on DVDs or stream the show through Netflix, Hulu, or ABC's official website. Re-watching helps consumers to engage with the show in between episodes or seasons (I will detail this behavior in a later section).

Larry explains his watching and re-watching pattern:

L: So... yes I watched every season on TV and the first three seasons I also watched on DVD. I watched the seasons on TV and when it came out on DVD in the summer I watched it again. I did that. First time I did that was because I liked it. Second time I did that was... I think I was dating someone I got her into it and then we watched them all over together.

I: What about the fourth and the fifth seasons?

L: I have watched on TV. I haven't done the DVDs. Netflix has all of them online. Actually ... I know this is nerdy. You know it didn't start till February this year so I, during winter break; I watched all the last episodes of each season, which is pretty cool. Because they are all on Netflix....Just to get myself ready for the last season. You know 16 shows left. Really excited. So I wanted to be ready. And I wanted to see the clues about where they might be going.

I: Why did you choose the last episodes?

L: The cliffhangers. Each one had like a weird cliffhanger. I didn't have time to watch all of them.

Consumers might adopt several rituals of re-watching practices. Like Larry, some re-watch in between seasons or before each season starts, whereas others engage with weekly re-watching activities like watching the episode right after its live airing once more and more with pause/rewind type of practices to obtain details of the show better. The re-watching practices of the consumers are driven by their ways of coping with the abundance of information and details in *Lost* story as well as their desire to extend or re-live the hedonic aspects of the experience. As Larry says, one of the reasons consumers engage in re-watching is 'to get ready' for the coming seasons. It is evident that some consumers are aware of the demands the participatory culture puts on them and what their part in this culture is. Getting ready for and doing their part is one of the responsibilities some consumers perceive as integral to being part of this new cultural dynamic.

In summary, anchoring is a very important narrative consumption pattern. Anchoring sets the tone and the habitual consumption patterns regarding the franchise, as well as consumers' expectations for the show. Anchoring might be thought of finding that critical first person in a party room where you don't know anyone. It is about finding that entry point to a universe you are not familiar at all. The term anchoring also communicates the idea of the excessive reliance on a particular type of starting point for the TMC experiences and practices. Specifically, the ways people anchor to an expanded transmediated universe will also govern some of the narrative consumption they might assume for their future engagement with the show. For example, latecomers who stick to a weekly schedule after catching up with the show and early committers are more likely to engage with the consumption of secondary texts, as well as with

social media engagement regarding *Lost*. Thus, anchoring style might affect whether and how people will engage with different and multiple TMC experiences. That's not to say that dabblers are always and only stuck at the anchoring practice. But generally dabblers do not migrate to the social media or secondary media consumption. Although very few, some of the dabblers might use social media, particularly towards the final seasons. Our dabbler, Mousy Scientist explains his late and limited social media use regarding *Lost*:

During both seasons 4 and 5, I was aware that there were internet forums, recaps...etc. But I just didn't have any time to devote to reading them. I finally gave in during season 6. It certainly made for a different, and in some ways better experience, but took A LOT of time" (*Mousy Scientist, Lostpedia, Main Forum, 2010*)

The community involvement of the anchoring consumers is very low, if any, or is limited to their close circles. Anchoring consumers are mostly focused on the mysteries and short story arcs of the primary text, the story told in the television show in context of *Lost*. Anchoring *Lost* consumers do not identify themselves much with the characters in the show or identify with many of them. Heidi responding to a question what keeps her in the show:

I think it is the mystery...it is the mystery I like.... What's gonna happen or why are they on the island or what are these... There is always something like the black smoke or something in each season, especially there is something that is so vague and questionable and you don't know what's going on. So I think that's why ....that's what keeps people really into them. (Heidi)

One of the expectations from the producer is to tell a coherent story in a contained media platform. They expect that the story in the television show provide every necessary answer. Erwin explains his expectations of *Lost* producers as he compares them to the producers of *The Matrix*:

E: I also hate the Matrix, very similar feeling about the Matrix and about *Lost*, that's interesting, did you bring it up on purpose? No didn't consume any additional media with The Matrix either. No [didn't read any theories either], I mean once again I thought they would tell me, I thought the writer, I will theaters they just paid a hundred fifty million dollars making the movie, guesses it's gonna their f\*\*\* story somewhere, not so much...I want it to be there, the story.

Wachowski's story in the Matrix, Abram's story of *Lost*. I'm essentially naming a conversation with them, so what type of a conversation, but it's a conversation, so in any thing I consume I want it to be told by them. It's like the Mob Boss and I was talking, I was trying to make deal with him, I don't want you to talk, you're not him.

## **Recruiting**

Recruiting refers to the process of attracting, screening, and selecting qualified people to be a *Lost* consumer by other consumers. Recruitment has already been identified as one of the activities that brand community members use to acquire and retain members (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). *Lost* consumers' recruitment efforts are aimed at getting friends, coworkers, significant others, and family members to consume the franchise, and mostly the show itself. In an effort to create micro-communities, consumers promote the show to their immediate or close

circle of friends or family. They mostly engage in conversations about the show on the phone, through email, or during office chats.

I got my friend and co-worker into watching the show and he and I spent many hours on the phone talking about it- the characters, the storylines, what we thought was working, what wasn't, pacing, structure et. al. Never had those kinds of deep conversations about any other television show. In fact, "*Lost*" is the only show that I own every episode of." (Mattepntr, Main Forum, 2010)

In the *Lost* community, recruitment efforts are guided by a moral responsibility to the brand community, where members of the community can help others realize the full potential of the brand, share product knowledge, and also screen prospective members through their knowledge of the brand (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). As such, *Lost* consumers not only try to talk others into watching the show but also lend DVDs, provide episode recaps, follow up on newcomers' progress, and mentor them on some of the possible difficulties they might encounter. Drawing from their own experiences, the recruiters foresee some of the possible difficulties the newcomers might encounter during their consumption and lend them a hand in these predicted rough patches. To keep the newcomers involved in the show, they try to maintain these newcomers' faith and commitment by providing support or a first-hand, experience-based insight that the pace will pick up in the coming episodes or seasons.

I'd tell people "Episodes 1 and 2 are good, Episode 3 drops a bit but Episode 4 will make you NEED to watch the show" (alex909, Main Forum, 2010)

One of the common ways to recruit new *Lost* consumers is through re-watch parties. The re-watch parties, especially in between the seasons, are used by existing consumers to get more people into the show. And, if the recruited is a significant other or

family member, the recruiter develops a plan and a schedule about their *Lost* consumption to catch up with the show.

When S6 [Season 6] started, my wife (who had never watched *Lost* previously) would exit the room. About a month before The End [title of the final episode], I started a series re-watch. While she tried to sleep thru The Pilot, she commented that it wasn't bad and wanted to watch the next episode. We ended up doing about a DVD a night to finish up S1-S5 along with the new remaining S6 before the finale. Needless to say she loved it. (Jacks Porposie, Main forum, 2010)

Recruiters try to communicate some rules while enlisting others for the show. Successful outcomes of recruitment include finding a potential committed *Lost* fan, not spoiling the *Lost* experiences for the recruited, and also keep them interested in the show till the final. As such, recruiters give each other advice from their own recruiting experiences on what to do and what not to do. *Lostee* (Main Forum, 2010) details his/her suggestions to the recruiters as:

A few suggestions when getting others to watch it/watching with others: \*Watch what you say, don't get ahead of yourself and give something away. Tell them that when they ask you a question that you are going to answer as if you were watching it for the first time. Just try and remember your initial thoughts from the first time you saw it. \*Don't point out the little mysteries--I don't think people would have been stuck on stuff like the Hurley Bird or the Dharma food drops if others hadn't emphasized them so much. \*Watch your favorite episodes with them! Like I said, seeing people see this for the first time is priceless. \*Watch what you say (again) - The first re-watch, I kept asking my buddy if he had seen

"(insert here)" happen and then it would happen a few minutes later. It's easy to give stuff away, so be careful. Good luck finding some candidates guys

Recruiters also enjoy the recruitment process. They want to share their joy about the show by talking to someone else about their passion as well as to “re-live” the pleasure of *Lost* through the eyes and the experience of a new comer.

I got my ex GF, current GF, and old roommate into *LOST*. I loved watching the episodes with them and seeing the looks on their faces when a WTF moment happened. Like when my old roommate watched the S2 premier. At the end of the opening scene when it was revealed that we were watching someone inside the hatch he actually said something like "Holy shit! This show's f\*%king awesome!"  
(galmy25, main forum, 2010)

Dirty, another recruiter, details how he draws joy from the re-lived experience through the experience of a first time *Lost* viewer. The re-watches with the new people are kind of creating or mimicking the pleasure of watching the show the first time for the recruiter. Recruiting *Lost* viewers watch the show over and over with each people they recruit.

I got many people to watch it and I watched it with them! It is the closest thing you can get seeing it for the first time, seeing people's reactions is awesome. I understand why parents go balls out for Christmas now, so they can live it through their kids. Same thing with *Lost*. Anyone that hasn't seen *Lost* is a CANDIDATE. They are out there folks, people that have somehow managed to avoid EVERYTHING about it. Find them, get them to watch it, show them the way. ....A week after I finished it for the first time, I got 2 friends to start watching it with me. One of them took to it really well, and within a few days



were 10 episodes ahead of the other. So I kept watching with that friend all the way through, and he was a die-hard *Lost* fan. (He completed it in 1 month)...The other guy (that stopped after a few) tried watching it on his own, and I had to PUSH him through it. We were on "One of Them" (S02E14) and he told me that he was going to stop watching it. When I asked why he said "at first I thought they were all there for a reason, but now it seems like it's just a bunch of random coincidences." Needless to say I wanted to scream. Anyways, he plowed through it, and ended up LOVING it. But the beginning of the 3rd season is what sold him (which is weird because some of my least favorite episodes are from around there). Few months later he was a die-hard *Lost* fan. (He completed it in 2 months, but I had to push him)...Then I got my old roommate from college to watch it, and he watched it in 3 weeks. He absolutely loved it.....And I just got my ex-gf to start watching it, she just finished "Outlaws" (S01E16) last night, and she loves it as well. Come to think of it, I don't think I have NOT had someone I was watching it with since I saw it the first time. (The Dirty, Main Forum, 2010)

Most informants and netnographic participants are proud of the number of people they convinced to engage with the show. They are happy with the success of creating a consciousness among new people. Recruiting is one of the ways to deal with the stigma of watching *Lost* or being a *Lost* fan. *Lost* viewers are happy about adding one more person to the *Lost* team.

My ex-girlfriend, my best friend and his girlfriend along with his brother and sister, another good friend of mine, and lastly this kid I don't really know well but he fell in love after Walkabout [title of one of the popular episodes]. So that's 7

people. I should be an evangelist. I warn them that I didn't think season 6 was that great, but that the journey was one hell of a ride. (Oveckin08, main forum, 2010)

Recruitment is also a very crucial step in TMC as it transforms the individual-level media consumption — watching in this case — into a micro community activity. The recruitment not only helps building communities but also might help dabblers come back to the show. Although most dabblers are fickle in their commitment and in sticking to a schedule, their recruitment by more engaged viewers might correct the long-term implications of this anchoring style.

My sister actually started watching it as soon as the series premiered, but she never finished s1. I started watching midway through s1. Around season 5 I got her to re-watch it all and she loved every season of it. She said she was a bit disappointed by the finale, though. (Ell0 ell0, Main Forum, 2010)

## **Grounding**

Grounding describes the consumers' practice of making their *Lost* experiences relevant to their daily lives. They borrow character traits, plots, scripts, names, or even branded merchandise and use in their daily lives. My data reveals two types of grounding: grounding to professional and to personal domains. Through grounding, the show becomes an “extended self” as it is used to reflect and contribute to the identity of the *Lost* consumer (Belk 1988).

*To Professional Domain.* *Lost* consumers adopt and borrow topics, philosophies, plots, performances, or merchandise from the story and use them in career or job-related activities. Several informants express how they use *Lost* in their professional lives. Joy, who is a program developer in one of the local channels for ABC, created many *Lost*-inspired recipes for her cooking show that airs on a local ABC channel just before *Lost*'s weekly episode. Another

informant who is a pastor, Sean, describes how he used the religious zest in *Lost* to prepare his Sunday masses. There are professors who create philosophy, religion, physics, or sci-fi literature classes using *Lost* as a springboard.

I have used *Lost* clips to illustrate certain parts of my Sunday sermons. Several weeks ago, I used clips of... where Jacob dips his cup in the water and passes it over to Jack. Very Christian concept of “now you are like me”. That was a Hollywood version of the communion ...of Jesus instituting communion. Drink from this cup, eat this bread and when you do you essentially remember what I have done for you and the way they stated in the show was “you will be like me.” That’s our goals as Christians. Christians come from the Christ; we are to be like Christ. That is a very Biblical concept. Communion and join us with a very God like figure, Jacob, and we believe Christ to be God and the Trinity. So, to join a communion with him is a Christian concept. I used that. I showed that clip. I also showed pictures of the scene where Jack takes the drink and of course Jack does the same thing to Hurley later on. Now you are like me....There are so many biblical themes. I probably will go on using those clips and pictures. If I want to talk about forgiveness, for example, could I find a clip in *Lost* about forgiveness, redemption, having a second chance, relationships....yes! There are tons and tons of material in there. (Sean)

Co-creation through co-creation of space also emerges from my data. You Tube video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTQE7vJHvnU> ) display how an enthusiastic *Lost* consumer use branded merchandise and collected memorabilia to create a *Lost*-themed space. As evident from the quote and video, in the grounding, the consumption practice is beyond consuming

branded merchandise but entails using the narrative, aligning it with consumer's life, and co-creating an office-space using *Lost*-art, souvenirs, *Lost*-action figures, and so on. (Note: YouTube video is a way of "circulating," and entails social media. But, I was told by some of my consumers about *Lost*-themed offices. Many consumers upload the photos of their rooms or offices designed with *Lost* merchandises and memorabilia to photo sharing websites. The photos of their desks, shelves, walls, and also the desktop pictures of their computers are some examples of these pictures<sup>15</sup>.

*To Personal Domain.* Consumers adopt or borrow threads, plots, performances, or merchandise from the story and use in sacred or everyday life activities. They organize *Lost*-themed honeymoons, take names of *Lost* characters to name their pets and even kids, or create bands and use names or labels from *Lost*. *Lost*-theme parties to entertain friends are especially very common among grounding *Lost* consumers. Meghan describes how she organized a couple of *Lost* parties for many different groups of friends.

Consumers ground *Lost* in their personal life by connecting it to the important events and sacred moments that had happened in their life during their consumption of *Lost*. Al, for example, has stressed how over the six years *Lost* marked very important rites of passages in his life such as getting married, buying a house, and having kids. He explains how the names of kids are inspired from *Lost* characters he identifies with:

I identify with a little bit of Jack and a little bit of Charlie. That's not just because my sons are named Jack and Charlie, which I have already mentioned in my column. Charlie is a musician and I am a musician. I understand that stuff what it takes to be in a band and travel around and that perspective on things. I am

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<sup>15</sup> An example of one of these photos is at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/vlkt/3914103093/in/photostream/>

certainly not a doctor like Jack but I guess I am in a leadership role. Often times I find myself in that role. I think I identify with some of that. Part of his character.... [After I probe about his kids' names and their connection to *Lost* characters] only like like tertiary...the primary reason is that my grandfather's name is Jack and my wife's grandfather is Clarence. Charlie was closer. That was the primary reason. I think they were also already in *Lost*, I think, enhances that. I am just being honest. (A1)

Similarly, Gill describes how *Lost* intertwined with and marked many important moments in her life like completing her medical degree and being a family.

Like losing your best friend something that was a part of your life in very momentous ways and at very momentous times of my life personally. A lot of things happened from the time I started to the time it ended. I moved I got married, had a baby, and finished my residency. A lot of stuff that was big occasions in my life were all sort of intertwined with watching *Lost* or just I can call to mind watching it with certain people in Memphis so I will always remember at that moment when season two started I was with Ashley and Nicole. I have memories associated with people at various times throughout the last five years.

Through grounding activities, both to professional and to private domains, *Lost* consumers make the *Lost* story relevant and present in their lives. They find places, spaces, or domains to extend their relationship with *Lost* and their journey through *Lost*'s consumption. Thus, *Lost* becomes the story that marks other stories in consumers' lives.

## Extracting

Extracting describes how *Lost* consumers pull out, draw out, and distill some parts out of the *Lost* story, mostly the part that is told in the TV show, and use those excerpts on Internet and other social media platforms and social networking sites. Extracting is like a quotation or a citation where a portion of a book or document are drawn out and incorporated distinctly in another work. According to my data, consumers' extraction patterns can vary in terms of the portion that is extracted: that is, consumers engage in performance related or product related extractions.

*Performance Related.* Consumers isolate character traits, lines from the script, screen shots, pictures, and places and enact those performance roles on social media forums — through such means as like fantasy role play games, Facebook photos, *Lostpedia* member avatars, and banners with some script lines and so on. Through this extraction, *Lost* consumers attend the performance and perform with the *Lost* story, which acts as the “frozen potential for performance” (Deighton 1992, 362). Below (Figure 6) is a banner that shows a script and the corresponding screen shot from the *Lost* television shows (other similar banners are included in Appendix E). This scene was one of the most popular scenes of *Lost* that created an “A-ha!” moment among many *Lost* viewers. This banner was used by a *Lostpedia* member as part of her *Lostpedia* account. It is not an avatar. Separated by a footer line, this banner is placed at the bottom of each this member's posts on the forum. Jenkins (2007) interprets fan fiction as an unauthorized expansion of the media franchises into new directions which reflect the reader's desire to “fill in the gaps” they have discovered in the commercially produced material (and the same explanation can be extended to fan art). Yet, these banners are not a fan art that appropriates or extends the story through a textual or aesthetic productivity (Schau and Muniz 2002), but more of a conscious

consumption practice that outlines and distills some scenes, characters, or some parts out of the *Lost* story. Unlike fan art, performance-related extraction is not necessarily inspired by the holes or the topics or threads that have not been included in the *Lost* story but more based on what is said within the original script or by the original characters. Extracting consumers' focal narrative aspects are parts from the script, screen shots, or actors. They are mostly hooked up with one topic (e.g., religion, romance) or arc (e.g., love relation between Jack and Kate) in the story.



Figure 6: Performance-related extraction

*Product Related.* Similar extractions can be performed for the products and brands embedded in the *Lost* story. In other words, *Lost* viewers extract these products or diegetic brands (brands that are part of *Lost* universe) and explore them on Internet and social media platforms. The *Lost* story is very roughly about a plane crash survivors on a mysterious island. Oceanic Airlines is the fictional airline that operated the crashing plane. Although it is a fictitious brand created for *Lost*, it is very much embedded in many story arcs. *Lost* producers created a website for Oceanic Airlines that look very similar to any airlines' website ([www.oceanic-air.com](http://www.oceanic-air.com)). Some other diegetic brands in *Lost* story are Dharma Initiative (abbreviation for Department of Heuristics and Research on Material Applications, a fictional research project run on the island), HANSO foundation (the major benefactor of the Dharma Initiative), and Apollo bars (chocolate bars)

(Figure 7). The logos for those brands are used by consumers on social media platforms, as part of their avatars, on their websites, or on their forum posts. These logos are mostly recognized only by *Lost* consumers. As such, they connote some kind of membership in the fandom.



Figure 7: Product-related extraction examples

Besides logos, consumers extract some characters and use them as brands to show their support for the character. Following the discourse of third *Twilight* movie<sup>16</sup>, *Lost* consumers also extracted some of the characters from *Lost* story and expressed their support for these characters under the label Team Jack, Team Sayid, Team Locke, Team Desmond. They expressed their liking for these teams on Facebook, twitter, blogs, forums, or so on. Consumers use these teams and team banners to show their support for a certain character that occupies a prominent role in the direction of *Lost* story and sometimes as a sign of their identification or affection with some of the characters (Figure 8).

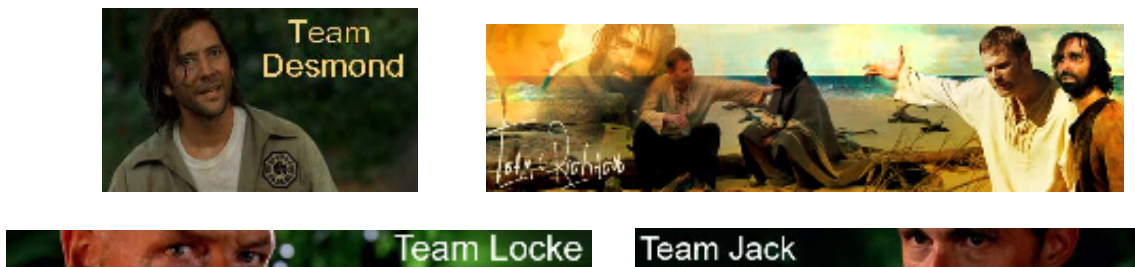


Figure 8: Product-Related extractions: TEAM theme

<sup>16</sup> After the third *Twilight* movie, the viewers of that movie picked a side in this vampire world and been divided into Team Edward or Team Jacob. This team discourse bled over to the mainstream media, even to Hollywood that resulted everyone voicing a side in this vampire love story and raising an opinion on which guy the main girl character should choose: Edward and Jacob. This new supporting language in the mainstream media impacted *Lost* consumers as well.



## Relating

Relating describes consumers' use of social media or the Internet to establish a connection or relationship with other *Lost* consumers. Social media and Internet provide several opportunities for consumers to relate to and share their experiences with the people they already know and also initiate new connections with new networks or communities. I will identify two different ways of relating in TMC: Intra-circle and new networks.

*Intra-circle.* Intra-circle relating is about the deepening of consumers' connections with the people they already know. Discussions with friends, significant others, or office mates are generally the way *Lost* consumers relate among these circles. Personal chat interfaces such as G-Chat, Yahoo Messenger, AIM, group or individual emails, and SMS are generally the ways *Lost* consumers relate within their existing circles. The communication activity might be ritualized for some of the consumers. Most informants state that especially before and after the weekly show, their use of email, chat, and SMS get more intense the day the show airs or right after the show is aired on national TV. *Lost* consumers share their experiences — mostly their immediate reaction to the weekly episode — with their friends, colleagues, family, and sometimes significant others. Through these media, they might vent, show disappointment about the direction of the story, discuss how their expectations have not met, or note some 'A-ha' moments. Erwin explains his use of emails for relating:

“E: No, I've never written a blog or anything about *Lost*.... probably I have written emails about *Lost*, but I have never posted anything to a form or to a blog about. [Emails are] Just questions about the story, you know, like back and forth, hey, this is this, that is that.

I: Which of your friends would you write about *Lost*?

E: Just those three I mentioned, my sister, and two friends of mine from work. If there's something really big, I would shoot out an email to my friends, and if not no other further engaging....I guess some really big revelation on the show, you know like, wow, something unexpected, or now because it, f\*\*\* it up not so much, if they ever tied together any sort of loose end, that would qualify as big. Because they didn't do that." (Erwin)

Some of my informants mention how *Lost* help them to strengthen their relationship with some close and also distant friends and family. Gill's quotes in the above sections have already mentioned how *Lost* helped her to make new friends like the couple they watch the show together and also how *Lost* brought her closer to her in-laws. The commonality of the experience brings consumers of *Lost* together. Janet mentions how *Lost* help her connect to a colleague in her office that she wanted to be friends for a long time. These office chats mostly bleed to more convenient and quicker ways of talking and discussing the show. Larry explains how a random conversation at a work-related party brought many *Lost* lovers together in a small campus town and enlarged their *Lost* community:

I went to a college event. So my friend Lori and her friend Alex. We were talking and like you like *Lost* and you like *Lost*. Actually we sat there. Actually the event ended at five but we ended up staying like six talking about the list for the whole hour. And, then Al who is also in the college. You know him.... We kind of identify with each other and then we had a *Lost* happy hour right after the last season. So, there are about 7 or 8 of us. And, that's how I met Lori, Elizabeth, who comes in once in a while. That was really cool. I didn't know any of these folks. Even at work.(Larry)

I have personally attended many of Larry's *Lost* parties where I met Lori, Alex, and all the other *Losties*, as they call themselves. The parties were held in a very casual environment where everybody bring a small snack to munch during the show. The party groups included guests that were involved with the show and the *Lost* franchise in general. Larry and some other involved viewers of the group help the others in the party by reminding what happened in the previous episodes or respond to some questions about the episode from the confused viewers. In these parties, the biggest problem among the group is the chit-chatting during the episode. The communal consumption initiates some conversations during the episode. Guests who really want absolute silence during the show become very uncomfortable with this simultaneous socializing. This group got so big, the group emails started to be less convenient for their communication. So, they started a newsletter among this group. And, one of the members of the group eventually decided to write a weekly blog about the show on a local community portal ([smilepolitely.com](http://smilepolitely.com)). *New Networks*. Relating might lead consumers to connect to new networks. 'Like'ing Facebook fan pages, joining Twitter lists, and subscribing to YouTube channels are all some ways *Lost* consumers establish these new communities and networks around *Lost* on social media platforms. Informants express how they use *Lost* as a conversation starter with people they do not know. This common denominator of experience helps with the small talk even between two strangers. Simply put, "Do you watch *Lost*?" is a question that brings consumers closer. Consumers use Facebook fan pages and twitter lists to relate to these new networks using social media.

"In celebration of the Final Episode I decided to make an [Facebook] event basically for all of us *Losties* to celebrate the end of our favorite show by doing anything to show that off, the main thing we are doing is putting our favorite

quotes as our statuses on the day of the Finale, but another idea we have had is that we could all change our profile pictures to our favorite characters. So I thought that I should put this up here in case any of you fantastic fans wanted to give it a go, cheers! Event is here:

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/event.php...10394075668285>" (The Hanso Dharma, *Lostpedia*, Main Forum 2010)

Some of these communities are very much on a local level (like Smile Politely). On the other hand, *Lostpedia* and similar consumer co-created communities like DarkUFO, *LostFan108* are large-scale *Lost* communities co-created by *Lost* consumers. I will unpack these communities in the next narrative consumption strategy below

## **Meshing**

Meshing is a term used to refer to the use of Internet (blog, websites etc) in conjunction with a media to enhance the experience of that medium such as TV program (Yahoo Media Report 2009). In the TMC context, meshing, use of online resources for narrative consumption, entails three permeating practices: searching, lurking, and posting

*Searching*. Searching is the activity of investigating, inquiring into, or looking thoroughly in order to seek answers or to find something. Searching in TMC context has a particular goal and is performed through various online resources and sites such as search engines, wikis, online databases, blogs, forums, and similar. Consumers use these online resources to access the information or details about the show very quickly. Google, IMDB, Wikipedia, or Flixter are some examples of these online resources that are used extensively to learn something about the show, to clarify a conflict, to access a quick answer about a particular section of the story (e.g.,

learn about the number theory in *Lost*), or to know more about the characters, settings.

Consumers use each online site for different purposes but for a particular set goal. Consumers segment these online resources in the sense they know which one to go to quickly achieve their goal:

....if I am confused, I will Google and look stuff up. I will use *Lostpedia* as probably my primary reference. I will use Wikipedia as well. And I use IMDB to figure out, you know, is that the character I've seen before, is this some part of a larger narrative that they are weaving back in. I go IMDB for very factual, very trusted info. *Lostpedia*, I also trust a lot, because it's kinda like run by fan-boy nerds. The kind of people if you got the story wrong, they would quickly correct it, I trust that a lot. For Wikipedia, I go to for the non-fan-boy angle. just kinda like the high level, here are the facts of the story.... (Erwin)

*Lurking*. Lurking describes an unobtrusive and shadow like online presence where consumers read and review online such as forums, blogs, discussions, but rarely if ever participate in them by writing a post, comment, or a feedback. Market research companies that are interested in different consumer practices might have labeled consumers with this set of practices as Spectators (Forrester Research Project Social Technographics profile) or 'the browsers' (Bressolles et al 2008). All of these terms — lurkers, spectators, or browsers — refer to the consumption of online media yet lacking participation. Lurking *Lost* consumers visit ABC's *Lost* website, forums or blogs (*Lostpedia*, Dark UFO), or some weekly blogs (Entertainment Weekly Doc Jenson, etc). Yet, they mostly don't have accounts on these sites of participation and do not log in.

Lurking is a productive —textually productive — narrative consumption strategy. Reading online has been explained to be productive and co-creative both on meaning creation and textual creation levels. Kozinets (2008, 342) explains this productive aspect of online reading as:

Yet it becomes clearer that in the online space a key practice as apparently as straightforward as “reading” text — and the accompanying hypertextual clicking and scrolling — can be both learning and doing, as well as consumption and a production. When page views are automatically counted and timed, and the electronic analog of page turning results in data being produced, reading becomes related to clicking, tagging, and registering and is thus indistinguishable in some ways from inscribing. Once the annotations that the consumer previously made for themselves or future readers in books, the marginal scrawls they make on the back of the photographs, or the clipping and annotating of magazine or newspaper articles become systematized into communications systems, the line between reading and watching, and writing and sharing becomes ever more blurred.

Lurkers visit websites to learn what other consumers are thinking, compare their own ideas to those of the people who have already posted on the forums, or learn from the consumers they perceive to know more than themselves. One of the long time lurkers explain her practice of reading the online forums and listening to the online conversations:

I didn't have an account, I just read them, I just consume the information. ...

[What lead me to the online resources] Because I had ideas, I wanna see what other people's ideas were. It's like I remember thinking, in season 2 or 3 maybe they are in purgatory and it's like do other people think they are in purgatory,

people think they are in hell. And the producers came out and say no it's not about that. It's like wanting to hear other people's ideas (Cathy)

*Posting.* Posters also consume existing social media accounts or online resources, but, unlike lurkers, they do share their thoughts, communicate those ideas with the groups, or communities, and participate in online conversations. Most people read online forums for very long times without contributing to them. My data reveal that, for some lurking consumers, there is a barrier or a resistance for switching from lurking to posting. Most lurkers think they do not have much to add to the existing conversation or they do not know as much as the people who are already writing on forums. And, if they ever decide to post on these forums after a long lurking period, most of them explicitly state that “it is their first post” and they ask for some tolerance from the existing members of the forum. These first time posters are hesitant and concerned about the possibility that their comment or feedback might not be relevant. Halsey's first post is:

Hello everyone. I'm new to the forum but have been lurking around here and *Lostpedia* for a long time. I have been following TLE on and off since the beginning partially thanks to *Lostpedia*. (Halsey, ARG The *Lost* Experience, 2008)

Long time lurker here, first time poster... (Sloth, Episode Discussions, 2010)

Here is a crap load of random thoughts regarding the finale. And yeah yeah, I'm a long time follower of the boards here but still a first time poster. (plscks, Episode Discussions, 05-24-2010)

Hey, first time poster so be gentle. I wasn't happy with the ending, sorry but I wasn't... (Bens\_Telescopic\_Baton, Episode Discussions, 2010)

Hey, I've been an avid fan since season 1, but this is my first time posting here.....

(meek, Episode Discussions, 2010)

Posting consumers generally have one community — like a base — that they prefer to write and contribute. Although these consumers might lurk around at different forums and blogs, they have or sometimes identify with a forum or a community to participate.

Gill consumes several blogs, forums, and websites about *Lost*. She reads Doc Jenson's blog on Entertainment Weekly, *Lostpedia*, EasterEggs.com, blogspot, DocArst.com, and a local blog one of her friends writes. She describes how she uses these blogs at different times and for different purposes:

The blogspot and it had still frames so if I had missed anything or the big moments where they showed Jacob in the cabin or somebody in the cabin or Charlie's hand on the glass or something like that so I could see what was happening...the local one I read before and after for sure. I'm more likely to read Doc Jenson before and after and *Lostpedia* than the other two. One that I always read before and two 75% of the time I read before. I would say that I'm more interested in, you know Doc Jenson takes it in a very different place than *Lostpedia*. *Lostpedia* is just very cut and dry and they cross reference episodes so if I can't remember something I would go back to *Lostpedia* as opposed to Doc Jenson. I don't know what I would do differently I just read them. The *Lost* Easter Egg one is only pictures. There's no discussion there's no perdition. Nothing. It's just screen. Screen shots or what do you call them screen caps. So that would only umm that was not something that I would spend a lot of time on that blog but I would go at least to makes sure that I had seen everything I needed to see. Doc



Jenson writes like 12 pages so while I'm at work like in between patients I would be at my desk reading Doc Jenson's sometimes I wouldn't finish it one day I would have to come back the next day. I was always very excited to hear what my friend had to say on his blog because ya know he and I are we have known each other since we were four so we have a lot of shared history. *Lostpedia* was always good to just go kinda help me figure out ok I'm supposed to know who this person is but I can't remember where they fit in. I can't remember what season it was maybe two or three when all that stuff was happening with Nadia. And there were familiar faces but I just couldn't remember exactly where I had seen that person before. So that was a good one to learn all the little connections. This season especially there were a lot of commonly repeated phrases. So then I would go to kinda touch base on when did they say that and what was the context last time they said it. (Gill)

Gill's use of online resources has proliferated with her deepening engagement with the show. She has added more blogs to the blogs she follows as the show progresses. She has started with Doc Jenson. Then, she got into *Lostpedia* when the stories of the show became too complex for her to manage alone. She mentions she started using Doc Arts, *Lost Easter Eggs* and blogspot to understand the flashbacks in the stories during the last season of the show. When I probe her whether she has a *Lostpedia* account, Gill explains how she doesn't post to every blog she follows but only to selective ones:

No [I don't have a *Lostpedia* account] I don't ever post to it I just read it. I comment to some other ones. I try to stay away from the comments on Doc Jenson's because I heard there are a lot of spoilers. So I'm not interested in

spoilers so I try not to read any of the comments. But I have commented in the past not this season and my friend I comment on his blog almost every week.

(Gill)

It is more common among *Lost* consumers to post *Lost*-related statuses or tweets on their twitter or Facebook accounts. Yet, active participation and interactivity in forum discussions, blogs, or communal activities require a certain engagement with the show. Tam doesn't read many online forums and she has picked one local forum — Smile Politely - that she contributes in a very limited manner. And, she explains that she doesn't want to write something as a comment that has already been expressed by someone else. She expresses her hesitation about the things she interprets and her concern that what she thinks might be common knowledge. This hesitation is mostly because Tam is not avid poster or a lurker that reads many *Lost*-related blogs or forums. She is aware that she is not exposed to many theories or information that is out there. Tam explains when and how she contributes to the forum on Smile Politely:

I didn't ever want to write a post unless I have something new to say that had not been said. If I didn't have anything new to say, or anything useful to say, I didn't. So I would. It's good sometimes, only I've tried to tell I'll try to do that, sometimes I'll be like, that's brilliant, and that's it of course. Yea, wasn't gonna just talk about the show, and I'll say anything in, so that was the whole, so I always thought hopefully whenever I said, was something unique.

What would it be about content-wise?

Last night, when I was re-reading (laughs), I was struck by how I tended to, I'll apply a lot of religious symbolism, and I was always talking about either

mythology or religion. I tended to do that a lot. You know, that's what I saw, and I was, so I was always afraid like... maybe this is something obvious, and that's why it hasn't been brought up. But you know, if it hadn't been brought up, I'll bring it up like the whole Jacob story from the Bible or Virgil, a leader or the guide. For example, those I didn't know, I had to go to the forums to yea, sometimes things are so obvious to someone might not be so obvious to the others.

To describe the different styles of meshing I have used searching, lurking, and posting instead of searcher, lurker, or poster. This, certainly, is not in agreement with my terminology in the anchoring section where I used dabblers, latecomers, or early committers. For the anchoring practice, the different terms are used to explain how different consumers attach to the narrative in different ways and each consumer attach in a certain way using one of these three patterns. On the other hand, the searching, lurking, and posting describe kind of a continuous process of meshing that pertain to an increasing level of engagement. Meshing consumers might start with searching, and more they get used to the online conversation norms and online presence, they might go from searching to lurking, and in time from lurking to posting. The quotes about the first time posters above also support that some consumers wait for a long time before they start posting. This finding about consumers' intensifying and progressing consumption of online communities and online media is consistent with Kozinets' (1999) conceptualization about consumers' acculturation with the online communities. Kozinets (1999) theorizes that consumers' are voluntarily drawn into these communities and that their behaviors change and align with those of the communities as a result of their extended contact. The core activity of

consuming the media franchise extends to the online communities making them unique consumptionscapes for fan activity.

## **Patching**

The story of the *Lost* universe is too big to be told on a single media platform; thus, producers tell the story of this universe across a multitude of media platforms where each tells a piece of the meta-story (the entire story of the *Lost* universe). Jenkins (2006) defines this process as the ‘world-building’: a process of designing a fictional universe that will sustain franchise development and that is sufficiently detailed to enable many stories to emerge, but at the same time coherent enough so that each story feels like it fits with the others. Jenkins’ definition of world-building details the producer’s perspective on creating a world using interrelated stories. While consumers are consuming these interrelated narratives and the worlds, they do not necessarily engage with every media platform that the producers use to disperse the story. Consumers travel across media platforms and pick and choose among them to create their own version and interpretation of this expanded universe. Patching describes this consumers’ world-consuming process — rather than world-building — that entails uniting, joining, affixing their version of the *Lost* worlds on different media platforms to each other. Similar to patching a quilt, each piece tells a story but when they are affixed together, they have a bigger story to tell. John explains how he picked and chose media platforms to patch together his own *Lost* universe:

I consumed every possible media that I thought was out there and that I would appreciate. *Via Domus* didn’t look like a very good game. From what I heard from the friends. So I decided not to buy it. It is a PC game. I think they also made it for the consoles. Video game. I play both PC and console games. A, it

didn't look like very well done from the reviews I read. B, it didn't look like it provided a lot of information. So I skipped it. And same way with the Bad Twin novel or whatever. If that seems to be playing on a theme and I get it. I am on board with the Bad Twin theme. I didn't feel like I needed to read that book. Anything else I was very engaged with. I read the Bad Twin through references on *Lostpedia* and other blogs and fan sites. And, I played the two ARG's. Indeed, I read one on *Lostpedia* and played one. ARGs provide information on this expanded universe. If they give everything in TV show, it would be boring. One ARG gave information on DHARMA and HANSO. I appreciate the show more when I get the 'answers' wrapped up in ARGs. ” (John)

Patching practice involves four permeating types of practices: mapping, dipping, digging, and stitching. Consumers identify the elements of the *Lost* world, interpret them, and then reconstruct their own versions of the *Lost* world by stitching multiple stories together (and generally around the primary text of TV show).

*Mapping.* Mapping is the exploration and the survey of the terrain of the *Lost* universe to establish and learn the elements, features, and details of this particular universe. *Lost* consumers who only consume the TV show might not be familiar with the other extensions or intertextual popular culture titles related to the *Lost* story. So, the patching starts with mapping of the terrain to identify the media platforms through which the *Lost* story is told. During our interview, when I probed Cathy about her consumption or awareness of some of *Lost* extensions like the video games, ARGs, or novels, she was very surprised not knowing any of those platforms that tell parts of the *Lost* story. Cathy's *Lost* atlas does not include those secondary texts. Cathy doesn't patch as she is not aware of these secondary texts and also do not think there are parts of the

story on these secondary platforms that might add to the story of the show. As I will unpack further in the migration section, Cathy's perspective on the contributory role of the secondary media is an outcome of her not knowing the specifications of transmedia storytelling (Scott 1994). That also prevents her progressing into the other practices of patching.

I think any other media-enhanced would be supplemental inspiration, I don't think it's necessary. I think most, I would say 99.9% of what you need to know is in the show, but if you wonder about the references, like the names, you know like who John Locke is. If you are curious, like those other pieces like sources of information become important. (Cathy)

On the other hand, some *Lost* consumers are familiar with the multi-platform, multi-thread storytelling and are aware of the existence of a bigger world that is dispersed across several media platforms. That insight gives them an advantage in the exploration as they already are aware of these possible elements of *Lost* universe. Yet, they still need to engage with mapping to establish these elements for the *Lost*-world. Larry's mapping of the *Lost* universe assists him to establish his own atlas of the *Lost* world.

I think *Lost* is definitely... probably on purpose connected with all the other forms of media. It cannot be just a TV [show]. It would be too difficult to keep up. Or they would have made much simpler. The books didn't mean as much or the Easter eggs and the representation wouldn't have been there. There is no way they could do that. Maybe they could but probably... most people knew what that meant aren't watching TV. [laughs] (Larry)

In addition to establishing the secondary media platforms, mapping also include the exploration of some of the popular culture titles that are intertextually connected to the *Lost*

universe. Some of these titles are signaled by the producers in podcasts or in interviews, some are embedded in the story or script of the TV show, and some are deduced by the consumers who recognize a possible link with the show.

I just dropped into the Book Club to check it out, hoping there were threads on individual books. With 6x04, it now seems that several books not seen on the show per se are highly relevant: *Heart of Darkness*, *Conrad Watchmen*, *Alan Moore*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *Nietzsche*.... (bongzilla, Book Club, 2010)

Lots and lots of stuff thourght *Lost* that is blantant *Dark Tower* inspired which is AWESOME! (Steebin, Book Club, 2009)

*Dipping*. Dipping is the limited and second-hand consumption of the secondary texts or media via reading recaps, synopsis from blogs, forums, Wikipedia, or hyperlinks or through other personal resources (e.g., consuming without playing ARG, without reading the spin-off novels). Dipping consumers have gone through the mapping, so they are aware of the terrain of the *Lost*-world, media extensions, and intertextual popular culture titles. Yet, they mostly prefer to consume them through secondary resources like recaps, summaries, forums, databases, wikis, and so on.

I guess, there were things that would happen in the show that books will be shown very briefly [in the TV show]. Sometimes I would go on the discussion board and ask oh what that book is about. People would say oh I remember reading *Wrinkle in Time*, this is what it is about, and just give a little synopsis, and I could find out that information of my own, like in Google or something...like having it on the discussion boards. People would say well I think it's related to this, or maybe this character is reading that, this is why this is on the television or the show. (Cathy)

Dipping is a form of coping strategy for most *Lost* consumers in the face of daunting numbers of extensions that require a lot of time, investment, and effort. Tam explains how the blog she follows is doing the necessary research for her and she prefers to read what happens in these secondary media in the blog rather than doing the research herself. Similarly, John had to read through the first ARG due to time limitations. Here, dipping refers to having some but limited experience with each media platform — have a taste of each — although not enjoying them to the fullest through a first-hand experience. John explains his dipping process in the below quote. I also quote John in mapping, quoting him again in the dipping subsection to illustrate the progressing and permeating levels of patching.

I read the first one (ARG) that was about what was going with Dharma and the Vanzetti equation and all that stuff. And then I played ... I didn't complete but I played pieces of Where is 815. The second one. ....I was so busy at the time that I appreciated being able to read a recap. ...For *Lost* at that point everybody was very thirsty for answers. And there seems to be some information in ARG about the Vanzetti equation and those numbers. And so I appreciated being able to get those answers. Same way I appreciate to be able to get to the next episode when I was going through season 1. It is the same kind of connection to the next one. So I liked being able to read the recap on the first one. I liked playing the second one but now I didn't have the time to do both. So, other people were figuring out stuff out before I was even catching up. Then because I was so religiously reading *Lostpedia* every source I can get to anyway. Enough solutions were being provided as the game went along that I played some and then I ran across some solutions anyway. I was like "ok, screw it, I am gonna read it over". ARGs are the



... when I have time for, I think, it's the best marketing tool ever. What I did, I appreciated reading it afterwards. (John)

Above, I describe dipping as the limited and second-hand consumption of the extra media. Also, first-hand but incomplete consumption of these extra materials is a type of dipping. Consumers who start playing the ARGs but do not complete these interactive plays or reading the novels but don't finish the books are some examples of these incomplete consumptions.

I enjoyed playing The *Lost* Experience until stage 3. I don't exactly remember, but I guess I forgot to keep myself up to date. I found out recently that it's over now. Does anyone know if there's gonna be another TLE for 2007 or something? I'm pretty sure TLE didn't end on that MUCH of a satisfactory note, so I'm guessing there will be another one, but anyone got any news about it? (vitalsign87, The *Lost* Experience TLE, 2006)

*Digging*. Digging refers to consumer's first-hand experience with the secondary texts and intertextual popular titles to find clues, interpret mysteries posed by the *Lost* story, and make sense of the *Lost* world. Digging is similar to a 'forensic exploration', which is hyper-attentive mode of spectatorship embracing a detective mentality, seeking out clues, charting patterns, and assembling evidence into narrative hypotheses (Mittell 2009). The two quotes below illustrate where some of the clues in *Lost* story are hidden and the extent of investigation consumers have to engage. The below quote illustrates the amount of skill and detail required from consumers during digging as they might need to encode a backward recorded message as a part of the ARG game.

And one more thing- if you highlight the link and right click on it, a listing of code for the whole contents of the page shows up. For the link; it says &lt;div id

=>mainContent">.( I think it's for the link;-it's the first thing listed.) (Just Thinking, ARG 2009 Viral Marketing, 2009)

<http://persephone.thehansofoundation.org> is definitely from the first session of TLE. There was a backwards message in the audio if I remember correctly.

<http://www.thf.org/index.html> is new to me, but it has a serious side that I doubt is TLE related. I am going to watch it and investigate further. (XMOZZAZX, *The Lost Experience*, 2008)

Digging entails going to the deeper layers of the meta-text and intertextually connected texts as a means of this forensic mode. Digging *Lost* consumers study physics, electromagnetic theories, astronomy, theology, philosophy, calculus, literary theory, history, and even mythology to discover clues, decode some mysteries, more importantly to acquire a deeper understanding of the *Lost* world.

If this IS differential calculus, which I understand to be the math of momentum under the laws of motion (in relation to physics), then that might help draw a connection somewhere.... Though, the hint could be VERY broad in regards to what it's "referring" to (meaning, which field of study) I think it gives us a revealing insight...

Quote: "In physics, the derivative of the displacement of a moving body with respect to time is the velocity of the body, and the derivative of velocity with respect to time is acceleration."

Keep an ear out for any names popping up like Leibniz, Lagrange, Newton, or Euler as they were major contributors to the study of calculus. There's also a "Jacobian Matrix" in calculus which makes me wonder (though, it's a bit of a different TYPE of calculus) (Paperknives, ARG: Find 815, 2008)

Agreed. The ARGs and what-not add a lot of backstory. While you can get along fine by just watching the show, if you want a deeper insight to the *Lost* universe then digging into this extra material will give you a lot of insight. (DeBarlo, ARG: Find 815, 01-04-2008)

*Stitching*. *Stitching*, succeeding digging, describes how consumers put the clues together, interpret them, and make their own version of the *Lost* world. *Stitching Lost* consumers interpret the clues they found and try to establish the intertextual connections between the television show and the stories they consume on these secondary media. They seek to understand and establish why and how these media are connected to the television show (primary text) or their own interpretation of the *Lost* world. Zorbathebomb, for example, craves to know whether and how Stephen King's novel *Dark Tower* might predict the ending of *Lost*.

I'm a hardcore *Dark Tower* fan and I like the fact that *Lost* is so obviously influenced by it. The ending of the dark tower is special because it opens more possibilities than it closes, it's not really an ending, it's something more...Some people think jack is locked into a certain destiny a lot like Roland but I don't think that an ending like that would go over well AT ALL with the majority of *Lost* fans, hell tower junkies are still arguing about it nearly six years after the book came out (Zorbathebomb, the book club, 2010)

Some *Lost* fans teach others how to establish the intertextual connections between primary and secondary media platforms. Especially consumers who know the transmedia storytelling practices or have been a part of a different fandom before know better how to establish these intertextual connections. Garmonbozey explains his way of stitching:

The rule of thumb for ancillary stuff like this is thus: The characters themselves are not important or canon to the show, the information they uncover however is. Here's an example: In Find815, there's a long character arc about someone who finds the fake 815 crash with underwater probes. In the show, this event/information is canon. We see the probes even. But the person behind them is not the same. The character wasn't there or important, the information revealed through him was, and was included. See what I mean? Some stuff from the ARGs actually has been referenced to in the show. In "The Constant" we see Widmore buying a book, and the auctioneer says it was from a man "Magnus Hanso" and contained information on the Black Rock. Previously, this information was only referred to in TLE. But mostly, the information won't make it in episodes, but it is however canon to the mythology. They do these ARGs for the reason of getting out info or plot details that can't be fit into the show itself well. (Garmonbozey, ARG *The Lost Experience*, 2009)

## **Pooling**

Pooling is grouping of resources, talents, and knowledge of consumers, in a community, for the common advantage of the community members. This available supply is shared by the group and might also be consumed by the lurkers who do not participate in the formation of this pool. As I have stated above, *Lost* universe is big and the story includes heaps of details and topics. It is very difficult for one person to master all these skills or possess all these knowledge. Thus, consumers bring their skills, talents, and knowledge as well as their time and effort

together to solve these mysteries or make those investigations. Reverendmilo, for example, who is an expert in the Photoshop, helps the community by investigating a photo in ARG game:

I definitely will splice more segments if we find them. diving deeeeeeply into the images with a hex editor does not reveal any weak forms of stego. It appears that the photos were processed using Photoshop's "save for the web" feature at 60% image quality. This form of processing strips out all the EXIF metadata. I wish I could find the originals, but I did not find them on bpm's site or thecobrasnake's sit (Reverendmilo, ARG 2009 Viral Marketing, 08-19-2009)

Speak for yourself about the code breaking thing haha. I actually like code breaking but knew nothing about binary, hexadecimal and all that. I remember the vegeniere's cipher, and while I was trying to work it out, using a bit of frequency analysis, someone else was running it through an online decoder lol. So I think pretty early on I decided to let the experts do the tech stuff. I did enjoy searching for glyphs and Blake videos though. I think you can still enjoy it from a retrospective position, but agree you miss some of the thrill when you find something that hasn't been caught by fellow gamers yet. I also liked the real-world stuff (though most of that happened in Australia because Ninja was really into that). It's an enjoyable read though, and it's incredibly diverse. I mean I'm still learning new stuff about Project Sumo and DaimlerChrysler while working on them for the wiki it at the moment. ( mac\_ad, TLE: The *Lost* Experience, 2008)

Consumers also pool their summaries, reflections, or short accounts about their experiences while consuming these additional media. These accounts seek to help the consumers who will consume that media in the future, provide heads up at necessary points, and direct these

possible new comers in the right direction. Along these lines, community members also care for the possible new fans of the show. Laheupmo is putting together a documentary about the alternate reality games and the video game for future fans and asking other members' help to put it together:

Hello all, I'm currently working on putting together a mock-documentary of the *Lost* Experience ARG and Find 815 ARG. I've got pretty much everything I need except for several of the DJ Dan podcasts, which don't seem to be available any longer. The ones I can't get are the 5/25, 6/14, 6/16, and the 6/30 podcasts. I've looked all over the web, but I can't find any of them. If anyone has a copy of any of these, or can find them anywhere to get a copy, it would be incredibly helpful.

Thanks a bunch! (Laheupmo, Main forum, 2009)

## **Appropriating**

Appropriation describes how consumers adopt and borrow some elements of the *Lost* story and create a new story (text) using those borrowed elements. In social anthropology, appropriation refers to the use of borrowed elements such as ideas, symbols, artifacts, images, sound, objects, forms, or styles from other cultures, from art history, from popular culture or other aspects of man-made visual or non-visual culture and their use in the creation of new art, ideas, or cultural material (Schneider, 2003). As Jenkins (1992, 156), "fan writing builds upon the interpretive practices of the fan community, taking the collective meta-text as the base from which to generate a wide range of media related stories." In the context of TMC, consumers borrow characters, plots, script lines, or story arcs from *Lost* universe and use them in a new story that is not necessarily in agreement with the nature and facts of *Lost* universe. This new

appropriated story re-contextualizes *Lost* story and all the elements borrowed from it. Although this new story doesn't change what *Lost* universe is, it definitely extends it. Consumer and media scholars note that fan communities appropriate and alter media-based products through, for example, the writing of fan fiction (Bond and Michelson 2003, Caudill 2003).

I wanted to make my own sequel to the game, but I wanted to make it longer and more interactive than the last one. The first day is a little slow, but should pick up from there! Tell me what you think. (Desmond\_Fan16, Via Domus, 2009)

The appropriation produce cultural forms such as: fan fiction, fan art, videos, movies, games, fan music, and so on. Some of the appropriations might be performance related. Consumers reinterpret *Lost* world through performances. Dancing, dressing up at conventions are some of these performance related appropriation examples.

The focal narrative aspect of the appropriating consumers is the holes in the story, the things that haven't been told or intentionally left out by the producers. *Lost* story, for example, originally did not contain any queer arcs. Bothered by that gap, some *Lost* fans appropriate the story to the queer world. This particular fan writing that explores alternatives to traditional masculinity using the media text as the base is called slashing (Jenkins 1992). Consumers expect that producers will not have a tight control about these appropriating practices and will have tolerance and encouragement for this creative space around the franchise regardless of their content. See Figure 9 for examples of *Lost* fan art.



Figure 9: Examples of fan art – Appropriating

### Role of the Narrative

People interested in transmedia as a producer, as a film maker, storywriter, or a scholar will stress that story, the meta-narrative, is crucially important for the success of a transmedia franchise. Yet, how transmedia narrative leads to various consumption experiences at different layers of media has not been that much explored.

The dynamic relationship between consumption practices and consumption texts (Hirschman, Scott, Wells 1998) points out to the narrative and its role in shaping consumer practices. My data reveals that the role of the narrative in TMC experiences varies across different consumption practices and can be conceptualized as: narrative as a hook, narrative as a cultural attractor, and narrative as cultural activator (Figure 10 illustrates different roles of the narrative across typology).



<b>Co-creativity</b>	Textual	<b>Grounding</b>	<b>Meshing</b>	<b>Appropriating</b>
	Communal	<b>Recruiting</b>	<b>Relating</b>	<b>Pooling</b>
	Meaning	<b>Anchoring</b>	<b>Extracting</b>	<b>Patching</b>
		Contained	Social Media	Extensive

***Variety of Media Consumption***

	<b>Narrative as Hook</b>
	<b>Narrative as Cultural Attractor</b>
	<b>Narrative as Cultural Activator</b>

Figure 10: Role of the Narrative across Typology

*As Hook.* The role of the narrative as a hook describes how the narrative attracts the grappling nature of the contained media and its role in sustaining consumers’ attention. It is like an enticement, a catchy motif. The role of the narrative here is to sustain anticipation between episodes, seasons, and after the season is over.

*As Cultural Attractor.* The role of the narrative as a cultural attractor how the narrative draws consumers together by creating common ground between communities. Narrative enables the

consumption to be social and communal, so that certain works will attract consumers together where they can enjoy, work, or create together. Mac\_ad explains how the narrative helps him to connect with people all over the world:

Honestly though, TLE was AMAZING while playing it, finding clues in website source code before anyone else on the planet, talking to people halfway across the continent to get the codes on glyphs.. It was truly fun. (mac\_ad, *The Lost Experience*, 2010)

*As Cultural Activator.* The role of the narrative as cultural attractor explains how the narrative sets into motion consumers' decipherment, speculation, and elaboration by providing the necessary push for consumer and communal creativity. The narrative delegates consumers assignments, roles, goals, or even norms for participation.

So I've been thinking a lot since Via Domus about what I would want from a *Lost* video game, and though it's entirely fanky wanky, and it would never truly happen, I decided to share my thoughts on what I feel the perfect *Lost* gaming experience would be. (Sarnecki, Via Domus, 05-25-2010)

## CHAPTER 6

### TRANSMEDIA CONSUMPTION PROCESSES

“Welcome to convergence culture...By convergence I mean the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want” (Jenkins 2006, 2)

As detailed in the earlier sections of this dissertation and coined by Jenkins in the above quote, transmedia storytelling is driven by the omnipresent logics of convergence culture on social, technological, and ecological domains. The cultural logic of convergence lends itself to a flow of narratives, characters, and worlds across media platforms (C3<sup>17</sup>2006). Similarly, consumers also migrate from one media platform to the other, as do narratives. Motivated to understand how people consume and co-create transmedia consumption experiences, this chapter seeks to explore and conceptualize the migratory behavior of transmedia consumers and is guided by the question: “How and why do consumers migrate across media?”

One of the research questions of my dissertation is “How do consumers consume and co-create transmedia consumption experiences?” Responding to that research question, my data reveals four different and emergent transmedia consumption processes: migration, engagement, reading, and collaborating. Among these four emergent transmedia consumption (TMC) processes, migration and engagement are the ones that offer the most potentially significant theoretical contributions. But, due to the length constraints of this study and to sustain depth rather than breadth, I will discuss only migration as an example of the TMC process. I have

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<sup>17</sup> Convergence Culture Consortium (C3) Podcasts <http://www.convergenceculture.org/podcasts/>

chosen migration because this is clearly one of the most important consumption-related processes in transmedia consumption, highlighted, but still relatively unexplored, in all of the current transmedia literature to date (Jenkins 2006, Askwith 2007, Long 2007).

I will begin by defining migration for TMC. Next, I will explore the migration processes, reasons for migration, and barriers to migration. Although migration across media is the focus of this chapter, I add an emergent theme to the end. Specifically, my data reveal that the boundaries are not only between media platforms but consumers' TMC practices traverse other boundaries as well. I conclude the chapter by exploring consumers' migration across these boundaries.

### **TRANSMEDIAL MIGRATION: DEFINED**

Media migration or migratory behavior, as a term, has been coined by some media scholars (e.g., Jenkins 1992, Jenkins 2006, Ahlers 2006). In his book, *Textual Poachers*, Jenkins (1992) establishes the framework for media migration drawing from the nomadism concept. Jenkins (1992) uses De Certeau's (1984) notion of "nomadic readers" to offer key insights into fandom and fan practices. De Certeau (1984, 174) describes readers as "nomads," always in movement, "not here or there," not constrained by permanent property ownership but rather constantly advancing upon another text, appropriating new materials and making new meanings (as cited in Jenkins 1992, 36). Similarly, Radway (1988, 363) asserts that audiences are not constituted by a particular text or genre, but are "free-floating agents who fashion narratives, stories, objects and practices from myriad bits and pieces of cultural productions." In addition to poaching, Jenkins (1992, 37) deems the nomadic behavior of consumers in the 'intertextual grid' as a fandom practice. In the context of transmedia consumption (TMC), nomadic behaviors of

consumers have a more distinctive pattern and nature, as transmedia producers also assume a role in the dispersing of the intertextually connected transmedia narratives across media.

Transmedial migration, then, becomes not only limited as a choice for the fans who seek for different pleasures of the text but also a defining characteristics and salient process of transmedia consumption experiences.

In the new media domain, on the other hand, media migration is mostly used to refer to consumers' switching behavior between media platforms. Related scholarly studies, particularly in the context of journalism, point to consumers leaving one medium permanently and using another one for the consumption of a specific content. Media migration in this context is more a form of competition or substitutability between old (traditional) and new digital media. Some studies in this stream also offer a compatibility view of media migration where consumers use both traditional and online media (Dutta-Bergman 2004). In the marketing and consumer behavior context, this understanding of media migration coincides with the proliferating number of studies about online shopping behavior and consumers migrating from brick-and-mortar to Internet as a shopping medium (e.g., Rajamma et al. 2007).

Yet throughout my dissertation, migration and migratory behavior concepts are used in a broader sense, similar to Jenkins (1992, 2006) and DeCerteau (1984), to indicate consumers' exploratory behaviors across a set of media platforms rather than referring to a switching behavior. In this regard, I am not interested in the either-or decisions of media migration but in the less permanent, back-and-forth movements that describe consumers' navigating behavior across media. Throughout this chapter, migration in the context of transmedia consumption

(TMC) experiences is deemed as consumers' navigating behavior across three types of media: contained, social media, and extensive<sup>18</sup>.

### **Centrality of Contained Media for TMC Experiences**

The contained media encloses the vital elements of the transmedia universe<sup>19</sup>. There is a central medium for each transmedia storytelling project that is central for consumers' understanding and making sense of the expanded universe in transmedia projects. Some transmedia scholars call this media platform that entails the fundamental story elements of the transmedia universe as “the Mothership,” “the driving platform” (Gomez 2010), or primary medium or primary text (Long 2007, Fiske 1987, Genette 1982). (Please refer to the Dimensions of Typology subsection in Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion of contained media). The contained media/medium<sup>20</sup> is the center of the consumer's transmedia consumption experiences. In that regard, this central platform is the node, junction, and connection point. As I have mentioned in the typology chapter, there is a central text and media for each transmedia storytelling project that is at the center of the other intertextually connected media and texts. The scholars agree on the concept of intertextuality (as detailed in the literature review section), yet the methodological questions such as how to examine intertextual structures and social structures shaping these intertextual texts are still unresolved.

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<sup>18</sup> Please refer to “Chapter 4 Typology of TMC Experiences” for the explanation of these three types of media.

<sup>19</sup> In Chapter 5, I have detailed how this concept emerges from my data.

<sup>20</sup> In *Lost* franchise, contained media is composed of the six season of the television show. In some other transmedia franchises, the vital elements of the expanded universe can be communicated via multiple media platforms. That's why I prefer to use plural – contained media – instead of “contained medium”

Primary text is the commonly used term to refer to this central story or platform. Scholars define the primary text in different ways (I detail these discussions in the Chapter 2). According to Genette's (1982), hypotext is the earlier text that serves as a source for the current text. Any text is hypertext, grafting itself onto a hypotext, an earlier text that it imitates or transforms. Similarly, Fiske (1987) defines the primary text as the individual program— for example, a TV program or series — that the other related texts make reference to or draw meaning from. Building on Genette's (1982) explanations about intertextuality and secondary elements, Long (2007) also stresses the important role of the primary text and states that transmedia franchises focus on successful primary elements, subsequently; secondary extensions build on the primary text. This primary text (sometimes termed primary elements or media) is signaled by the producers of the franchise and is consumed by the majority of the consumers who are somehow engaged with that franchise. For instance, the primary text is the story told in movies for *Star Wars* and *The Matrix*, TV show for *Lost*, *Fringe*, *True Blood*, and *24*, video game for *Halo* and *Tomb Raider*, comic book for *Spider Man* and *Catwoman*, and book for *Harry Potter* and *The Lord of the Rings*. The primary text is devised for the primary media. Yet, this primary text can be accessed through other media platforms as a result of the proliferation of 'expanded access' (Askwith 2007, 56). The number of posts and TV show forums and the traffic on *Lost*pedia (and similarly on other forums) compared to those on the forums about *Lost* ARG, novels, book club, and video game forums also point to the centrality of the story of the *Lost* television show. This section explains the emergent characteristics of the primary text as the departure, reference, and hub.

Throughout my analysis, I preferred to use the term "contained media" instead of "primary text" for several reasons. First, contained media is consistent with the other labels I use

to refer to the hypertexts: secondary media and intertextual media. Second, "contained" also communicates the world included in that media. Primary text assumes that there is a single text or story that the consumers can refer for the vital elements of a transmedia universe. This might not be true for all transmedia franchises. In *Lost*, contained media is the serialized six seasons of the weekly episodes. The story arch is over the six seasons. For *24*, the contained media is each season. For a transmedia franchise, the vital elements of the franchise might be dispersed using multiple platforms, unlike *Lost* or *24*. Along these lines, I also prefer to call this central platform as 'contained media' rather than 'contained medium.'

*Contained Media as the Departure.* The contained media is the common starting point for most consumers of *Lost*. TMC experiences start with the activities related to this central platform (See the 'Anchoring' subtitle in the Typology Section). It is the common touchpoint where most consumers enter and start their engagement with the franchise. Similarly, most *Lost* consumers start their engagement with the franchise through their interface with the television show (i.e., story told in the TV show). Due to technological convergence and advancements, the story of the world told in the central media can be accessed via several other media platforms. Askwith (2007, 56) calls these additional touchpoints 'expanded access'<sup>21</sup> (e.g., DVD, The Internet, Digital Hubs like iTunes). The story of *Lost* television show might be consumed via watching it live on TV as it unfolds weekly, reading the episode recaps through *Lostpedia* or other online resources, or catching up on DVDs or episodes on *Hulu*. Consumption of the *Lost* television

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<sup>21</sup> Expanded access touchpoints do not provide new or original show related content, but instead provide additional points of access to the show's core content (i.e., full length episodes) through a range of distribution platforms and channels. Expanded access touchpoints empower media consumers to access content whenever and wherever they want, through whatever device or medium is available." (Askwith 2007, 56)



show — regardless of the expanded access — is the central point for the consumption of the franchise.

In sum, contained medium /media is the departure and starting point for most *Lost* consumers. As described in the TMC typology in the previous chapter, anchoring is the foremost TMC practice in which *Lost* consumers engage. *Lost* consumers anchor the television show prior to any move to the consumption of other *Lost* extensions (such as ARGs, novels, video games). Furthermore, the way they anchor to the show has an effect on their migration behavior across media platforms as I have explained in Chapter 5. In the transmedia landscape that offers consumers several touchpoints, departing from the contained media helps consumers have a meaningful and complete experience with the franchise.

*Contained Media as the Reference.* This central platform serves as the basis to evaluate the value of each text or media platform integrated into transmedia storytelling of a particular franchise. It sets the facts and standards about whether information or story told via a certain media platform belongs to the *Lost* world or not. Consumers double-check and analyze any information about the *Lost* world for its consistency and its accuracy with respect to the core story in the television show. Consumers ascertain, triangulate, or verify the information or the parts of the story they have learned through social media and secondary elements against the story told in the television show over the six seasons. For instance, consumers play the *Lost* video game (*Via Domus*) and evaluate the authenticity of the animated world of the video game with reference to the *Lost* world they have seen in the television show. In that regard, *Lost* viewers consider the story in the television show to be the basis of the *Lost* universe. If the new bit of information or the story that is told via another resource aligns with the story of the television show, this new story might be considered as part of the world that *Lost* consumers patch together (See ‘Patching’ in the

Typology chapter for details about world making). Any conflict with the central story in these contained media affects the acceptability of this new bit of information into the *Lost* world. In other words, the contained media serve as the reference for the emic perspective of canonicity — the quality or state of being canonical, attributed authoritatively to a particular artist or franchise (Anderson 2000) — by *Lost* consumers.

Canon, in very simple terms, is used to refer to the officiality of the texts and stories in a franchise that describes the world of a particular fictional series or franchise (Jindra 1994). If a text or medium is considered canon, it means it is regarded to be an official part of that universe. Cova et al (2007, 202) calls this official body of work as the “official lore” of the franchise. Canonicity is a way to judge the consistency and the fit of the new information for that franchise. Canonicity is frequently defined by the producers and refers to their perceptions of what belongs to the particular fictional universe. Yet, it is important to note that the term does not necessarily define the set of media or stories produced by the creators but might also entail what the producers think — and what might even be co-created by consumers — that belongs to that particular universe. My data reveal that *Lost* consumers are led by producers about the canonical elements — sometimes by producers’ explicit announcements of the canonical elements of a universe. As TokyoRose expresses, he relies on producers’ words about what might happen to assess the canonicity of stories in secondary media.

As far as I see it, it's not canon. Darlton [one of the writers of the television show] told Hoodlum a salvage ship would find the wreckage in season four and they came up with an ARG round that. It wasn't TPTB so isn't really relevant to the show. Just a fun thing to keep people occupied during the hiatus (TokyoRose, ARG: Find 815, 2008).

Yet, in context of TMC, the worlds told via the contained media is the utmost reference for consumers to judge about the canonicity of the new information. Hence, consumers' perceptions of what counts as canon — fan canon (Jenkins 1992, 91) — is guided by the producers' explanations, but not limited or bounded by the producers' definition. They compare and contrast every bit of information with the story of the television show to judge about its canonicity. It is important to note, however, generally, 'there is no unanimity among fans on the parameters of the canon' (Porter and McLaren 1999, 53). Yet, the fan canon is socially constructed and collectively agreed by the fans (Cova et al 2007, 202)

Canonicity might refer to the fit of information (e.g., storyline, characters) or of media platform (e.g., movies, video games). It is the body of work that is deemed to be the 'legitimate narrative of the cultural consumption (Cova et al 2007, 202). If there is conflicting information from one medium, sometimes consumers not only regard that particular information as non-canon, but they might extend the non-canon to the media level and label the whole story told on this platform as non-canon. And, in some instances they label the entire medium as "semi-canon", i.e., not canon, but not completely unrelated to the *Lost* world either. Yet, "semi-canon" medium is treated with ambivalence and hesitation for its connection to the *Lost* world and especially its relation to the television show.

It's [ARG: Find 815] semi canon. We first learned in Find 815 that a salvage ship called Christiane found the fake plane. This was later confirmed on the show... And even if the rest isn't canon we didn't waste our time with it. I was kind of ready for this. Nobody said it was canon, so you couldn't just assume it was. It was a fun game, even if it wasn't canon all the way through. (Erf, ARG: Find 815, 2008)

One other way that consumers use the contained media as a reference is to establish the timeline in the *Lost* universe. The *Lost* story, like many other transmedia projects, entails a non-linear narrative dispersal where the events are not presented in a chronological order. Particularly for the *Lost* story, this non-linear narrative became more complex with the integration of flashforward, flashback, and flash-sideway<sup>22</sup> stories. The timeline presented or implied in the television show establishes the backbone of the sequence of events that might happen in the *Lost* universe. Consumers use this particular timeline as a reference to check the accuracy of the timing of the events as they are presented by other stories on different media platforms. Timeline conflicts are criteria for consumers to judge the canonicity of the story or the whole story that media platform presents. Consumers like Pandora below judge the canonicity of a story in ARG calculating the possible ages of the characters using the flash-forwards, flashbacks, and flash-sideways as a clue:

It'd be interesting, but I don't think it's meant to be the same Rachel. Juliet's sister is in her 30s or 40s and in the past, and Rachel Blake is a teenager in the present (and played by a different actress) (Pandora, *ARG: The Lost Experience*, 2007)

This [information in the ARG: Find 815] isn't canonically accurate... as Jack flew on Oceanic around July of this year... if not earlier. (Malion, *ARG: Find 815*, 2007)

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<sup>22</sup> In literature, film, and other media, a flashback (also called analepsis) is an interjected scene that takes the narrative back in time from the current point the story has reached. Flashbacks are often used to recount events that happened prior to the story's primary sequence of events or to fill in crucial backstory. In the opposite direction, a flash-forward (or prolepsis) reveals events that will occur in the future. Flash sideways is a new narrative technique. The flash sideways, like flashbacks and flash-forwards, intercut into episodes' main action a secondary storyline, which covered the centric characters at a different time. ([http://lostpedia.wikia.com/wiki/Flash\\_sideways](http://lostpedia.wikia.com/wiki/Flash_sideways))

Well the timeline is screwed up...Since Kate and Jack get rescued off the island, and it was 2007, Rachel Blake said no one knew about the Dharma Initiative, and no one knew where they were...But they would find out by saving the Losties.

(Apollo Candy, *ARG: The Lost Experience*, 2007)

Sometimes the possible inconsistencies with respect to the central story are regarded as clues by consumers. Consumers speculate as to how these inconsistencies might be hints to some of the mysteries in the *Lost* world and whether or not these inconsistencies were intentionally integrated in the story by the producers. Responding to Apollo Candy's timeline analysis, mac\_ad speculates about how the timeline in the ARG might not be in contradiction with that of the television show, but rather might be a clue:

We don't know that this boat actually rescues them, it could be another. 2) We don't know its Mittelwerk going there right now with Naomi, it may be someone on a different team. Also, it seems Jack hasn't been back long based on the Head of Surgery not really knowing who he is. He may have gotten back in early 2007 or late 2006. If we see the 'Helgus Antonius' then we know they screwed up, or do we? The time and space thing is still an issue, and Jack may have been dropped back in his own time for instance. (mac\_ad, *ARG: The Lost Experience*, 2007)

The contained media also serve as the reference for the consumption of intertextual media — popular culture texts or literary titles that are perceived to be intertextually connected to the *Lost* universe. Consumers' experiences of these intertextual media will depend on whether or not they engage with these media in relation to or independent of their *Lost* experience. Trying to find, understand, and explain the intertextual connections between these titles and the *Lost* story, they seek for similarities in characters or for parallels between the story lines.

You know Darlton [one of the writers of the television show] has always said that *The Stand* was an inspiration for *Lost* (*The Stand* is a *Dark Tower* book), but I see all kinds of DT [*Dark Tower*] references in *Lost*. Seems to me that there are more DT influences than Stand ones. Of course that could just be because I'm looking for them, but still. (Merlin1958, Book Club, 2010)

I'm almost done with my current Stand read...it's my third time reading the book. It's really interesting to read it while thinking about *Lost* connections. There are certainly plenty...I look forward to discussing them here!! (LoRab, The BookClub, 2009)

I love *The Stand*. It's one of my favorite books. It's been a while since I've read it, as well. There are a lot of character parallels- for instance the reluctant male leader (Stu=Jack). The female who stands by him (Frannie=Kate), the faithful dog (Kojak (Glen's dog- Glen was the old man, not The Judge)=Vincent), the musician (Larry=Charlie) and so on. I'll have to dust off my copy and read it again. (BeachBabe, The Book Club, 2009)

The world communicated via the contained media also serves as the reference of value for the consumers — a baseline to evaluate the relationship between benefits and costs of TMC. Jenkins (2006, 95-96) states that “a transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole.” Long (2007, 33) poses a very important question about this the distinctive and valuable contribution issue: ‘But, isn’t valuable subjective?’ The value of additional media or information is subjective. From the consumer perspective, the value of each text, story, or information is evaluated in reference to the primary text. Specifically, consumers make use of the producers’ definition of

what canon is and what it is not to judge the extent of the value secondary medium presents. In a *Lost*pedia thread ‘Is this game worth getting,’ members discuss the value of the *Lost: Via Domus* video game. In several other threads, the value/worth of the game is considered using several criteria as to whether the new game is providing an experience the television show does not or telling part of the story the television show has not. CTS explains why he thinks the video game is worth a buy:

If you're a die-hard *Lost* fan who appreciates the detail of the show, I would definitely get the game. It is cool to explore more of what is not seen on the show (such as the Swan reactor, Hydra tunnels, and Flame basement). All of these are considered canon, so it's like an add-on to your *Lost* experience. Despite a plethora of negative reviews, the game is definitely worth the money. (CTS, *Via Domus*, 2008)

The perceived value of the new information or the story from these secondary and intertextual media platforms might be affected by how consumers regard the canonicity level of any particular medium. The value of the canonical elements is high as their connection to the core story — the television show — is somewhat guaranteed. For the canonical texts and media, consumers’ expectations from this new information are generally to add to, and also further, the story in the television show. If that unique contribution is there, consumers regard their investments in the consumption of this story as worthy of their time or effort. On the other hand, consumers regard the non-canon or semi-canon elements as not as valuable since their experience of the television show would not benefit (or would not benefit highly) from the consumption of this extra story. For non-canonical stories and media, they might lower their

expectations accordingly. On the other hand, one of the consumers' expectations from non-canon entertainment is to provide a very rich experience.

It's not in canon anyway so why does it matter? (DL4815162342, ARG: Find 815, 2008)

The story is only tangentially related to the timeline of events on the island - I don't want to give anything from the game away, but for example, nobody ever moves to the caves and then moves back after the hatch is blown open, that whole series of events just doesn't happen in the game. I would be more forgiving of the other shortcomings, I think, if it were more true to the events of the series.

(Paranoid.pj, *Via Domus*, 2008)

*Contained Media as the Hub.* The contained media/medium is the hub of transmedia consumption experiences. It connects all consumption activities of the other media and texts to each other and onto itself. In social network analysis, a hub is described in terms of the centrality and the number of connections that one node makes with the rest of the network (Scott 2006). As such, the hub functions as the connector. The *Lost* television show is the hub of transmedia consumption experiences, stories, characters, the *Lost* expanded universe, and is the focal point of interest for most *Lost* consumers (Figure 11). Long (2007, 144) discusses the future of transmedia storytelling and suggests that the official websites of a franchise is a great 'transmedia hub'. In addition to Long's specification of the central narrative, my study offers interpretation about how this central media and story behaves as a hub and connection point for consumers. Along these lines, my data reveal that the consumers regard contained media as their transmedia hub.



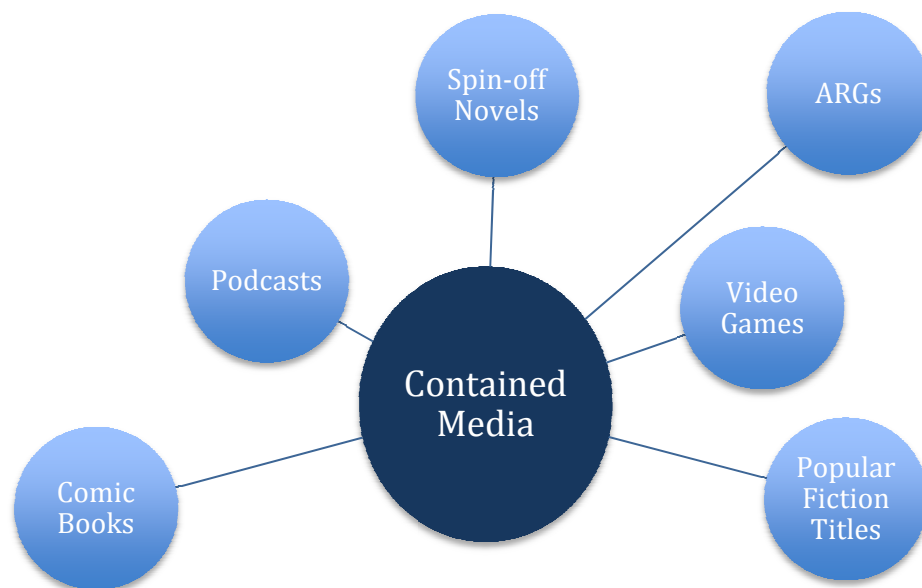


Figure 11: Contained Media as the Hub of Transmedial Migration

One of the functions of the contained media is to funnel all transmedia consumption practices onto itself and serves as an end point for TMC experiences. *Lost* viewers depart from the story of the television show, use it as a hub and a reference, and come back to the television show as their destination. If consumers cross media boundaries, engage with social media, or consume secondary texts or intertextual titles, they bring all of those experiences back to this core media that contains the fundamental elements of the story. Extrapolating what they have learned from these media, they use this additional information or experience to speculate about what might happen in the television show or to get a better understanding of this core story. They use these new parts of the story to come up with a new theory, test their existing theories about where the story might lead, make predictions, or generate speculations about the story arcs, characters, or possible directions of the story. Most of the time, migratory behavior does not end when consumers migrate from the core story to other stories across media:

I can see a similarity with the bomb at the end of season 5. I think it was a 'wake up' call for all the characters...Although I would love a bloody showdown but that

wasn't the point of story. The story was about good standing up against evil and that was what Larry, Ralph and Glen courageously did...I think *Lost* [television show finale] will end in a similar way. Jack and co. will not physically beat up Flocke/Esau but they will do something brave and noble that would prove Esau was wrong about his views on humanity. I think everyone will die except for Sun, Jin, Walt, Vincent, Desmond and Hurley. (Trylobyte, Book Club, 07-31-2009)

I remember when I first read that I thought that it was a real study. This could apply to the new characters that are going to be added to the cast. They could have missed their Oceanic flight and dodged the whole thing like Frank did. (Bring Eko Back, Book Club, 2009)

Although very few in numbers, some *Lost* viewers enter the franchise and start their TMC experiences through the consumption of secondary media, like *Lost* video games rather than through the primary text, the television show. Yet, as evident from the below quote, even in that case, the destination is still the core story, i.e., the television show in case of *Lost*. *Lost Legends* starts his/her *Lost* experience with the consumption of the video game. Yet, s/he states that s/he might have go back to the television show to see through, in other words to understand the true nature of, the *Lost* world. As I state above, consumers need the contained media as the departure to have a meaningful experience of the franchise.

Hi everyone, just signed up, thought I'd say hello. Finished *LOST: Via Domus* before I ever even watched the show, I may have to go back to the show and see through it again to understand the *LOST* Universe (*LOST Legends, Via Domus: 2008*)

## THE MIGRATION PROCESS

This section will detail the emergent characteristics and patterns of the transmedial migration processes.

### **Temporality and Sequentiality.**

There is a temporal and sequential order to transmedial migration. As detailed in the above section, the starting point for transmedial migration is the contained media. The extra touchpoints — DVDs, TiVo, or streaming — helps consumers access the central story of the transmedia universe. Similarly, *Lost* consumers utilize these additional touchpoints to consume *Lost*. As I also mention in the nature of the typology section, media consumption is hierarchical for transmedia consumption experiences. The below figure (Figure 12) explains this hierarchical sequentiality of media migration.

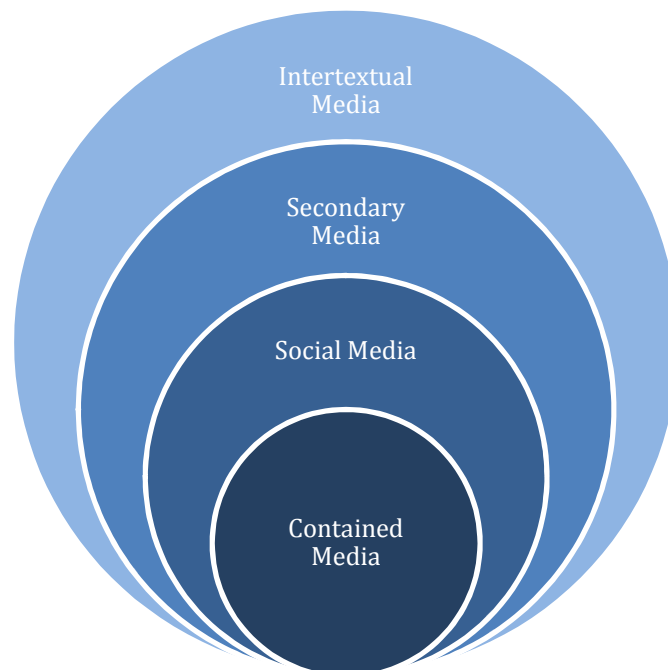


Figure 12: Sequential and Hierarchical Transmedial Migration Process

Besides sequentiality, transmedial migration might also follow a temporal order. Consumers' migration processes are also bound by the producers' schedule of deploying secondary narratives. If people consume the show in real time — in other words, if their consumption is synchronous with producers' deployment of narratives (i.e., they watch the show weekly, play the video games when launched, engage with ARG as the producers are orchestrating that experience) — their migration pattern is more structured, tends to be less random, and is determined more by the producer's activities related to the franchise. Especially for these consumers, the producers' schedule becomes more influential. These consumers expect that producers should do what they are supposed to do, hold up their end of the bargain, and provide consumers with continuous experiences regarding the franchise. Especially during the long hiatuses in between *Lost* television show seasons, consumers expect that producers would provide some sort of a *Lost* experience that consumers can nibble on.

They're [producers] totally gonna have to do something that will keep me (and the rest of us) occupied. I mean, I love reading this forum, but I don't think I can make it through the next 7 or so months with just this....Can you imagine how crazy the theories will be by January? The longer they give us to think, the more outrageous our conclusions will be. (misskitty211980, Episode Discussions, 05-25-2007)

Just contemplating that makes me want to cry. They [producers] just have to give us something to work on. You mean like Jacob is Jeremy Bentham who is a slave from the Black Rock? If I'm already thinking stuff like that up without any substantiation, imagine what I'll be coming up with by October. It is just too sad.

*Lost* writers: Please please PLEEEEEEASE give us something to work on in the interim. (Leiaor, Episode Discussions, 05-25-2007)

Leiaor is crying out for a more closed text, which is defined as texts that leads the reader to a more authorial interpretation (Eco 1984). Leiaor is uncomfortable about the openness of the *Lost* narrative as it leads to several interpretations and do not want to embrace this open —ended stories.

### **Asynchronous consumers**

For consumers who do not engage with real-time watching, transmedial migration is more sporadic and less organized as the producers' lead is absent or in some cases not evident to them. In this case, consumers' navigation across media is more random. Most of the time, they learn about the secondary media or even social media resources later. And, by the time they join the communities or participate in forum discussions about some mysteries or pending questions, the communities have already been established and elaborated upon many questions. Also, some story arcs have already been resolved in the subsequent television episodes. At this time, these asynchronous consumers might decide not to bother migrating or still pick and choose randomly from the media that they can still enjoy as asynchronous s. In that regard, the hierarchical and sequential migration pattern might not hold true for these consumers.

Some secondary texts and secondary media (like ARGs) require synchronous consumption due to the perishability of the digital contents and the producer-paced hunt embedded in the storytelling. TLE (The *Lost* Experience) is one of the early *Lost* alternative reality games. Some of my informants started consuming *Lost* long after the TLE was introduced. These asynchronous consumers who want to engage with TLE encounter several

difficulties. They find out that some of the links required to unlock some codes are not working, or the YouTube videos have been removed. More importantly, the collective memory of knowledge communities about the ARGs or video games fades away. Without the help from the knowledge communities, it is very difficult to go through some ARGs as they require very diverse skills.

sigh, so much happened in those few short months that it's hard to remember it all

lol, Nick the wiki is great, hopefully they will prove us wrong and surprise us

with more to add to the story... although unlikely (mac\_ad, TLE, 05-15-2007)

You can play Find815.com, but TLE is done and over with. But you can view

files, pictures, videos, and experiences, etc on The *Lost* Experience page on

*Lostpedia*. (Apollo Candy, TLE 03-08-2008)

The perishability of online content and fading collective memory affect consumers' migration practices. When consumers cannot consume the ARG live, they adopt different types of practices. Similar to dipping, they migrate to social media resources for the second-hand consumption of these stories. They refer to the portals or Wiki pages where they can read about the stories in these secondary media platforms. Consumers who have previously engaged with the ARGs, video games, or novels — collectively or individually — create Wikis, websites, portals, or blogs for the prospective *Lost* consumers. Via these resources, consumers can find the entire set of the clues, tips, recommendations, roadmaps, or recaps of the secondary texts. The second-hand consumption of these elements in this case is slightly different and more engaged than the dipping practice in the typology context. Dipping implies a quick and less demanding experience with regard to the core of the story told in those secondary platforms. In case of these asynchronous consumers, their objective is not only to get the core of the story. Unlike dipping

consumers, most are genuinely interested in fully engaging with these stories through secondary media. Yet since these consumers do not have access to some online and community resources, they cannot experience the first-hand consumption of these secondary materials. Mac\_ad is a member of *Lostpedia* forums who frequently participates in the discussions, particularly in ARG related subjects. Mac\_ad takes on a leader role in these ARG forums for the asynchronous s who want to play the ARG. He has created a website that he provides blogs, comics, archived documents, or roadmaps to the *Lost* ARGs. Consumers like mac\_ad help these consumers who are asynchronous with the producers by providing their own experiences and also the documents that consumers might need for the proper consumption of some media. These acts facilitate migration of the second-wave consumers to enrich their *Lost* experience and also prevent them bailing out of the whole franchise. The communal support rewards these types of migration efforts even if they are asynchronous with the live unfolding of the franchise.

And for people who are following the ARG, here is a site chronicling the most recent developments. <http://www.heroesarg.com/main/> and the official pages are [www.nbc.com](http://www.nbc.com) and [www.primatechpaper.com](http://www.primatechpaper.com) respectively. So far it seems most of the extra story (ARG) is coming out in comic book form. (mac\_ad, TLE, 06-02-2007)

This new ARG has great production value in the movies etc, but the game play is lacking what we had in the first TLE [*The Lost Experience*: the first *Lost* ARG]. Actually I wouldn't be able to build a webpage if it weren't for the first TLE!!! Have as much fun with the new ARG as you can... Also, if you ever are curious

about old clues like the one you posted and such, check out the wiki, there is a boatload of great info at your fingertips. (mac\_ad, TLE, 01-08-2008)

Some of these asynchronous consumers are not even sure they can still play the ARG, or whether it will still be worth to invest their time and effort in these secondary media platforms. As an asynchronous consumer, I went through that same hesitation myself during my TMC experiences. I had to go through several *Lost* websites to find out whether I can still play the ARGs and if so where I could get the most help to be able to crack the codes in the ARGs. Given that they are — and I am — late, these consumers seek confirmation or substantiation from the community members with regard to whether they can still play the secondary media.

I just found out about these online games like *Lost Experience* and Find815.com.

I want to play TLE, but I am not sure if you can still play it. Thanks. (thegame14, TLE, 2008)

Even if these asynchronous consumers want to fully engage with the secondary stories and even if they access every possible resource to play ARGs, games or read novels, the pleasure of some of these experiences depends highly on their timely consumption (i.e., as the *Lost* story unfolds in real time). In real-time watching, these secondary stories tap into the mysteries or provide some sort of closure via cues on questions that are pending at that time in the *Lost* universe. As the *Lost* story unfolds, these cues become accessible through forums, and are integrated into the television show. So the incentive or the pleasure of consuming these secondary media might not be there for asynchronous consumers.

[Response to whether the video game, *Via Domus*, is worth buying] Short answer, no. It's an "ok" game. ... There are big mistakes and errors as some of the game does not match the show. I think that if you played it 2 years ago then you may



have been satisfied but if you play it now you will just be disappointed.

(UKAndrew, Via Domus, 2010)

### **Voluntary vs. Enforced Migration**

It is important to note that some of these migrations are voluntary. Specifically, consumers often willingly and on their own volition navigate across media platforms. In other cases, some of these migration practices are imposed or unintentional; that is, consumers are courted across media platforms without their conscious decision to move. On the other hand, communities court and even sometimes lead consumers across different media platforms. They provide links, share YouTube videos, point out to the secondary media where some clues can be uncovered, or share their transmedial migration experiences. In this context, the migration might not solely be the decision of the consumer, but is also influenced by their community involvement. These consumers are gently courted across media platforms by their communities. Yet not every instance of community involvement will necessarily lead to transmedial migration of all of its members. But, it is important to note the role of community-induced migration while discussing the reasons for migration.

He's [my husband] somewhere in between me and my parents. He wants to watch them [the episodes], he's interested in watching them sometimes more than once. He will read a blog if I encourage him. If I find something especially juicy or interesting or informative he'll read it. .... I pull it up and make him read it (Gill)

Additionally, some of these migrations are enforced and compulsory. For example, certain types of secondary media require *Lost* fans to intensively navigate across media platforms. For instance, ARGs are, by design, similar to a treasure hunt across media platforms

where consumers navigate across online websites, many offline and online resources, videos, podcasts and so on. In that regard, ARGs demand intensive migration across media.

Furthermore, producers integrate a strong intertextual relation between some secondary texts. In the below quote, Red\_Blaster complains how he had to consume a *Lost* spin-off novel, *Bad Twin*, just to be able to understand the ARG, The *Lost* Experience. So although some consumers do not like to consume some types of secondary texts, they do so just to be able to engage with the other secondary texts that rely on each other.

I have a question about the *Lost* Experience [one of the *Lost* ARGs]. Are we ever going to find out what happened to Thomas Mittelwerk? ... That's a pretty big cliffhanger! I know parts of the *Lost* Experience aren't necessary canon, but this is still a storyline that was important for a lot of us. Some of us even suffered through BAD TWIN [emphasis in the original] for this! I think we deserve some closure. Are we ever going to get a resolution for this arc? It doesn't need to be on the show, it could be in a book, another ARG, a videogame, a couple of sentences on Damon's [one of the writers of *Lost* television show] Twitter...anything! But I doubt we will ever see something related to this again. (Red\_Blaster, ARG: The *Lost* Experience, 2010)

In short, consumers' transmedial migration practices are motivated by one or more of these reasons. As seen in Scott's quote above, he wants to learn more from the blogs but at the same time stresses how migration is also enriching his experience when he obtains information that will not be included in the TV show. Yet, at the same time, none of these reasons explained above might be enough for consumers to engage in transmedial migration. These cited reasons are definitely not the determinants or antecedents of transmedial migration.

## Patterns of Migration

My data reveal some patterns of migration that describe the nature of transmedial migration further. In no way can these patterns be structural and infallible elements of migration nor be considered like that. These patterns are emergent and repeated paths followed by most consumers. Consumers use them to organize their navigation practices across media. At the same time these practices reveal the unstructured, unruly, and randomness of the transmedial migration. These patterns should not be interpreted in any capacity to define or limit consumer agency in transmedial migration.

*Seesaw Pattern.* First, the transmedial migration might follow a **seesaw pattern**. As I have detailed in the above sections and illustrated in Figure 13, the center of transmedial migration is the primary text (that can be consumed on primary media and expanded access). Consumers migrate to other media platforms — for example to social media — but always make the connection back to the contained media. They might use the experiences in these other media to enhance their understanding of the central story or to get closure on some questions. With this renewed understanding of the central story, they navigate across other media such as secondary and intertextual ones. And, as I detailed earlier when discussing the contained media as hub, consumers try to use all those information in relation and with respect to the contained media.

Especially for consumers who do not have prior fan experience, have never engaged with a transmedia narrative, or who are not technologically literate, all of the Internet activities (blogging, searching, posting, discussing, and so on) or communal consumption experiences might be drastically new and also intimidating. In that case, consumers might adopt a media migration pattern that entails steps that requires small, less extreme changes or demands from them. Through these small steps, they gradually socialize themselves with respect to what

transmedia consumption experiences require from them. For instance, if some *Lost* viewers have not used Internet, social media, forums, or blogs before, they might hesitate to play an ARG (and, if they know how to play it), engage with a video game. Yet they might prefer to migrate to a secondary medium that they are more comfortable with, and that requires less specialized skills (e.g., spin-off novels). As they learn to engage with knowledge communities there and then they might try playing the ARG.

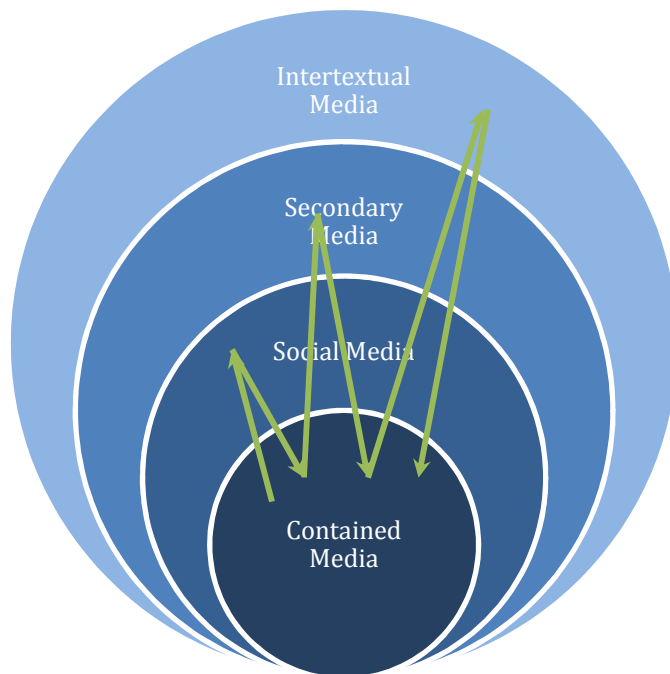


Figure 13: Patterns of Transmedial Migration: Seesaw Pattern

In addition to the individual migration patterns, my data also reveal roles of communities in transmedial migration. When the communities in social media or secondary media reach a critical mass, they spur more consumers to migrate and navigate across media as they act as an established linkage. They teach the new consumers, provide “head ups” notices and information,

and also serve as an emotional and intellectual support<sup>23</sup>. A critical mass of consumers should be sustained to form a knowledge community for this chain migration to occur. Most of my informants who engage in the communal consumption of *Lost* express that they have chosen communities where they already know the members or have some sort of familiarity with them. That does not mean that they do not participate in *Lostpedia* or other bigger communities. Nevertheless, their main *Lost* community is mostly one where they have some kind of a connection or familiarity.

*Broken Levee Effect*. Transmedia narratives can be considered as consumption webs (Kozinets 1997) that ‘increasingly draw a group of consumers into deeper and more profound levels of (sub)cultural involvement and enthusiasm, consumption, and investment.’ Kozinets (1997, 201) defines consumption webs as ‘the holistic set of related consumption objects in a culture or community of consumption that specify object complementarity, and impel further culture-specific consumption.’ A similar pattern emerges from my data. After consumers migrate across boundaries, they want to engage further within that particular media platform. For example, once they start engaging with one ARG, they want to try the other *Lost* ARGs. Similarly, once they start reading intertextual media titles, they want to go deeper into that. I call this phenomenon the **broken levee** effect. Once the boundary or barrier to migration is broken, consumers explore and expand into in that media (See Figure 14). By connecting media products, stories, and experiences, the broken levee effect suggests that ‘different types of consumption webs are connected and interconnected, forming an overarching consumption web or consumer culture’ (Kozinets 1997, 202).

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<sup>23</sup> I provide more detail about this support mechanism in the community in the Collaboration section of Chapter 5.

.... Just wanted to say that I am LOVING this series. After I read The Stand I decided I wanted to see what the Dark Tower was all about. (ZEITGEIZT, Book club, 2010)

Yeah, I went back to find 815 awhile ago to see if I could finish it. I started it but it was so buggy on my pc and I thought it was a bit silly so I quit. When the new ARG came out I wanted to go back and do 815. No luck. It's over. Wish I would have done TLE. I heard that was pretty cool. (SawyerCallsMeGrimace, TLE, 2008)

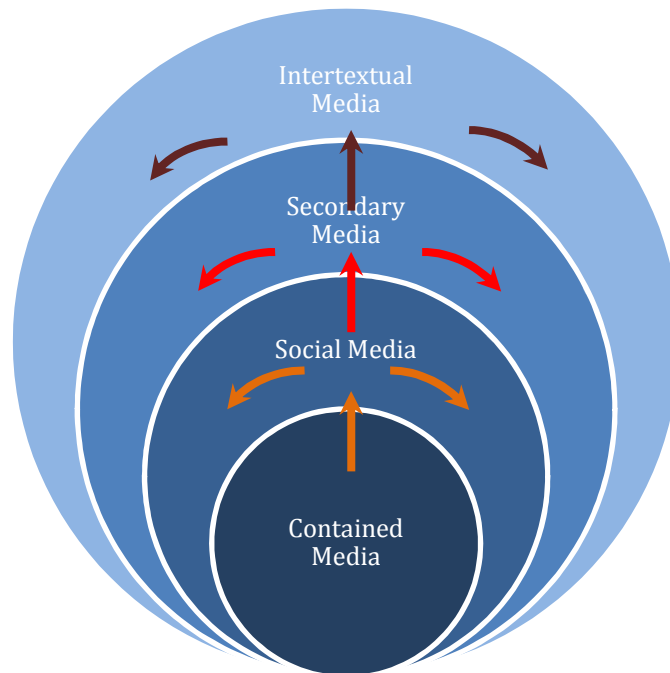


Figure 14: Patterns of Transmedial Migration: Broken Levee Effect

## REASONS OF MIGRATION

“Media fans take pleasure in making intertextual connections across a broad range of media texts.” (Jenkins 1992, 36)

In the context of transmedia consumption experiences, consumers’ migratory behavior is driven by various reasons. This section will detail consumer motivations for navigating across media platforms.

### **Extend, Sustain, and Enhance Their Experiences with the Franchise**

Consumers migrate across media to extend, sustain, and enhance their transmedia consumption (TMC) experiences. Below, I will unpack each of these behaviors in turn.

Extend. Consumers migrate across media to **extend** their transmedia consumption experiences. They seek various means to engage with the franchise. *Lost* consumers navigate across media platforms and engage with *Lost*-related content and media just because it is yet another entity they find that pertains to *Lost*. In truth, these consumers might not be that concerned about the quality of this additional content or the possible contributions it makes to the *Lost* world. Their migration decisions are initiated more by their tendency to grasp any possible opportunity that would proliferate the ways they can engage with the franchise. Along those lines, Atarada describes how s/he consumed the *Lost* video game, despite its low quality. Atarada embraces every opportunity that she can experience the *Lost* universe. The joy for her is not about whether the additional media would contribute to her understanding of the booger *Lost* universe but the experience of anything *Lost*. Her transmedial migration is mostly driven by hedonic motivations.

Hey, if you can try it for free, just try it [*Lost* video game: *Via Domus*]. Don't expect anything good from it, so at least you're gonna enjoy the rare good things in the game. It's a bad game as a player, as a fan... it's... hum well, "meh, but entertaining, and it's still fun to interact, even slightly, with the *Lost* universe".

Give it a shot. (Atarada, *Via Domus*, 2010)

*Sustain*. Consumers' transmedial migrations are also fostered by their motivation to **sustain** their transmedia consumption experiences. During the hiatuses, consumers migrate across media platforms and engage with transmedia consumption with the franchise to a greater extent. In between weekly episodes and in between seasons, *Lost* consumers' engagement with the secondary texts or intertextual titles intensify. There is also an increase in the number of posts both in the ARGs, book clubs, and video game forums during these hiatus periods. Consumers rely on these secondary or intertextual texts to sustain their engagement with the franchise. Mac\_ad complains about the lack of content to refer to producers not giving any stories to the consumers. Consumers like mac\_ad expect producers to give them some story or pieces of a narrative without any discontinuity. This desire for closed text (Eco1984) affect the pleasure they get from the franchise during hiatuses.

So, we've beat TLE to death, and last year we were lucky enough to have a plethora of *Lost* info for hiatus. With the huge difference between last year and this year, including a much longer hiatus to wade through, are you all as upset with TPTB as I am that they have left us high and dry, with nothing *Lost* related to keep us going? There has been talk of a game which I haven't heard much about lately, but even that isn't enough content I'm sure even if it were to come out right now. I want a book which is Canon, like Gary Troops Bad Twin [Bad



Twin is a *Lost* spin-off novel] (which wasn't all canon) Or a podcast to answer questions, or a simple website giving us a piece every now and then.. I'm not even asking for a full on ARG. We fans have put in countless hours and money towards DVDs/products, research, and have made awesome sites such as *Lost*pedia, and with the lack of content right now I can't help but feel almost...betrayed. Does anyone else feel the same way? (mac\_ad, TLE, 2007)

The ending of the story in the contained media leads consumers to secondary media platforms to sustain and also extend their engagement with *Lost*. As such, consumers' transmedial migration became more intense and frequent when the *Lost* television show was over. Some consumers tried to play the video game when the television show was running and were dissatisfied with the game. But merely to avoid the emptiness caused by the finale of the show, even these consumers re-consider buying the game once the show was over. The secondary media and ancillary *Lost* material are used as a way to cope with the ending of the television show, just as coping mechanisms emerge after the loss of a relationship (Kübler-Ross 1969).

Monday, I actually went out and bought this [*Lost* video game: *Via Domus*].

Because it was "the only *Lost* I have left". Personally I thought the game was terrible, but it wasn't a terrible story itself. (The Numbered Rabbit, *Via Domus*, 2010)

*Enhance*. Consumers migrate across media also to **enhance** their experiences of the franchise. Consumers expect that, at some point, the information from these secondary stories and all intertextual media will be linked to the primary text and enhance their experiences. While consumers are deciding to consume a secondary text or a related literary title, they want to know

whether or not this new story will enhance their understanding of the core story of this particular universe. Similarly, *Lost* fans try to understand how consuming a certain *Lost* spin-off or an extension will contribute to their understanding of the *Lost* story. Predominantly, they expect that transmedial migration will provide them a better grasp of the central story, the television show. The evaluation of the benefits and costs regarding the consumption of the secondary and intertextual media is one of the key determinants of transmedial migration. In this section, I will only focus on how the possible contribution of the secondary media facilitates migration as it might enhance TMC experience. In the succeeding section, I will provide consumer accounts about why consumers decide *not* to migrate after they make judgments about the low value of these additional media and how that judgment might actually act as a barrier to migration.

PadLocke reminds *The Matrix* franchise and how the stores in the animated movies assisted consumers to have a richer experience of the trilogy movies. As Jenkins (2006) notes, *The Matrix* is one of the good examples of transmedia franchises where the stories dispersed to other media enrich consumers' experience in the contained media. Consumers, especially the ones with previous transmedia consumption experience, expect that each media contributes uniquely to the bigger narrative (Jenkins 2006).

I know that we all love the show and probably some of us would actually want to be on the island, but who here thinks this game [*Lost* video game: *Via Domus*] will be any good? If they can make it whereas the story is the driving force of the game, and not throw us silly action sequences (kill the polar bear before it ravages the camp, multiple times throughout the game) it can be a good game. Help us to understand the show more through the game and such (like the Animatrix movies and game did). (PadLocke, *Via Domus*, 01-23-2008)

On similar grounds, dispirito wants to know more about ‘this unique and distinct contribution’ of the video game (Jenkins 2006). He judges the value of the transmedial migration by this unique contribution of the secondary media to the core story.

Does the *Lost* Experience directly influence the show? Like if we did not follow it, will we understand the show less than the people who did? Is there any information that is useful towards the plot of the show? Was it meant to give people answers about the show or just something for fun. Answers please!!!!!!  
(dispirito, ARG: The *Lost* Experience, 2007)

All the media I used. I did podcast, I did websites, streaming video, there was, you remember these little short, they weren’t on the season on ABC but they had these video clips, they were extra mobisodes those were cool. Those were very very cool. They brought a little flavor, extra flavor that wasn’t going to be shown on TV. One of them I remember, Christian Shephard is petting Vincent, the dog, in one of his mobisodes and says “go find my son, he is out there” and now that I know that he was dead. (Sean)

Transmedial migration also enhances transmedia consumption experiences by providing further immersion in the *Lost* world. Social media engagement, re-watching the show on other platforms, communal consumption in the blogs, or consumption of the secondary media such as video games, ARGs, novels take the consumers deeper into the *Lost* story. Stressing the quality of the experience, some fans accept the demands put on them as consumers of *Lost* and want to understand what is going on in the *Lost* world. They navigate across media platforms and get further engaged in the story.

I’m sure there are some people who can just watch the series and get what they need out of it and enjoy the series for what it is, or for some aspect of it. But, for

me to get the most enjoyment out of it yeah its [DVDs] essential because you have to watch it more than once and there are certain episodes where I have to watch three times to feel like I got everything out of it and understood what was going on. (Meg)

I think it's just a personality preference. I mean for my husband he enjoys *Lost*, but deep down [for him] it's TV, you know it's just a TV show. For me it's much more of an experience and I knew there were smart things happening and I wanted to be able to discuss them with people. So, I had to go find out what was going on from the people who it is their full time job. Doc Jenson [a famous and popular *Lost* blogger who writes weekly on *Entertainment Weekly*] does nothing else. I knew he would have time to watch every episode to catalog everything and tell me what these things meant. I treated that as my secondary job, like I was studying like my secondary source of *Lost* information as opposed to just watching the show. (Gill)

I love the mystery solving aspect of it and the logic puzzle and trying to solve the mystery itself, and figuring out all the little clues and having things being hidden and discovering them. To me that was a huge part of the fun doing those things.

The show itself was wonderful too. I like the end. (Jill)

The various ways and technologies that the core story can be accessed also enhance transmedia consumption experiences. Migration to these media platforms of 'expanded access' (Askwith 2007, 56) provide a richer experience to *Lost* consumers in several ways. DVDs, TiVo, and streaming provide time flexibility of the consumption. Also, DVDs and TiVo provide a seamless experience that is not invaded by commercials. These media also grant more control to

consumers, enabling them to manage their viewing experiences. They can pause, rewind, fast forward, or zoom to a particular scene if they need to. Most of my informants assert that they prefer watching *Lost* on TiVo, as the live airing on TV is interrupted by too many commercial breaks. Although I have informants who cannot wait for that extra 15 minutes to see the weekly episode of the show, consumers either stagger (i.e., start 10-15 minutes later than the actual start) or watch a few days after the original show's airing. Furthermore, although watching an episode streamed on a computer affects the experience due to the screen size and interruptions by commercials, this access option generally enhances consumer experience. On DVDs, particularly, the extra scenes, bonus features, or deleted scenes add to consumers' *Lost* experience. Some consumers perceive these as new information or insight to the *Lost* world.

[Responding to a follow-up question of what he likes about DVDs] But mostly just deleted scenes and maybe some commentary. If it's with like the creators 'cause they may kinda explain why they did this. I mean it enhances it [my experience] a little bit. Especially deleted scenes just because like I said... So I guess it's kinda cool to be able to see things that didn't make the cut. Kind of adds a little bit you know other things that, even though, they might not ever necessarily be called back on again or whatever. Little extra. Little something.

(Matt)

These extra information on bonus or deleted scenes help consumers differentiate their worlds — the ones that they patched together — from the other consumers. Watching and knowing these extra details is like accessorizing their worlds to make them a little different from the other consumers. These information make the consumers feel like an insider of this universe.

## **Economy of Information Management**

One of the structural characteristics of the transmedia narrative is “negative capability” (Keats 1817). In the storytelling context, “negative capability is the art of building strategic gaps into a narrative to evoke a delicious sense of uncertainty, mystery, or doubt in the audience” (Long, p 53). As Long (2007, 59) notes, negative capabilities are closely linked to migratory cues, or signals towards another medium. They are means through which various narrative paths are marked by an author and located by a user through activation patterns (Ruppel 2005). In short, negative capabilities are where these cues are planted. In the transmedia context, the objective of these negative capabilities and migratory cues is to lead consumers across the media platforms to fill holes in the story that might create ambiguity for the consumers. Combined with the intertextuality and the dispersed stories across a multitude of media platforms, information management becomes a problem for consumers engaging with transmedia narratives. In this context, transmedial migration becomes a coping strategy for information management. Although negative capabilities and migratory cues might initiate or facilitate some migration across media platforms, the role of the narrative is underdetermined. In other words, neither the narrative nor the structural characteristics of the narrative (e.g., negative capability, migratory cues) necessarily actualize transmedial migration. Several social cultural, technological barriers and contexts affect whether and how the consumers will navigate across media platforms (I will discuss these barriers in the next section). In this section, I will describe how consumers navigate across media as a part of their information management practices, a coping strategy of consumers in the context of transmedia consumption practices.

*Missing Information.* Coping with the ambiguity and curiosity that arises due to the some missing information — perhaps due to the negative capability integrated by the producer or to a piece of information not being included in the *Lost* world — is one aspect of information management. Consumers who are not comfortable with this ambiguity navigate across platforms that can help them with their high need for closure (Hiel & Mervielde 2003). The streaming, DVDs, or any platform that offer binge consumption opportunities — like episode summaries, video recaps of the seasons of the show and so on — are preferred by these consumers who have a high need for closure. For some consumers, this ambiguity is managed by migrating to a communal consumption. They start reading blogs, engage in online conversations, play ARGs, or search for information in some related literary titles.

Well if they really want to know what's going on, I think the curiosity, the curiosity I guess, and being involved in the show to some extent. The show doesn't give you all the information, I think that's part of it, so you have to, if you want to know it all, you still don't, but if you want to know it all you to try to find out locations where you can find possible answers? (Annie)

Ah, well I really liked being able to see what other people were adding into forums, you know, maybe they caught something that I didn't catch. Uh, and it would be nice, sort of, putting pieces together that way. (Meghan)

Across the data, not everyone deals with ambiguity by migrating across media. Some consumers who are uncomfortable with ambiguity in the story might also drop off the bandwagon of the franchise because they do not want to, or know how to, migrate. Thus, they just quit engaging with the show. For example, Abhijeet only watches the television show, and re-watches the episodes when it airs on the national television. He does not stream, watch DVDs,

or use TiVo. He is not involved with any type of communal activity. He states that he likes to watch the television show alone. He does not read blogs or consume any other secondary or intertextual titles. During his interview, he states that he kept engaged in *Lost* over the years because he found his way of dealing with the holes in the story or dealing with the ambiguity. Re-watching the show definitely helps him to keep up with the story. I am including this interview excerpt below to illustrate that a *Lost* consumer who does not read any blogs, consume any form of secondary text, or engage in any form of migration might nevertheless develop unique strategies to stay engaged with the show. Like Abhijeet, according to my data, non-migrating consumers devise these types of personal coping strategies. Abhijeet explains his mindset:

In some ways I have found an interpretation by myself. So this could be x, y, z, and I'll let it be until the series confirms it or denies it. Till it dawned [till the producers reveal the answer in the television show], I am pretty okay with living with my assumption. I keep molding them depending on how things progress. I think you and I were talking about how Sawyer was a cop, and everybody was surprised. I wasn't because I realize the sideways stories are absolutely opposite of what happening on the island. So, when I saw Sawyer, I was like okay, he has to be the best guy in the world. I made that assumption myself so the TV episode confirmed it. I was like okay, cool. If it was denied, I would be like Oh my god, how did I misread it? I would probably go re-watch the episode just to make sure this was how I should have interpreted this action instead of the other way. That's how I deal with a lot of uncertainties they [the producers] leave. (Abhijeet)



*Abundance of Information.* Another aspect of information management is coping with the abundance of information. Consumers have limited resources like time, effort, or skills, and they are bound by some geographical and technological constraints. Consumers migrate across social media and secondary media to find people who have information that they cannot get due to these limited resources and constraints.

It's a lot of information, a ton of information, so for people who are online all the time they are constantly having that information at the back of their head constantly. Stuff from season one can be brought up and so you know that information is always present, always there, always a part of the discussion. Whereas if you're just watching from one episode to the next, it's really easy to forget what happened two seasons ago. Because you don't have that brought up in your memory. So, it's a whole lot harder to make the connections for seasons to pay off. (Janet)

DarkUFO [a popular *Lost* community and blog] would post it and I would listen to the podcasts that Jay and Jim [producers of a popular *Lost* podcast] would do. They actually live in Hawaii and would have certain informants in the field and follow the crew and the filming. So, I would see all the pictures and have an idea of what was happening and so yeah I would keep up with that through the day...They had, there were some people who had the equipment to listen to the whispers and try to break down what the words were so that's when I first started going to *DarkUFO* because they were through there and I try to figure out what was being said in the whispers...(Janet)

Blogs, they are helpful. What is helpful about them is that you just get a bunch of other people's opinions and points of view that you wouldn't get otherwise. As you know, just me and you sitting here talking in the middle of the University of Illinois. [During our interview] you probably learned something new about *Lost* today that you didn't know before. That wouldn't have happened unless we interacted. Blogs just allow you to interact that way they let you talk and learn.

(Scott)

Re-watching the episodes and using social media resources are also ways to cope with the abundance of information in the story. Consumers sometimes regularly engage in re-watching the episodes to keep up with the story, refresh their memories, and to be ready to link the unfolding stories to what has happened before. Similar to Larry's story I cited in the typology section, Gill engages in re-watching and very regular engagement with the online communities and social media resources.

Well I can tell you that for the last season I would read some blogs with predictions — two in particular — and try to remind myself what happened in the last episode. Sometimes I would re-watch the previous episode. Especially when they would show it before the most current episode and they had pop-up video where they would show, umm tell more information about things that you might have missed. So I would have often watched that. Probably 50% of the time I did that. Every week I read the blogs the day of and then I watched the show. I would leave it at that just the one watching unless it was really really good, and then I would watch it again the next night. But the following day there were one two three four five websites. (Gill)

Consumers prefer certain media resources that provide more succinct and neatly packaged information. They like *Lost* portals or websites that contain aggregated information from multiple sources. These media decrease the material and immaterial labor (Lazzarato 1996, Terranova 2000) necessary to keep up with the *Lost* story in the face of a daunting number of touchpoints and entertainment options.

Um, honestly I would just do a search on twitter [for *Lost*]. You know, for the most part. Because I wanted to have a cross-section of information. I didn't want to go to one place that was maybe biased more than the other. Actually you know what that reminds me I used to. I used to listen to both the official *Lost* podcast that was done by Damon and Lyndoff [writers of *Lost* television show], and then I would also listen to the unofficial that was done by the couple in Hawaii. I listened to those probably from, you know, late 05 through 07 [2005 through 2007]. You know [stopped] just for time reasons, stopped listening to the *Lost* podcasts. So those were actually part of my evenings. I've never really gotten into the blog culture for entertainment. I do use them as a source for information, but that was just you know, me personally. I like very short, you know, succinct bits of information, which is surprising since my answers are not short and succinct, right? (Juan)

At times, the informants use coping strategies of information management for the welfare of the consumption community. Gill likes to read blogs, tries to solve related puzzles in the *Lost* story, listen to podcasts, and make a point of re-watching the episodes regularly. Beyond her own enjoyment and her own learning, she communicates this information to the other members of her community. Gill has talked her husband, her parents, many of her friends, and

her in-laws into watching the show. I explain the details of this consumer practice in the 'Recruiting' section of the Typology chapter. But beyond recruiting, Gill takes care of the progress of her local community (she is also engaged with bigger communities like *Lostpedia* and Dark UFO). She follows their progress, make sure everyone is on the right track (e.g., meaning, everybody is up to date about the developments in the show, and knows the story) discusses several issues with them, and if necessary helps them find necessary information. Gill resumes the role of the active resource for her local community and becomes the hub of information regarding *Lost* for the members of her local community. This investment in the welfare of the community in turn enhances Gill's TMC experience, as these efforts sustain her community and their involvement with the show. So, she has people around her who are at the same page on *Lost* story with whom she can bounce ideas back and forth.

I was sort of my husband's secondary source because I would read the blogs and kinda talk about the big points with him. It was good to have him more on the same page as me, because then if there were questions like this season with the sideways. Trying to figure out what it was and what it meant. Watching it with him and knowing that he knew at least the majority of the stuff that I knew that I had learned from the blogs he and I could discuss it. You have to have somebody live to bounce these things off of. And I used my friend's blog to comment and ask questions to him if my husband was like "I don't know. I don't know who that little kid is, I don't know what's going on." So I'd ask my friend "who do you think that kid is?" What's the deal with the rules and stuff like that cause my husband he didn't care at some point. 'Cause to him it is still a TV show. And then like my parents, like I said my mom has 15 or 16 other shows that she

watches but I can count on one hand the number of shows that I watch. So I have more energy to devote to it. ....I actually got my in-laws into *Lostpedia* also, because they would miss a lot in New Zealand. The way the show is edited with commercials is different so they would lose a lot of things and be confused and so they used *Lostpedia*. (Gill)

Gill differentiates her experience of *Lost* as well as her relation to *Lost* from that of his husband. She thinks her husband sees the show only as another TV show, just to be watched as it airs and will be resumed next time it is on. However, Gill has a more intimate relation with the *Lost* franchise where she sees her role as a consumer more than mere watching it on TV. She is more selective in terms of the shows she watches but she prefers to be engaged with them on deeper levels.

### **Faith in the puppetmaster<sup>24</sup>**

Consumers' faith in the puppetmaster — producers and writers in the context of *Lost* — is one of the motivations of transmedial migration. Consumers who believe in the producers and their abilities are more flexible and patient with the potholes or rollercoaster moments of storytelling. Cathy, for example, is comfortable with the unfolding of the story. She is not bothered that much that the producers are not providing answers to all the pending questions. The possibility that all of her questions might not be answered very quickly, if at all, does not make her uncomfortable. Cathy's ease with the direction, pace, and the contents of the story is an outcome of her faith in the producers. Building on this faith, Cathy navigates across media to find out some clues and answers about the mysteries.

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<sup>24</sup> Consumers also use TBTP (The Powers To Be) to refer to the producers. TBTS is a more franchise-specific term. It was used in *Angel* show. Puppetmaster has been used across entertainment franchises.

I think .. I think the producer kinda walked a fine line, of like ... introducing a new question almost every week, but then giving you little clues to help you answer previous questions. I think some people bailed, because their questions weren't answered quickly enough. But if you are patient and if you paid attention and if you consumed other media outlets for information, you would start to see the clues, you say like okay, this is maybe a hint of the answer to the question that I have, I may not know the whole answer, but some--- to know the beginning, this is an answer to this question. Here is question A, here is answer A. I think I don't think that way, I think it's okay to have unresolved questions. It was like, each week I keep coming back like I want more hints and more clues, but I'm okay with not knowing. (Cathy)

They [producers] didn't actually write the script or anything like that but still, I still consider some of the arc information in there [podcasts]. Let's see here, their podcasts I pretty much consider as canon knowing they will not lie to us. (Alex)

Because I believed the creators, the producers, I don't know what all titles they held, but I believed them when they said that there was an explanation for everything. And so it was kind of like a giant mystery and I kept trying to, I kept trying to figure out rational reasons that things happened and I really believed that it was going to tie up in the end and make total sense. Because that's what they had indicated in the first year interviews, that everything had an answer and that it made sense. (Jane)

While the faith in the producers might foster transmedial migration, lack of this faith might act as a barrier of migration. Like Erwin, some consumers do not believe in

the skills of the producer for delivering a well-designed story. Erwin thinks the producers have every intention of not telling a coherent story so that consumers will stick till the end of the show to see the answers of some pending questions. As evident from Erwin's quote, consumers think that producers are part of the bigger entertainment industry that tries to make money by engaging more consumers and will benefit from stringing as many consumers as long as possible.

So the whole point of it [*Lost*] was the mystery aspect of it, so if you have something, a mystery is only good as the clues you don't give, if you give all the clues there's no mystery, there's no suspense, shows like *King of the Hill*. I spent a lot of time consuming transmedia for *King of the Hill*, it's an open book, there's no mystery, there are free to tell you everything, and it just me wandering through all the 250 episodes and find where has smoke appeared, who did these voices I don't feel like there's any benefit for the producer of *King of the Hill* to withhold information. For *Lost*, I always felt that it was in their best interest, to not let the stuff get out there, I always thought it will never be a good use of my time to attempt to find something out there. Because the only thing you are gonna see is the stuff they want you to see, and I assume that was through the show... Initially you want to listen to every theory by every fan you want a detailed list of all the information that you missed and you come to a point where you realized, nobody has a f\*\*\* clue on what is going on, no fan has the right story and if he does, we will not gonna learn until the end. He [ J.J.Abrams , the producer of the show] just sat there and lied with a bald face. I think between season 1 and 2. He said there was no time travel in *Lost* and there never will be. You fat motherf\*\*\*\*\*. That's a

lot clearer that there was time travel..... I am much more willing ....if I feel that it is in the best interest of the show to either really promote other forms of media or at least not to hinder. I felt that it was the best interest of *Lost* to hinder transmedia. (Erwin)

## **BARRIERS TO MIGRATION**

Some consumers will not, cannot, or do not want to migrate extensively or at all across media platforms. This section will explore the barriers of migration for these non-migrating and less-migrating consumers.

### **Lack of resources**

Some consumers lack the required or necessary resources for migration. In my data set, limited time resources are one of the most pronounced resources that prevent or hinders transmedial migration. Most of my informants who do not rely on secondary or social media or do so in very limited amounts express that they cannot engage with all the possible touchpoints because they do not have enough time in their schedules. The options available to consume *Lost* are profuse. Furthermore, the time required for these many transmedia consumption practices are definitely daunting for most of the consumers. Time scarcity is sometimes used by informants as an excuse not to further their engagement with the *Lost* franchise. But, at the same time, it is very difficult for an individual to consume each possible touchpoint of the *Lost* world and engage in all possible arrays of co-creative practices.



I think most of them [*Lost* fans] are just like me, like, not having time to do these things. So if I went to a social event and people talk about it, then I would be happy to talk about it, but I would not, I don't know, spend time at the computer writing a whole lot 'cause it takes time to do that. (Annie)

Another important resource that hinders the transmedial migration process is an individual's skill set that pertains to media and technology. Consumers' lack of experience with an interactive media platform or technology holds them back from migration practices. Among my informants, there are several of them who read the blogs — and some for multiple years — without posting anything on them. Some of these informants have the skills and just enjoy the lurking, but some others are hesitant about posting because they are not familiar with these technology-mediated conversations. Similarly, as I have observed in the Posting section in the Typology chapter, my netnographic data reveal the first-time posters after several years of lurking around the forums. According to my data, there is a barrier for consumers to adopt and engage with these interactive, digital, and dynamic community conversations. But, the barrier for transmedial migration might be franchise-specific as evident from Erwin's above quote. Erwin engages with blogs and posts on them for the *King of the Hill* franchise but not for *Lost*. As another example, if a consumer has never played a console video game or does not have the necessary technology (Xbox, PS3, or Wii), any consumption of the *Lost* video games is highly unlikely. Consumers can compensate for the lack of media and technology skills if they are engaged in communal consumption regarding the franchise. Collaboration and sharing in these knowledge communities assists consumers in compensating for these types of insufficiencies.

## Avoiding Spoilers

Spoilers are used by consumers of the franchise to short-circuit the program's narrative design by seeking out advanced plot points online (Jonathan and Mittell 2007). Similarly, for the context of *Lost*, *Lostpedia* describes spoilers as the content that gives away or reveals information about future happenings of the franchise that has not yet been seen<sup>25</sup>. Consumers' attitudes towards spoilers as well as their ways of consuming or avoiding them can vary. Jonathan and Mittell (2007) describe the varying narrative consumption practices of *Lost* consumers regarding spoilers:

How viewers wish to experience narratives unfolding can vary. Some viewers consider the "Next week on *Lost*..." previews following episodes as spoilers, wishing to experience each episode with as little foreknowledge as possible, while others are comfortable seeing any "official" advance information like previews and producer interviews as sanctioned and thus not bona fide spoilers. Some spoilers pop up in everyday fan discussion — though etiquette demands that spoilers be clearly marked as such ("SPOILER WARNING") — but many magazines like *Entertainment Weekly* and commercial websites like E! Online make a business of serving up spoilers. Most fan sites have dedicated spoiler boards, where spoilers are not only circulated but exhaustively discussed, evaluated for veracity, and used for both community-building and group speculation. Importantly, though, while spoilers have spoiler fans, they also spread virally, "spoiling" non-spoiler fans and forcing advance information upon

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<sup>25</sup> [http://lostpedia.wikia.com/wiki/Lostpedia:Spoiler\\_policy](http://lostpedia.wikia.com/wiki/Lostpedia:Spoiler_policy)

them; hence, their relevance extends well beyond the Internet enclaves that tend to circulate and even research them.

Consumption of spoilers as a narrative consumption practice is a very broad topic in itself. Article by Jonathan and Mittell (2007) would provide a detailed discussion of consumption of spoilers in *Lost* franchise to the interested readers. Avoiding spoilers emerges as a theme that holds back some consumers from migrating across media. Some consumers do not want to read or engage in community conversations in forums or blogs as they believe they might be exposed to any type of spoilers. And, as Jonathan and Mittell (2007) explain, what consumers regard as a spoiler varies. For example, some consumers might avoid engaging with some of intertextual media like literary titles, as these media can reveal something about the possible direction or some sort of an answer to the *Lost* story.

Anyone feel up to writing a very brief synopsis [of King's book *The Stand*] for me? All of the ones I have found online are too vague, I don't really get a good 'picture' of the series. And I don't really want to dig too much deeper for fear of being spoiled! (GOBernardGO, Book club, *The Stand*, 2010)

Just a quick question, sorry if it's been asked I didn't want to go through the topic in case of spoilers, I want to read *The Stand* since I've heard great things and I love Stephen King but I heard *Lost* is similar in a lot of ways, even down to Flocke being similar to the bad guy in the Stand. I don't know if I should read it know and notice similar things in *Lost* in the future and say "oh 'like the stand" or keep *Lost* as something totally original in my eyes then read it later. are the similarities really that close or am I worrying for no reason? (Misticknight, Book Club, 2010)

## Perceived Value of Migration

Consumers weigh the benefits and costs of transmedial migration. In the above section, I mention how time pressure is a limitation for some consumers to engage with the secondary texts or additional material about *Lost*. In addition to time limitations, consumers want to be assured that it would be worth their time and effort if they invest in consuming these secondary and additional materials. Simply put, performing some cost and benefit accounting, they try to calculate the added value of the migration.

Consumers might perceive that the benefits from migrating are not clear enough, or that the cost of those benefits is too high. This cost and benefit accounting might lead them to an idea that consuming certain extensions does not provide enough value. In the *Lost* context, this value judgment manifests itself as either believing there is no meaningful answer that will be provided by this ancillary content, or in thinking that the show will provide similar information. Secondary or intertextual media are expected to contribute to informants' understanding of the *Lost* universe, particularly the television show. Consumers question how these extra stories will contribute to their deeper understanding of the TV show.

No, actually. I didn't [play the *Lost* video game: *Via Domus*], because when I first thought about playing it, I read a lot of the reviews, and they said it didn't add anything to the story, but as a video game, it was very bad. So I have no experience with it besides what I read. None of my other friends were really big video gamers that watched *Lost*. I had two groups of friends, friends who watched *Lost*, and friends who played videogames. So I didn't know anybody else who played the *Lost* videogame. (Chris)

Well I do realize that a lot of people have their panties in a bunch over this, but the reality is this: ask yourself, "Does it matter?" I mean realistically, the only reasons they told us this stuff is because either (a) we'll learn it soon enough on the show any way to a lesser or greater degree, or (b) because we otherwise may never have learned it. (circeus, ARG: The *Lost* Experience, 2006)

[about reading *Bad Twin*] It was really badly written to begin with and didn't have much to do with the series. So going backwards the idea for the *Bad Twin* with the two brothers kind of end up playing out... Jacob and men in black [a character in the show] but I don't think it's necessary to read the book to get to that point.

(Janet)

*Valuable but Limited Contribution of Migration.* From the consumer's perspective, the use of secondary and intertextual media is expected to provide value, but at the same should not reveal too much. Jenkins (2006, 95) introduces the criterion of 'distinctive but valuable contribution' of each media. The idea that these secondary media will reveal too much or spoil the show impacts the transmedia migration of consumers. Secondary texts are expected to provide some additional insights to the *Lost* television show, but should not reveal answers to the major mysteries of the *Lost* universe.

Does *The Lost Experience* [one of the *Lost* ARGs] directly influence the show?

Like if we did not follow it, will we understand the show less than the people who did? Is there any information that is useful towards the plot of the show? Was it meant to give people answers about the show or just something for fun. Answers please!!!!!! (dispirito , ARG: The *Lost* Experience, 04-09-2007)

I'm just relieved the game [*Lost* video game: *Via Domus*] will not spoil any of the TV shows mysteries. This from an interview with Damon... I'm so glad these guys are on top of maintaining the shows mystery. And I also like that, while it promises to have a great story and explore places you'll never see in the show, it will not reveal anything too important, leaving that to the show. This is only fair. So I just feel they took all the considerations you need to when making a game like this, and made all the choices I would love them to make...It just looks like a great adventure game, regardless of its connection to *Lost* (but [i]especially[i] because of it). (Rex the Runt, *Via Domus*, 2008)

My data indicate that consumers' expectations are lower when engaging with intertextual titles (such as popular culture titles like *The Stand*) compared to the secondary texts. These intertextual media are not expected to contribute to the story as much; however, they are also expected not to spoil it. The stories contained in the intertextual media should not be identical to that of *Lost*, but they should provide some type of a joy and insight, or a basis for extrapolating to the *Lost* story. Similarly, consumers have lower expectations from the fan created (e.g., fan fiction) or non-canonical content.

I just finished the book [*The Stand*] last night and I'm incredibly disappointed. *Lost* might as well have been an adaptation - almost everything from the *Stand* was taken and used for the show. *Lost* isn't anything more than a patchwork quilt of other works. (Candidate, Book club, *The Stand*, 06-23-2010)

Secrets? Secrets? Well, you shouldn't expect a game to give away secrets, I suppose. But just to confirm, there aren't any, really. Yes, you can go see what's behind the door in the hatch, but aside from a really messed up ending which is

hard to interpret and may not in fact be canon (i.e. might not even mean anything in the context of the show) that's just about it. (paranoid.pj, Via Domus, 2008)

As detailed above, consumers expect that the secondary and intertextual media contribute to the *Lost* story, but in a limited fashion.

### **Stigmatized Fandom**

Some consumers' perception and prejudgments about hard-core fans hold them back from engaging in transmedial migration. For example, sentences in forums and interviews such as "I am not that of a hard core fan," "I am not that type of fan," and "it's just a TV show" reflect attitudes that hamper consumers' further engagement with the show. These stereotypes about being a fan originate from the connotations of the term fan with the fanatics (Jenkins 1992).

Consumers are very much affected by the marginalized representations of the fans in the current discourses. Jenkins (1992, 12) explains the connotations of the word fan: "The term fan... was often used sympathetically by sports writers, it never fully escaped its earlier connotations of religious and political zealotry, false beliefs, orgiastic excess, possession, and madness, connotations that seem to be at the heart of many of the representations of fans in the contemporary discourse." Similarly, the connotations of being a fan keep back some *Lost* consumers from further engaging with multiple touchpoints and getting deeper into the *Lost* universe.

The type [of fan] that watches it, I guess I don't post my own personal physics theories online about what it's about. I am not a hard-core fan. I'm not that extreme, I'll speculate a little bit after I watch the show but it doesn't really go anywhere from there (Asim)

I think I was as faithful to it [the *Lost* franchise] as anybody else, but I don't know that I was as absorbed by it. I mean, I wouldn't go rent the videos and spend, you know, I would not watch the show 10 times trying to figure out, you know, some motive or something like that. So, I would say, I mean I was a fan, as far as entertainment I wasn't as big of a fan as detective work. (Jane)

### **Misaligned Genre Expectations**

According to Scott (1994), the reader's recognition of the genre of a text calls to the occasion three requirements: First, the readers should have a notion of what to expect from a text — a “frame” for it. Knowledge of the genre thus provides a schema for reading. Second, readers should have past experiences with format conventions typical of that genre. Thirdly, readers should be able to select a reading strategy appropriate to that kind of text. Within the context of TMC, readers might not know what to expect from the transmedia narrative, and therefore fail to select an appropriate narrative consumption strategy.

Same sort of thing, you watched the first *Matrix* and you say flip-flopping into *The Matrix*, first they are raging against the machine, and second it's now Neo vs. who knows, who knows what. They are literally in a virtual world, and you are about to go see the other world and it, they f\*\*\* it up, you know there was a contract there, there were some level of trust that they will provide the same level of quality and the same level of storytelling two more times, and they didn't... (Erwin)

The question of whether the story or the elements from the secondary texts would link to the central or primary text is also about knowing the genre specifications of the transmedia



storytelling. Simply put, a consumer who has never consumed a transmedia narrative does not know how to treat the secondary texts and their connection to the story. As they might not know the narratives that are dispersed across a multitude of media platforms might be connected to the transmedia franchises, they start questioning the connection of all those secondary media to the *Lost* television show. These less experienced consumers lack the expectations as well as the ‘strategies to read’ these extensions, and the ability to connect the intertextual links between the transmedia extensions and stories at different platforms (Scott 1994, 461):

sorry if I'm asking dumb questions, but please have patience!...I'm getting these two separate entities confused..TLE and *Lost* the show. having read pandoras great synopsis and having seen the Sri Lanka video and Rachel at Comic Con., I'm wondering how much of it relates to *Lost*, like will we ever see any of the characters coming up in future seasons? how much of what we see going on with D.I.H.G viruses etc..will be involved in *Lost* story lines? Ok- I get it now, but the quest. still stands..will any of these plots be upcoming in future *Lost* episodes?  
(ste@?, ARG: The *Lost* Experience, 2008)

The rule of thumb for ancillary stuff like this is thus the characters themselves are not important or canon to the show, the information they uncover however is. Here's an example. In Find815, there's a long character arc about someone who finds the fake 815 crash with underwater probes. In the show, this event/information is canon. We see the probes even. But the person behind them is not the same. The character wasn't there or important, the information revealed through him was, and was included. See what I mean? Some stuff from the ARGs actually has been referenced to in the show. In "The Constant" we see

Widmore buying a book, and the auctioneer says it was from a man "Magnus Hanso" and contained information on the Black Rock. Previously, this information was only referred to in TLE. But mostly, the information won't make it in episodes, but it is however canon to the mythology. They do these ARGs for the reason of getting out info or plot details that can't be fit into the show itself well. (Garmonbozey, ARG: *The Lost Experience*, 2009)

As evident from Erwin's and Cathy's excerpts in the "Faith in the Puppermaster" section, faith (or lack thereof) in the producers also effect consumers' involvement with the online communities and consumption of other media platforms. Cathy thinks producers might be telling parts of the story in other media outlets and she consumes these social and secondary media platforms to deal with ambiguity. In contrast, Erwin is frustrated by the holes in the story and the fact that the story is not contained in a single media platform.

## **BOUNDARIES OF MIGRATION**

Migration, as a term, entails boundaries. Yet, in the transmediation context, consumers do not only move across media boundaries. The transmedia narrative enables the existence of permeable boundaries not only across media platforms, but also across different types of boundaries. Permeable boundaries allow consumers to pass through, in, and out of these domains. The original focus of this section is to describe and conceptualize consumers' migration processes across media platforms as transmedia by definition encompasses move of stories across media platforms. Yet, as an emergent theme, this section details the other boundaries that consumers encounter and cross (sometimes back-and-forth) during transmedia

consumption practices such as real world vs. fiction, online vs. offline, fictional world vs. animated world, fictional world vs. real world, and fictional world vs. related worlds.

### **Online vs. offline**

Consumers' transmedia consumption practices move between online and offline domains. For instance, consumers carry over the things they have learned from the online communities to their local communities. In the above sections, I cite Gill and describe how she acts as a resourceful person who bridges her local and online communities. Likewise, Mike and Christopher also describe a similar back and forth movement between online and offline communities:

I've always been kind of an internet nerd anyway, so I've spent a lot more time on the internet than the average persons. So I've always kind of been able to use it to my advantage if I wanted to search for certain things or find information. I think having that local outlet for, it was kind of nice change 'cause people that I knew in real life were getting on and talking about it. So in case I might not see them for a few weeks at a time or something like that or a month, so at least on line we could talk about our *Lost* problem. (Mike Ingram)

Yeah but back then the coworker who originally got me into the online stuff, he was there. So Wednesdays, we were able to talk about it the next day but he left so it was just more me wanting to get to it as fast as possible and discuss it with anyone else. (Christopher)

Via meshing, consumers move back and forth between online and offline domains. Meshing<sup>26</sup> is one of the most salient TMC practices where this boundary crossing is especially evident. It entails the use of the Internet (blog, websites etc) in conjunction with a medium to enhance the experience of that medium such as a TV program (Yahoo Media Report 2009). For example, during a *Lost*-related conversation with their friends, if a point of controversy arises, consumers just might refer to online resources to solve that controversy. Meshing via mobile phones is also an example of online vs. offline crossing. However, obviously the mobile apps were not as popular in the earlier seasons of the *Lost* show. So, although there is limited information in my data set about the use of mobile apps in the context of *Lost*, the recent popularity of these media tools point out that they will be an integral part of transmedia consumption practices for future transmedia franchises.

Occasionally, I mean not the first time, no, I wouldn't watch it on the phone. I wouldn't. Well, it depends. If I had no other choice, I would watch *Lost* on it, but typically I prefer the computer on the Internet. I re-watched the *Lost* finale, some of it there [on the phone], because after we watched it together [with her husband], and then I went home and then Jason [her husband] went for shopping, then I went to the apartment to clean. It was like 5am 'cause I had to drop him off. And I figured, okay I might as well clean. There was just nothing in the apartment like I can do, but I had to wait till Home Depot opened. 'Cause I had some things to get there. And, I didn't want to have to drive back and forth so I didn't know what to do. Then, I started watching the last section of the finale 'cause I was kind

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<sup>26</sup> See the Meshing section in the Typology chapter.

of still confused at that point about what was going on. Then, I did it on the phone. (Annie)

Uh, I actually downloaded and played the iPhone game, when it first came out. It was one of the early iPhone games. Um, I think it was you were playing as Jack, you know, and you were trying to gather things, um, from the crash. It was a, you know, I mean compared to the iPhone games that we have today, which is just a few years later, it was a very basic game. But it was interesting to see how they were allowing people to use this mobile device to play as a character, and uh, there were actually pieces, you could unlock secrets, unlock mysteries. (Juan Garcia)

### **Individual vs. communal**

One of the other boundaries for the transmedia consumption practices is between the individual and community. For example, consumers might prefer consuming the television show alone, yet they might enjoy discussing their interpretation of the show and the story with friends or online communities. Abhijeet is very protective about his solitude during the show and he enjoys getting his own interpretations of the story without any input from anyone else. Abhijeet states: "... Also I like to unravel these mysteries by myself and see if I was right. Partly it's conscious and partly it's unintentional." Similarly, Alex prefers to watch the show alone, but likes discussing it with friends and use social media communities for further engagement with the show.

Alex: I prefer to watch the episode by myself, And actually understand what's going on and think it for myself instead of a party where people are talking and more like socializing than watching *Lost*.

I: Do you discuss *Lost* with your friends?

Alex: Yeah. Yeah I used to. Especially when I lived in Turkey one of my best friends was watching it a lot too, so we then would discuss *Lost* pretty much on a weekly basis. Here in the United States less so, I used to post things on Facebook and then, especially for season 6 and then people would reply to those. But umm no I mean even here too, on a weekly basis actually I would say through Facebook or through a friend of mine I got to learn that she likes *Lost* too.

### **Fictional World vs. Real World**

Consumers also like to traverse boundaries between the fictional and real worlds. Real world is a problematic term in itself. What is real and what is not is a whole different discussion. For the scope of this section, the real world is where the consumers enact daily activities beyond their time in front of the screen watching the show, reading the books, participating in the blogs, or playing the videogame. Consumers are led across this fictional vs. real boundary by the secondary texts, like the ARGs. The crossing of this boundary is more encouraged or reinforced by the producers in the later phases of the *Lost* franchise. The later *Lost* ARGs, for example, incorporate more situated in their everyday activities. The real-world migration is becoming more and more common in recent transmedia franchises. There might be several co-creation activities of consumers around this boundary as well. For example, fans of Hanso Foundation, a fictitious company in the *Lost* universe, attend secret company meetings in Comic Con and meet with other fans in person. All these diegetic elements — the elements of the fiction world — cross over to the real world via consumers' co-creative practices. These diegetic elements create a pseudo —reality for the *Lost* fans.

OK , late I know but I'm just getting into The *Lost* Experience [one of the *Lost* ARGs] and having trouble looking for the fragment codes where do I look please help (tina1127, The *Lost* Experience, 2006)

That's cool, but there's no way you'll find them all on your own because some of them were found in the real world, not online. If you go to this page and look at the clues starting on July 22nd, you can find out how all of the glyphs were found. (HectorBadger, The *Lost* Experience, 2008)

yea... I walked past the place where one used to be and..... graffitti. On the other hand, walking in NYC, I look up and what do I see? AN OCEANIC AIRLINES BILLBOARD [emphasis in the original]... gone now. (neo12345292, 2009)

Actually TLE is an alternate reality game, and tried to come across as "real".

Therefore the events surrounding Flight 815 don't exist. The Hanso Foundation and DHARMA Initiative, however, supposedly "do exist". Rachel Blake appeared at Comic Con and accused the *Lost* writers of being on the Hanso payroll by using their name in their television show, and showing Hanso commercials in their ad breaks. The line undoubtedly blurred towards the end of the game, with mention of the Black Rock, the numbers and stuff, but the idea was that it was the real world while *Lost* was just a TV show. (nickb123, The *Lost* Experience, 2007)

### **Fictional world vs. animated world**

Many transmediated stories include several media platforms where the story, characters, and places are in animated form. The video games, animated movies, comic books, and podcasts all entail manifestations of the fictional world in animated format. Consumers cross between the

movie images and these other representations of this fictional world. Consumers perceive these animated versions of the places, characters, voices, or sounds as new pieces of information. When these diegetic elements are represented in the animated format, it adds to their experience of the television show. Consumers like immersing themselves in these animated worlds and experience the diegetic elements in the animated form. In particular, the places and characters that are prominent in the *Lost* story receive the most attention from the consumers in the animated world. Similarly, in *Lost*, the animations that allow consumers to explore the hatch, the cave, and the leading characters enhance transmedia consumption experiences.

Ok I love *Lost* and its Mysteries blah blah blah. Now a friend has the game, IS THERE ANYTHING AT ALL [emphasis in the original] that a *Lost* fan would find interesting? I mean OK, it's just a game etc etc etc, but I only care to play it if I'm gonna learn something, get something from it. So Should I play *Via Domus* [*Lost* video game]? The only thing I found interesting was exploring the hatch. That was amazingly done. I remember seeing the promotions for the game and seeing the crash site, which I was really looking forward to but it was really really bad. I remember getting to the beach and the characters all just standing still repeating the same dialogue. Michael calling for Walt and Jack resuscitating the same person over and over again (I think they are dead Jack). The crash site was nothing like the shows' version. (tiMe2KiCkasS, *Via Domus*, 2010)

Actually, you do get the *Lost* actors performing the voices for Ben, Desmond, Claire, Sun, Mikhail, and Mr. Friendly [in the video game *Via Domus*]. The worst voice acting of the lot is whoever the heck played Sawyer -- horrible, horrible



imitation. I wish it had been more of an open world, but perhaps since there were still parts of the island that hadn't yet been revealed (like the temple) they weren't going to allow that. I still enjoyed checking out the Black Rock, roaming through the Swan (as well as what is behind that sealed door), sneaking into the Flame, and other locations. If you're a hardcore gamer you might not like it, but for \$20 it's at least decent enough for a *Lost* addict. (DeBarlo, Via Domus, 2010)

What I'll like [in the animated world] is that instead of trying to pause a frame on the TV or hoping the camera pans a little bit more because I thought I saw something in the corner, I'll actually be able to hang out in some of my favorite island areas and check things out. (DeBarlo, Via Domus, 2008)

### **Fictional world vs. Related worlds**

The intertextuality of the transmedia narrative gathers many fictional worlds and connects them to the main franchise. The intertextual media — like the literary titles in case of *Lost* — create these related worlds. I have already discussed the migration back and forth across these intertextual media. Yet, consumers also like to see *Lost* actors or actresses, or any other diegetic elements of *Lost* (brands, places, sounds, songs and so on) in other fictional worlds. The casting of *Fringe* and *Num3ers* show threading in a *Lost* element enhance consumer experiences. Some *Lost* consumers migrated to *Num3ers* show, just because of this cross fertilization. Similarly, *Fringe* became popular among *Lost* consumers because it was produced by one of the early producers of *Lost*, namely J. J. Abrams.

In sum, in this chapter, I discuss how consumers navigate across media platforms and other boundaries as an integral part of their TMC practices. Transmedial migration is one of the

salient transmedia consumption processes. This chapter also details the reasons that might foster or barriers that might hamper transmedial migration. Obviously, these migration practices - as well as the broader typology of TMC practices I unpack in Chapter 4 — have substantial implications for academics and practitioners interested in transmedia consumption (TMC). In the next chapter, I focus on the contributions of two chapters (Chapter 5 and Chapter 6) devoted to the interpretation of my findings and also the implications for research and practice that emerge from these chapters.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the constituents of transmedia consumption (TMC) experiences and to explore how consumers consume and co-create these experiences. To achieve these objectives, I organized my findings in two chapters. The first of these (Chapter 4) details the elements of TMC experiences and presents a typology of TMC practices. The second chapter (Chapter 5) focuses on the processes of TMC and detail consumers' migration— one of the prominent TMC processes — across media platforms.

My dissertation situates TMC in the dynamics of the convergence culture that captures technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes in the ways media and entertainment are created, distributed, and consumed within our culture (Jenkins 2006). Convergence is “an umbrella term that refers to the new textual practices, branding and marketing strategies, industrial arrangements, technological synergies, and audience behaviors enabled and propelled by the emergence of digital media” (Kackman et al 2010, 1). Along these lines, this dissertation offers a new understanding of how convergent culture affects the lived experiences of media consumers through transmedia storytelling. To develop and explore the TMC concept, this study builds on the extant transmedia literature in media studies, as well as on the consumer culture theory framework. It also borrows insights from the socio-cultural branding literature. In so doing, this dissertation contributes to the existing research in three main areas: transmedia storytelling, consumer culture, and branding. I will begin this chapter by providing a discussion about TMC experiences and explicating the contributions of my dissertation in these three areas.

Then, I will present some implications of this study for academics and practitioners. I will conclude the chapter with some future research directions and limitations of this research.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS OF RESEARCH**

### **Transmedia Consumption Experiences**

This study explicates and explores transmedia consumption experiences and processes. The presented TMC typology identifies nine narrative consumption practices of TMC; in other words, the different ways consumers co-create, experience, and engage with transmedia narratives. Consumption practices, as deemed by Holt (1995), provide an apt analytical construct to analyze representations of cultural meanings and lived experiences. Through consumption practices, consumers actively construct meanings through their daily activities, and in so doing they re-construct and re-produce their everyday realities (Bauman 1999). In contrast to the prior transmedia storytelling studies that focus on the aesthetics and structures of transmedia narratives (Long 2007, Smith 2009) or the production of transmedia franchises (e.g., Dena 2010), this study focuses on the consumption domain to understand the constituents and processes of transmedia consumption experiences that are embedded in the convergence culture. Recent studies about convergence stress the importance of understanding the practices regarding convergence culture. Questioning the celebratory assumption that convergence has uniform — or uniformly positive — cultural and political effects, Kackman et al (2010, 4) state that “the more compelling issues surrounding convergence are often those regarding cultural boundaries and practices.” In summary, with its focus on consumption practices, my dissertation is among these

second-wave convergence studies that study convergence and its effects beyond the technological and economic aspects that mostly focus on the production practices. Below I describe the contributions of this dissertation to the existing transmedia literature.

*TMC experiences are broader and more diverse than mere consumption of narratives.* This study maintains that transmedia consumption (TMC) experiences are broader than the mere consumption of media texts. Put simply, consumption of transmedia narratives that are dispersed across a multitude of media platforms (e.g., watching the TV show, playing the video game, reading the novel, and so on) is only a small part of TMC experiences. The extant studies imply that transmedia consumption is equivalent to the consumption of multiple media platforms that extend the transmedia narrative (Scolari 2009). Yet, my study reveals that transmedia consumption (TMC) experiences are broader and more diverse than simply watching a movie, playing a video game, and reading the comics of a transmedia franchise.

Rather, my interpretation supports the assertion that transmedia consumption experiences entail various co-creation practices with varying levels of media use. My TMC typology maintains that consumers might not necessarily engage with a variety of multiple platforms (i.e., extensive media use column in the typology)—yet they still might engage in different types of consumption and co-creation practices across different levels of meaning, community, and text. Likewise, all transmedia storytelling opportunities do not necessarily translate into transmedia consumption experiences. A specific transmedia narrative might not warrant the entire range of transmedia consumption practices in the TMC typology. My data suggests that there are *Lost* consumers who engage with the franchise only within one media platform, the television show. These consumers might be watching or re-watching the show or might even be engaging with social media; yet, they might not consume the secondary texts. Just because *Lost* is a transmedia

narrative does not guarantee that consumers will engage with every possible narrative (or even any, besides the central narrative) of the franchise dispersed across media. Yet, it is important to note that TMC is not that much of a structured experience. Rather, messiness and gray areas of TMC emerge, where the transmedia consumer does not match or adopt practices that map onto this typology. In short, the typology is a loose and fuzzy structure that can offer some insights into the transmedia consumption experiences, but it should not be treated as the deterministic system where no randomness exists.

*TMC experiences might be limited to single-medium or single-narrative consumption.*

Consuming only one narrative of a transmedia franchise does not disqualify practices related to the transmedia franchise as transmedia consumption experiences. The TMC typology reveals that the consumers in the “contained” column are only interested in one narrative, which is that of the *Lost* television show. Even when the consumers engage with the consumption of one medium or a limited set of media, , the transmedia franchise already locates the consumer in the middle of an “intertextual grid” (Jenkins 1992, 37) where parts of that fictional universe are dispersed through a set of media platforms. Experience of these “contained” media consumers are still affected by this transmedia universe as they are somewhat a part of this intertextual grid of connected narratives and corresponding TMC experiences. Most of my informants who only consume the *Lost* television show assert that they know there are online *Lost* communities where consumers are engaged in ongoing conversations about the franchise, or that they are indirectly connected to, or encounter, consumers who are more engaged than they are.

In short, most *Lost* viewers are aware that the story they see on TV is part of a bigger story that is told across other media platforms. However, consumers who do not know about this transmedial dispersion are also affected as the story of the *Lost* television show include several

holes and story arcs that have not been addressed on the television show. Similarly, viewers of *The Matrix* sequel did not enjoy the second movie as much as those who played the video game in between the first and the second movie. But whether they play the video game or not, all of these consumers occupy the same transmedia consumptionscape that affects everyone engaged with the transmedia franchise in some way. Thus, TMC experiences might be limited to single-medium and single-narrative consumption.

*TMC experiences are very much affected by how consumers start engaging with the transmedia franchise.* Anchoring entails finding a major entry point that will help consumers enjoy a meaningful experience of the transmedia universe. The contained media is the common entry point into the transmedia franchise for consumers. It is the starting point of transmedia consumption experiences. Consumers anchor to the transmedia universe through this primary and central story. Furthermore, consumers anchor in various ways; for example, they might anchor at the earlier phases of the franchise, or later<sup>27</sup>. Consumers' anchoring style is a matter of their synchronicity with the producer, their ways of catching up, and the practices they adopt after catching up with the real-time unfolding of the story. Anchoring style is an important TMC practice as it also pertains to what type of narrative consumption practices consumers will adopt during their transmedia journey. Those who enter the narrative during the later seasons of the *Lost* television show and also never adopt weekly watching habits hardly ever migrate to secondary and intertextual media. Furthermore, most of these consumers are highly dissatisfied with their TMC experiences. So, how consumers anchor—and their anchoring style—impact the direction and the tone of their overall TMC experiences.

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<sup>27</sup> The franchise mostly launches with the primary text. Or, it also would not be wrong to say that the platform that the transmedia franchise launches is the primary platform.

*Consumer's value proposition of the transmedia franchise varies with different TMC practices.*

The fact that transmedia narratives can appeal to different types of consumers for various reasons is deemed as the strength and allure of transmedia storytelling. Consumers' expectations of the narrative and the producer, as well as what they find valuable in the transmedia franchise, varies across the typology. Prior transmedia studies acknowledge that consumers are attracted to different parts of the transmedia narratives. Yet, these studies have not explained the focal narrative aspect of these different types of consumers. My research reveals that some are attracted to the mysteries, some are attracted to the characters, some enjoy the holes in the story, or some focus on the parts that have been left out or not said in the meta-narrative. Similarly, across the different cells of the TMC typology, consumers' expectations of the producer can vary greatly. Some consumers want the producers to tell a story contained in a medium — e.g., to start and end in a single medium, some expect that producers foster interactive space around the transmedia narrative that will facilitate consumer participation, some demand that the producers acknowledge the investment inherent in the communal co-creation of the franchise, some expect the producers to provide a rich playground or sandbox with sufficient and continuous story elements, and some count on producers' tolerance for consumers' creative endeavors that might take the entire story in different directions. Thus, the value of a transmedia franchise varies for consumers who adopt different narrative consumption practices across the typology.

*Consumers' social resources play a part in the types of TMC practices they adopt.* Consumers who are located within different cells of the TMC typology vary in terms of their social resources. Consumers adopt different TMC practices that will be compatible with their own previous fan experience, as well as with the level of community involvement they seek. Some consumers come to a particular franchise with no or very limited fan experience; in other words,



they have never deeply engaged with an entertainment franchise before. Thus, they have not adopted diverse communal or individual media consumption activities, do not understand the norms or demands of a transmedia franchise, and/or do not know what being a fan entails in terms of media practices. Likewise, dissimilar social capital resources (Kozinets 2001) are one dimension of difference across consumers in different cells of the typology. Similarly, communal consumption skills and resources — as well as willingness to participate in communal consumption — are other type of social resources that vary across the consumption typology. Some consumers prefer to engage with the franchise alone, some switch between individual and communal consumption, or some just seek and cherish communal consumption in co-creating their TMC experiences. Communal skills and resources such as knowing the communal norms in the fandom, the ability to provide emotional support to the other members of the community, having enough skills and knowledge about the story to act as an opinion leader, or prioritizing the welfare of the community are different across the typology.

When the last two contributions are considered, it becomes clear that the typology that emerges from my dissertation not only explores different narrative consumption practices in TMC, but also describes the underlying dimensions of difference between the cells. Consumers who adopt distinct narrative consumption practices differ from each other on four dimensions: focal narrative aspect, their community involvement, prior fandom experience, and expectation of the producers. Along these lines, my study furthers our understanding of the factors that distinguish between consumers who differ in terms of their variety of media use and co-creation activities.

## **Transmedial Migration**

One of the other objectives of my study is to explore how consumers co-create and consume transmedia consumption experiences. Responding to that research question, my data support four emergent transmedia consumption processes: migration, engagement, reading, and collaborating. Among these four emergent transmedia consumption processes, migration and engagement are the ones that offer the most potentially significant theoretical contributions. Due to the length constraints of this study and to sustain depth rather than breadth, I chose to focus deeply on migration as the TMC process of interest. I did so because this process is clearly one of the most important consumption-related ones in transmedia consumption. I have chosen migration because this is clearly one of the most important consumption-related processes in transmedia consumption, highlighted, but still relatively unexplored, in all of the current transmedia literature to date (Jenkins 2006, Askwith 2007, Long 2007). And, in contemporary mediascape where the multi-layered and multi-media stories become more and more common, migration is a very important concept to understand the media consumption practices. Building on the works of DeCerteau (1984) and Jenkins (1992) that explores nomadic behavior, this dissertation explores patterns of transmedial migration, as well as facilitators of and barriers to migration, and migration boundaries. Thus, this dissertation furthers our understanding about consumers' migratory behavior across media platforms. In particular, I highlight six contributions below.

*Transmedial migration is not only an experience-enhancing option, but is also an integral and prominent process of TMC.* The existing new-media studies adopt a substitutability or compatibility view of the media platforms that consumers migrate both to and from. Similarly, fan studies (e.g., Jenkins 1992) assert that nomadic behavior of fans is complementary to

poaching, which entails creating new texts and communities based on existing texts (DeCerteau 1984, Jenkins 1992). Yet, until this dissertation, the patterns and nature of migratory behavior across media platforms have not been explored. Considering nomadic behavior as complementary to textual poaching, Jenkins (1992) implies that migration is a practice for consumers who are highly engaged with the franchise. Yet, according my study, transmedial migration is not limited to highly engaged consumers (or hard-core fans, über-fans). In fact, some consumers navigate across media platforms even though they might not be deeply involved with the franchise. Transmedial migration takes place at different levels of consumer involvement with the franchise in the context of transmedia consumption experiences. In the context of transmedia consumption (TMC), nomadic behaviors of consumers follow a more distinctive pattern, as transmedia producers also assume a role in the dispersal of intertextually-connected transmedia narratives across media. Along those lines, my study asserts that transmedial migration is not only an experience-enhancing option, but also an integral and prominent process of transmedia consumption experiences.

*The contained media is the heart of the transmedial migration.* The contained media contains the vital elements of the transmedia universe. My study identifies the central role of this contained media in the transmedial migration practices of consumers. Although named in different ways (e.g., “the mothership” or “the driving platform”; Gomez 2010), transmedia scholars and practitioners point to a central media or a story that entails the vital elements of a particular transmedia universe. Some transmedia scholars label this core story the primary text (Genette 1992, Long 2007). Although the existence of such a central platform has been acknowledged before, the roles of this central narrative in shaping TMC experiences or consumers’ migratory behavior across media have not been explored. The contained media connects all transmedia

consumption experiences as it acts as a hub, reference, and departure point. The emic perspective in my study reveals the ways consumers rely on this central platform or the story as a major element of their transmedial migration.

*Not each medium in the transmedia franchise is unique and accessible in its own terms.* Jenkins (2006) defines the role of the media used in the transmedia franchise as follows: each narrative in each medium is accessible on its own terms, but there is no single narrative the consumer can consult, to gain all the necessary information. Yet, my analysis offers support that the contained medium is the only one that is unique and accessible in its own terms without requiring the consumption of any other media or story in that particular franchise. Consumers will have a unique and kind of good experience of the *Lost* universe if they only watch the *Lost* television show, but not if they only play the Alternate Reality Games (ARGs). Similarly, for *The Matrix*, if they only watch the movies, they will have somewhat of a complete experience, but not so if they only play the video game. Among all the other media (secondary, intertextual, and social), this particular medium is the only one that can stand alone and provide a somewhat good TMC experience if consumed alone. Contained media help consumers to have a unique and complete experience without any need to rely on other media or story. For some transmedia franchises, the contained media might be composed of multiple media platforms or stories. In *Lost*, contained media consist of the serialized six seasons of the weekly episodes. The story arch is over the six seasons. For *24*, the contained media is each season. For a transmedia franchise, the contained media might be composed of movies and comic book, for example. Unlike *Lost* or *24*, the imperative elements of the franchise might be story-told using multiple media platforms. Thus, contained media might be composed of multiple media platforms.

*Transmedial migration process is temporal and sequential.* The order and the pace of transmedia consumption experiences are dependent on the producers' pace and schedule. The *Lost* television show, for instance, is broadcast on a weekly schedule. Consumers are bound by this weekly schedule and producers' plans about the duration, frequency, and length of the episodes, and also by the number of episodes in a season. Similarly, producers have the last word in how many episodes the *Lost* television show will entail. Likewise, TMC experiences are temporally bound. If consumers are synchronous with the producers' pace, their transmedia experiences are richer and their transmedial migration is more recurring and structured. If not, then transmedial migration is more random and limited. When consumers are synchronous with the producers, they navigate across media platforms to master the story and find the parts that are not told in the primary story. But, if they come into the franchise late, some of these missing elements have already been identified or mentioned by the producers or other consumers. In that case, there is less incentive for navigating across media platforms. This temporal order is evident in other transmedia franchises as well. For example, the producer of *Star Wars*, George Lucas, deployed the *Star Wars* movies in the order of: *Star Wars* 4, 5, 6, 1, 2, and 3. So, if a viewer wants to watch these movies in 2011, for example, most fans would recommend that he or she watch in the production order so that the viewer will make sense of the expanded universe and enjoy a meaningful and unified experience.

On similar grounds, transmedial migration is sequential — starting from the contained media to social media, then to secondary media and finally intertextual media. However, this is a very rough pattern; there are exceptions, and there are back and forth movements. One of the patterns of transmedial migration describes this back and forth movement as a seesaw pattern. Keeping the contained media at the center, consumers migrate back and forth across media

platforms. This pattern reinforces the central role of the contained media, and also its facilitating role in transmedial migration.

*Transmedia narrative per se does not warrant the transmedial migration.* Narratives have a role in courting consumers across media, as detailed in Chapter 4. Yet, the presence of a transmedia narrative alone does not warrant transmedial migration. Transmedial migration is motivated and hampered by various technological, content-related, and socio-cultural factors. My study identifies the reasons of migration as: extending, sustaining, and enhancing experiences with the franchise, economy of information management, and faith in the producers. On the other hand, the barriers to migration include: lack of resources (time, energy, media skills, or communal resources), perceived limited value of migration, and misaligned genre expectations. These barriers and motivations encapsulate the forces that Kackman et al. (2010) mention as shaping contemporary media practices:

Technology is not neutral and our current media environments — as much as those of the past — are not determined by the rise of new technologies, but are shaped by institutional, cultural, and political forces and by the continual engagements between the emergent and residual media forms. (Kackman et al. 2010, 3)

*Transmedial migration transverses across several porous boundaries.* Transmedial migration entails boundaries between online vs. offline, fictional vs. real world, individual vs. communal, and also fictional vs. related worlds. Transmedia consumption practices traverse across these permeable boundaries. These borders enrich our understanding of transmedia consumption experiences and presuppose that TMC experiences are not bounded by the narrative that sets the

limits for that particular transmedia universe. The intertextuality of the narratives is augmented by the intertextuality of the universes — real or fictional.

## **Defining TMC**

The above sections summarize some of the characteristics of TMC experiences as they emerge from my data. Transmedia consumption experiences are the hedonic, meaning creating, communal, and productive consumption practices around a transmedia franchise. A transmedia franchise is required for TMC experiences. TMC franchises entail a transmedia narrative and also transmedia production process, although not necessarily a perfect and successful one. The characteristics of transmedia franchises – in other words, intertextuality of stories, certain narrative aesthetics and structure (such as negative capability, world building, migratory cues), and systematic and coordinated dispersal of stories by the producers – are the antecedents of transmedia consumption experiences.

TMC is not about the number of media platforms that consumers transverse across during their consumption of media content. In the era of convergence, many media franchises and several entertainment contents facilitate consumption and co-creation practices across a set of media platforms. All these consumption practices and experiences across media are not transmedia consumption experiences. In this regard, TMC and transmedial migration cannot be reduced to consumption of multiple media platforms. Transmedia migration is facilitated by the transmedia narrative and encouraged and at times enforced by the transmedia producers as an integral part of their engagement with the transmedia franchise.

This study studies TMC experiences by adopting a holistic perspective of text, consumer, consumption activity and the producer. Solely focusing on the consumption practices across media platforms, ignoring the certain aesthetics of texts that might facilitate certain co-creative practices or court consumers across media, and excluding the producer's distribution pace and activities from the discussion would be against the idea of this adopted holistic approach. TMC experiences are manifestations of this bigger picture at the intersection of producers, texts, and consumers.

### **Contributions to Consumer Culture Theory Literature**

Transmedia consumption experiences entail various co-creation practices of consumers at varying levels of media use. In that regard, studying TMC is like marrying the transmedia studies that focus on the narratives dispersed across media with the consumer culture studies that focus on the co-creation and experience of narrative consumption. Through this integration, this study expands research in both of these fields. In one of his interviews, Gomez<sup>28</sup> (Workbook Project 2010) points out the pivotal role of consumers in transmedia projects and states that “transmedia is not transmedia if there is not a pair of ears around the narrative”. Transmedia storytelling is created to facilitate certain consumption practices and, above all, it relies on the interactivity, participation, and co-creation activities of the consumers. So, comprehending the relation between the narrative and the consumption practices contributes significantly to our understanding of the transmedia phenomenon.

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<sup>28</sup> Workbook Project, Transmedia Talks, 13<sup>th</sup> Episode, Interview with Jeff Gomez  
<http://workbookproject.com/culturehacker/2010/12/16/transmedia-talk-podcast-episode-13/>



*TMC provides a holistic look at the text, consumer, and the consumption of narratives.* This research contributes to our understanding of the relationship between consumers, narratives, and media\entertainment consumption experiences. Previous consumer scholars have extensively studied media consumption experiences as individual hedonic activities (e.g., Hirschman and Holbrook 1982) or as communal consumption (e.g., Kozinets 2001). Similarly, marketing and consumer behavior scholars are interested in how the consumer media or entertainment experiences deviate from what the producer intends and explored co-creation of meanings and interpretations (e.g., Scott 1994), communities (e.g., Kozinets 2001), and texts (e.g., Brown 2007). Yet, none of these findings taken together fully explain the transmedia consumption experiences, which is the focus here. In contrast to prior entertainment or consumption of media studies that focus on either the text (e.g., *Dallas and Dynasty*, Holbrook and Hirschman 1982), the experience (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982), or the meaning-making processes (Radway 1985), this dissertation provides a more holistic perspective on the consumption of media and entertainment — not only the exploring the text and not only exploring the consumption practice, but also examining how they interact.

Furthermore, the nine TMC practices detailed in the typology are narrative consumption strategies at the intersection of media and consumption activity, spurred by the certain roles of the transmedia narrative. As such, this study identifies three distinct roles of the narrative across the typology — as hook, as cultural attractor, and as cultural activator — in shaping different consumption practices. Cova et al (2007, 8) describe members of Consumer Tribes as players who activate and enliven a social process of commercial meaning and identity production and consumption. My study also contributes to this communal production of tribes and expands it for the media text consumption as it also unpacks the role of the narrative in this activation process.

The layered transmedia narrative across media facilitates different communal consumption practices. Some consumers use micro-communities to share their experience, some use bigger online communities to manage the information to create a better experience, and some consumers use communities — online or offline — to pool their resources and establish knowledge communities.

*TMC experiences entail narrative consumption strategies beyond reading.* Reader Response theory focuses on the act of reading as the most prominent narrative consumption practice (Scott 1994). This study reveals that consumers adopt several other narrative consumption and co-creation practices in addition to reading. Consumers do not only read the text but they co-create meanings of the texts through activities such as anchoring, extracting, and patching. In that regard, similar to Cova et al (2007), this study identifies a range of productive roles of consumers.

*Textual poaching is not limited to the highly involved consumers.* Textual poaching, or creating new texts and communities based on existing texts (DeCerteau 1984, Jenkins 1992), is associated with the idea of fandom. Mostly, this productivity level is considered as fandom itself, rather than one of the many activities of fandom (Wirman 2007). Textual poaching is deemed to be a practice for highly engaged consumers (Lanier et al 2007). Yet, my study reveals that consumers engage with different types of textual productivity at varying engagement levels.

*Engagement in TMC context is a staggered and permeating process.* This research also contributes to the media engagement studies. The TMC typology presents different co-creation practices for the variety of media used. In this regard, the typology can be interpreted as a way to understand consumers' engagement with the franchise across multitude of platforms. The variety of media dimensions of the typology can be interpreted as different depths of consumer

engagement, whereas the types of co-creation dimension can be interpreted as the breadth of engagement. The typology therefore illuminates both of these dimensions, and therefore also contributes to the fandom studies (e.g., Jenkins 1992), as it suggests there are fine distinctions among consumers than those represented by a “casual fan vs. hard-core fan” dichotomy.

Consistent with Jenkins (1992) and Abercrombie (1988), the TMC typology also communicates that as consumers bore more deeply into the textual co-creation and extensive media use levels of the typology, they become more engaged. In short, they become über fans. In the context of transmedia consumption, each consumer is, at the very least, engaged in meaning co-creation at the contained media level. The ladder nature of the typology also suggests that engagement with a transmedia narrative is a staged and inclusive process that comprises several layers of media consumption and co-creation practices. In the context of TMC, increasing engagement leads to increasing involvement with different kinds of co-creative consumption across variety of media platforms

*TMC is a both customizable and social experience.* Transmedia consumption is a customizable process that can be modified or altered to individual, personal, or at times, communal preferences, tastes, and skill levels. As consumers travel across the *Lost* transmedia universe, they find parts of the *Lost* story dispersed across a set of media platforms. To create a meaningful and coherent experience, they bring these pieces of story together. Consumers pick and choose the media and also stories to create their own version of that particular transmedia universe. They put together a collection of stories according to their preferences.

Furthermore, TMC is also a social experience. This social aspect manifests itself in different ways. Community and cultural expression is at the heart of the convergence studies (Kackman 2010). Consumers might engage in different types and levels of communal practices

in the context of TMC. Consumers might enjoy the micro communities of their extended family and significant others or might be engaged in communities that span globally like *Lostpedia*. This study elaborates how media and media text affect and shape the communities and communal practices, how communal consumption changes in response to transmedia narratives with multiple screens, and how consumers navigate across individual and communal consumption. A very recent concept called “ambient sociability” (McGonigal 2011) is also very relevant to transmedia consumption experiences. Ambient sociability (McGonigal 2011) describes how consumers love the idea that others have shared or are sharing the same experience, even when they engaged in consumption by themselves. McGonigal (2011) explains this concept further when discussing a study conducted on *World of Warcraft* players:

The researchers conducted interviews and found that players enjoyed sharing the virtual environment, even if there was little to no direct interaction. They were experiencing a high degree of “social presence,” a communications theory term for the sensation of sharing the same space with other people

Ambient sociability is also evident in the TMC experiences. The individual vs. communal boundaries I explain in the migration section describe how consumers switch between these modes. They watch the television show alone, but send messages to their friends during the show, go and post to an online community but do not necessarily involve in a conversation. They just want to share the communal space with the other consumers. Furthermore, ambient sociability becomes easier to experience with the increasing mobile technology advances like mobile phones, phone apps, and social media resources like Twitter. Along similar lines, Kackman (2010, p. 12) also point out this variously shared communal space:

Convergence is not just a narrow technological matter of transmediated texts circulated by digital media. Instead, media convergence is a part of cultural landscape that extends from the menu design of a digital cable box to our built environment — one that poses both challenges and opportunities for our relationships with the physical spaces around us, the media texts in front of us, and the people — literally or figuratively — sitting beside us.

*Transmedial migration practices traverse across consumption webs that are separated by media boundaries.* Consumption webs are “the holistic set of related consumption objects in a culture or community of consumption that specify object complementarity and impel further culture-specific consumption” (Kozinets 1997, 213). Transmedial migration patterns point out to the consumption of these specific webs of objects, texts, and stories across media platforms. My study supports that there are also resistances and barriers between contained, secondary, intertextual, and social media platforms. After consumers migrate across boundaries, they want to engage further within that media platform. This “broken levee” migration pattern implies that the momentum pertaining to TMC experiences builds in one media platform and then spills over to the other platforms. Once the levee is broken, consumers are less hesitant to migrate within that media platform and are more willing to explore the narrative consumption possibilities further on that platform. The broken levee effect also implies that the process of engagement contains elements that pertain to momentum and inertia, and that push and pull consumers across media platforms.

*Transmediation does not expand the consumer base due to the additive rule of consumers.*

Transmedia scholars (e.g., Long 2007, Jenkins 2006) suppose that transmediation expands the consumer base for the franchise as each medium attracts and brings in a new set of consumers to

the media franchise. These consumers are deemed to enlarge the consumer base for that particular franchise. Yet, as I have illustrated in the sequential and hierarchical migration figure, the majority of consumers enter the transmedia franchise from the contained media and migrate across to the secondary and intertextual media. Due to the hierarchical nature of transmedial migration, as consumers get to the secondary or intertextual media, they decrease in number. Obviously, the consumer base of a transmedia franchise might indeed be bigger than the consumer base of the same franchise not transmediated. But this difference is not due to the accumulating consumers who enter the franchise from different media platforms. The transmedia characteristic expands the media franchises because there are more people anchoring to the show and who engage in richer experiences, because of the various options available to consumers, as they pick and choose how, when and where to engage with that particular universe.

### **Contributions to Branding Literature**

This study contributes to the brand extension and socio-cultural branding literatures. First, the typology illustrates consumers' co-creation practices for a brand of mediated entertainment, and its extensions. Similarly, the transmedial process of migration describes how consumers navigate across a web of brand extensions to create a unified and complete media experience. Within a transmediation context, there exists a web of intertextually connected brand extensions rather than a parent brand-extension dyad. The narrative view of brands provides a good foundation to understand powerful brands that are products of multiple narratives at multiple venues (Diamond et al 2009). Thinking of brand extensions in light of the transmedia storytelling framework, we need a more narrative view on the brand extensions.

TMC clarifies that the deployment and re-camping of brand narratives creates, sustains, and communicates a unified consumer experience, which is interwoven among texts, consumers, and communities.

*TMC illustrates how the contained media for a brand plays a central role.* TMC and transmedial migration illustrate how the contained media for a brand plays a central role in the deployment of brand stories for “powerful brands” (Diamond et al 2009). The contained media is the departure, destination, and hub for TMC experiences. It is the prominent point of entry to the transmedia franchise (Askwith 2007) TMC clarifies that although orchestrating the dispersal of narratives is important to create a unified and coordinated consumer experience, connecting the secondary texts and related experiences back to the contained media are as crucial for TMC experiences.

*TMC entails self-branding practices.* By self-branding, I refer to the ways consumers adapt in producing and distributing their identities through social networking venues and through digital media. Arvidsson (2005) describes interactive consumer participation in the branding process as an immaterial or affective labor engaged in by consumers. Andrejevic (2002, 256) also notes that electronic commerce allows for mass customization, where individuals can overcome the homogeneity of mass culture. However, he claims that this digital form allows producers to meet consumers’ needs, because “consumer control boils down to the ability to have preferences monitored in detail.” Popular entertainment, such as reality TV, assists in spreading the idea that online self-disclosure is a way to access fame, and associates surveillance with self-expression (Quellette and Hay 2008). But, as Andrejevic points out, the process is complicated because of the ways that amateur labor becomes free labor for media corporations, and because of the ways that “branding” oneself opens one to surveillance apparatuses. Consumers might display consumer entrepreneurship (Huefner and Hunt 1994, Quellette and Hay 2008) that would

commodify the TMC practice or its outcomes. They circulate and commercialize their TMC efforts and expose themselves via traditional and social media platforms (Arvidsson 2005). The TMC typology entails narrative consumption practices that illustrate this important economic role of consumer participation, as well as the role of the narrative in facilitation that immaterial labor. Transmedia consumption experiences entail narrative consumption practices that illustrate how that immaterial labor is organized and compensated.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

### **Implications of Research for Practitioners**

Implications of this study for marketing practitioners concern brand building, brand management, multiple brands, and integrated marketing communications.

#### *Brand Building.*

Jeff Gomez is the quintessential comic-book nerd, a guy who can tell you in detail how Astro Boy went from circus performer to defender of the Earth... His forte is taking an existing blockbuster, whether a movie, toy, or soda, and extending the franchise. Gomez and his team create a backstory, or mythology, designed to get legions of new customers, especially young ones, hooked on an existing idea. As one might expect, many of Gomez's clients hail from Hollywood, where the franchise is king. But he also works with more mainstream companies. For example, he helped Coke devise a world based on its Happiness Factory advertising campaign, which the beverage giant may expand to include videos and games, and, of course, sell



more soda. "Whether you're selling movies or toys," says veteran Hollywood marketing consultant Terry Press, "people will buy a good story." (Grover 2009)

This quote is an excerpt from an article titled "Giving Products a Good Backstory" featured in a very recent issue of *Business Week*. The quote hints at the changing processes of developing, extending, and orchestrating brands via transmedia narratives — narratives that unfold across media platforms. The findings of this study support that transmedia storytelling might be a good choice for building new brands or extending the existing ones. New brands can make use of telling coordinated brand stories across a media of platforms to build brand equity. Transmedia scholars commonly stress that transmedia franchises starting as transmedia projects will be more successful in terms of the systematic dispersal of narratives because the roadmap for the media and content might be planned in advance. New brands could take advantage of this pre-planning about the dispersal of brand stories and build brand equity by telling coordinated stories across media. My study also supports that transmediation is a good option for extending existing brands; simply put, brands that already rest on rich and complex narratives can be extended using transmedia principles. Gomez (2011), one of the pioneers of transmedia producers, explains that one of the very first steps in transmedia production is creating a mythology for the brand. When starting a transmedia project, Gomez's company first creates a "Story Bible" — a collection of stories, narratives, and characters for the franchise — that is robust enough to be expanded across media platforms. So, the transmedia franchises are built on mythologies, similar to iconic brands that utilize mythical stories (Holt 2004). Along these lines, transmedia storytelling becomes a very relevant option for existing iconic brands that rest on rich and layered mythologies. These mythologies of the iconic brands establish a rich foundation for transmediation. For iconic brands like Apple and Coke, for example, transmediation provides

several ways that they can use those mythological stories to extend their brands and revamp their brand equity.

*Brand Management.* My study has implications for brand management as the findings on transmedia consumption can contribute to the ways brand managers coordinate media, content, and consumers. Transmediation contributes to the brand management practices in several ways. First, via exploring transmedia consumption experiences, I have described the nature of several touchpoints that brands can utilize to foster consumer co-creation. With increasing consumer participation and interactivity, consumers require brands offer some co-creation opportunities for consumer participation. For instance, Doritos uses fan-created commercials to be aired at yearly super bowl events. Although this is a great option for consumer interactivity, my typology might assist Doritos to develop other types of co-creation practices around the brand for consumers with less media skills, or who are less or more involved with the brand than shooting a commercial. Furthermore, transmedia producers struggle to connect content and experience, and try to find ways to avoid treating content and experience as separate entities. In [transmythology.com](http://transmythology.com), a high-traffic transmedia blog, transmedia producer Pulman points out this critical issue in the industry:

Almost every week I see some kind of discussion about the apparent divide between “content” and “experience.” The former term describes often static entertainment products that are generally consumed on a passive level. The latter denotes an emotional and communal event around that content, which could be as simple as laughing with a group of strangers in a darkened movie theater, but is usually used by commenters to describe more evanescent and phenomenological experiences

The findings of my study will greatly contribute to this seamless assembly of content and experience, as it details the experiences consumer seek for different types of media platforms and also how the content (story) leads to various experiences along the transmedia franchise. Thirdly, my study contributes to the authorship and control discussions that are becoming more and more common in the brand management field. How much control the brands should exert on consumer co-creation practices is still being debated. Brand managers desire and encourage community formations around the brand, yet they are hesitant about losing control of the brand meanings when consumers create new texts, art, or stories around the brand, especially when these texts contradict with producers' stories for the brand. My study provides insight to brand managers how they can facilitate communal co-creation opportunities for consumers and, if they do not want, discourage the textual co-creation to some extent by changing the structural elements of the text.

*Integrated Marketing Communications.* As I have mentioned previously, transmedia franchises that adopt transmediation principles at the beginning become more successful in creating a unified and coordinated brand storytelling. Yakob (2009) develops the concept of transmedia planning as an alternative to media-neutral planning. The existing frameworks of IMC and branding, or the "360-degree model" as Yakob calls it, uses a media-neutral planning where a single core thought iterates itself across any touchpoint via several media. In media-neutral planning, each iteration is suited to the channel that delivers it. The repetition of the multiple encodings in different media reinforces the core message and also the brand for the consumers. The early planning entails simultaneous decisions about the content (story) and the media platforms. This basically means that the creator assumes integrated marketing decisions (media platforms, advertisement targets) as well. In value-oriented marketing strategy, IMC is generally

used to communicate the value. But in the transmediation, IMC extends to include the decisions that would create value for consumers.

## **Future Research**

Considering all of the contributions above, in both consumer and branding areas, below are some ideas for future research questions.

*Transmedial Engagement.* Drawing from the TMC typology, future research should further conceptualize the topic of transmedial engagement. Although Askwith (2007) challenges the engagement concept for expanded texts, his dissertation mostly focuses on the production perspective on engagement. ? Do more media used mean more engaged viewers? Is there a relationship between canon and engagement? What is the nature of transmedial engagement?

*Other Transmedia Logics: Transmedia Activism and Transmedia Branding.* After grounding transmedia storytelling in the consumer behavior and marketing field, I realized there are other transmedia logics that are very relevant to our field. Future research should explore these transmedia logics that would contribute to consumer behavior and marketing field. For example, transmedia activism is a very recent cause-marketing framework to understand the role of media in mobilizing consumers. Transmedia activism seeks to “have people connect to a cause, by exposing them to a variety of media properties over various distribution channels.” (Srivastava 2009). Exploring transmedia activism would enrich our understanding of consumer resistance (Kozinets and Handelman 1998). How do transmedia consumption affect consumer resistance? How do consumers co-create transmedia activism practices? What are the processes of transmedia activism? Similarly, transmedia branding is a very important and interesting concept

for future research. Although the term has been pronounced by some transmedia scholars (e.g., Long 2007), it hasn't been explored fully with an empirical study. What are transmedia brands? How are they created and communicated? What is the source of brand equity in transmedia brands? How do marketers orchestrate transmedia branding practices?

*Rituals of TMC.* Following Rook's seminal work (1985), consumption of rituals has been an interest to many consumer scholars, particularly among consumer culture theorists. Ritualistic consumption has been studied in the contexts of gift giving (Sherry 1983, Otnes and Beltramini 1996), weddings (Otnes and Pleck 2003, Otnes and Lowrey 2003), Thanksgiving (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991), and pre-wedding rituals (Sandikci and Ilhan 2003). My netnography, in-depth interviews and field notes include many ritualistically repeated consumer practices pertaining to transmedia consumption experiences. Some future research might probe: How do consumers ritualize their transmedia consumption experiences? What are the structural elements of TMC rituals? To what ends, do consumers use TMC rituals?

*The critique of the celebratory view of convergence and consumer agency.* Scholars acknowledge the changing technological, cultural, economic, and social conditions in the contemporary mediascape due to the emergence and advancements in digital media. Yet, the impact of these changes on consumer agency is still being debated by scholars. Criticizing the celebratory view of Jenkins' perspective on the liberated consumers due to convergence, Kackman states (2010):

Convergence culture, for Jenkins, is a highly interactive participatory climate in which the mobility of texts and discourses across media forms blurs distinctions between producer and the consumer, and helps generate collective intelligence communities that can contest or alter the meanings and reach of commercial media texts. Whether these

new modes of participation represent the comprehensive commodification of everyday life of new opportunities for grassroots agency is an open question ...we need to engage in a more critical dialogue about convergence that doesn't reinforce hegemonic discourses of technological utopianism.

Thus, future research that would adopt a critical perspective to understand convergence culture would enrich our understanding of this contemporary dynamic. Along similar lines, exploring the nature of consumer agency in the convergence culture and how it affects the transmedia consumption experiences might be rich future research directions. What is the nature of consumer agency in convergence culture? What are some of the institutional, historical, and technological forces that shape consumer agency? How do consumers reflect on the scopes and limits of their own agency pertaining to transmedia consumption experiences?

*Evolution of the transmedia consumer.* in his book *Convergence Culture*, Jenkins (2006, 128) states that "the kids who have grown up consuming and enjoying Pokémon across media are going to expect this same kind of experience from the other content as they get older." Jenkins identifies Pokémon consumers (or the Pokémon generation as Jenkins describes them) as the genesis of contemporary transmedia consumers. Yet, there has not been any study conducted as to what make some consumers engage with transmedia consumption more than others. Future research might explore the cultural phenomenon of 'transmedia consumer' with the following questions: What are the historical, technological, and socio-cultural incidences that make transmedia consumer possible? What are the historical, technological, social, and cultural formations of the 'transmedia consumer'?

## Limitations

I conclude this chapter by acknowledging some of the limitations of this dissertation. First, the TMC typology and the transmedial migration frameworks do not reflect the dynamic nature of transmedia consumption strategies for the franchises where the TMC experiences simultaneously unfold as the transmedia franchise unfolds across media platforms. The *Lost* story has been dispersed across multiple media platforms over the six years. My data collection for this project did not start until January 2009 (and all of my in-depth interviews were conducted in the final season of the show), as the fifth season was airing on ABC television. So, by the time I started my data collection, the producers had utilized a set of primary and secondary media platforms for storytelling and consumers, and had established communities and practices around this transmedia franchise. If I had started collecting data from the very start of the show, I would have uncovered a different type of dynamism across the typology. Then, I would have observed how consumers move from one cell to the other since TMC experiences and practices are very much dependent on the production pace of the producers, and of the pace of the consumers. As this typology is developed from aggregate data of people's six-year-long experiences, it is rooted in consumers' reflections of this dynamism rather than observing it.

Second, this study is grounded in a single franchise. I study the TMC experiences in the context of the *Lost* franchise, which uses the television show as the contained media that tells a weekly story over the period of six years. The contained media, duration, number of extensions, and the genre of the story might be different for other franchises. All these differences across contexts might affect the transferability (Lincoln and Guba 1985) of the findings. Third, the data collection and analysis for this study have been performed by one researcher. Thus, the patterns or themes have not been products of agreement among multiple authors.

Transmedia storytelling, a contemporary media practice, is the telling of stories across media. Grounding transmedia to consumer behavior and marketing field, this study introduces the concept of transmedia consumption (TMC) experiences that detail how consumers engage with the interrelated stories dispersed across a multitude of media platforms. This study also explores the key practices, boundaries, and important processes of TMC. The results have implications for transmedia, social-branding, and media consumption frameworks.



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## TABLES

Table 1: Nethnographic Data in Numbers – Total number of posts and threads collected from nethnographic sites

	<i>Threads\Blogs</i>	<i>Posts\Comments</i>
<i>Lostpedia</i>	814	<b>100,547</b>
Main Forum		
Episode Discussions	<b>116</b>	<b>46,764</b>
Older Episodes	83	31,131
<i>Lost</i> : Book Club	66	1,637
<i>Lost</i> Re-watch	120	3,732
<i>Lost</i> ARG	408	15,331
<i>Lost</i> : Via Domus	156	1,952
<i>Lostblog</i>	691	~43,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>~143,000</b>

*As of June 12, 2010*

Table 2: Narrative Consumption Practices of Transmedia Consumption Experiences

Narrative Practices	Sub-categories	Description	Activities	Role of Narrative	Underlying Dimensions
<b>Anchoring</b>	Dabblers	<p>Flighting patterns of consumption</p> <p>Fickle in terms of their loyalties, interests, or affection with the franchise</p>	DVD, streaming, episode summaries, video clips, clip shows	<p><b>Narrative as Hook</b></p> <p>Sustains anticipation in between episodes, seasons, after the season is over</p>	<p><i>Focal Narrative Aspect:</i> Mysteries, Plot (short arcs); Primary Text</p> <p><i>Community Involvement:</i> Very low, if any, within limited close circles. Not seeking any</p> <p><i>Prior Fandom Experience:</i> Mostly none.</p> <p><i>Expectation from the Producer:</i> Tell a primary media contained story, no faith in the puppet master</p>
	Latecomers	<p>Started watching the show in between seasons</p> <p>Binge consumption to catch up with the show</p> <p>Transitional: might continue with weekly watching or dabble</p>	DVD, streaming, Hulu, Netflix, ABC website, illegal download		
	Early Committers	<p>Engage with the franchise from the very beginning (or almost very beginning)</p> <p>Committing to a consumption schedule — mostly weekly watching</p> <p>Most likely to mesh or migrate across media</p>	<p>Streaming, TV, DVR (staggered or watch very soon after it airs on TV)</p> <p>DVD, streaming, or DVR — for re-watch</p>		
<b>Recruiting</b>		Efforts aimed at getting friends, coworkers, and family members into the franchise	Providing recaps, lending DVDs, following up on their progress, mentoring	<p><b>Narrative as Cultural Attractor</b></p> <p>Drawing together and creating common ground between communities</p>	<p><i>Focal Narrative Aspect:</i> Characters, Overarching Plot; Primary Text</p> <p><i>Community Involvement:</i> enjoy being part of and consuming with community.</p> <p><i>Prior Fandom Experience:</i> Not much, if any the experience is limited</p>
<b>Relating</b>	Intra-circle	Discussion with friends, significant others, office mates, friends,	Personal chat interfaces (G-Chat, Yahoo Messenger, AIM) or email (group or individual)		

**Table 2 (cont'd)**

	New Networks	Discussing with local communities, as conversation starter with the encounters and even strangers	Local <i>Lost</i> communities (e.g., Smile Politely), “Do you watch <i>Lost</i> ?”		<i>Expectation from the Producer:</i> Means for participation, acknowledge the investment of communities, very little or <i>Lost</i> faith in the puppet master
Meshing <sup>29</sup>	Searching	Use existing social media accounts to share their thoughts, visit fan pages, relate to their friends	Twitter, Facebook  Twitter Hashtags, Fan pages, Twitter lists, tweets, Facebook statuses		
	Lurking	Read discussions on the Internet, but rarely or never participates in the blogs or forums. Don't have accounts on these sites of participation.	(Blogs, Forums Articles)  ABC website, <i>Lostpedia</i> and other forums like Dark UFO, some weekly blogs (Entertainment Weekly Doc Jensen, etc), Google, IMDB, Wikipedia, Podcasts		
	Posting	Active participation and interactivity in online sites and activities	All above meshing cells but a little more on forums and micro communities of <i>Lost</i>		
Extracting <sup>30</sup>	Performance Related	Isolate character traits, performance roles and enact in real life, travel tours in Hawaii	Fantasy Role plays, Facebook photos, <i>Lostpedia</i> member pictures, Banners with scripts		<i>Focal Narrative Aspect:</i> Characters, Brands (Diegetic, Actors), mostly hooked by one topic in the story (religion, physics, romance etc); Primary Text  <i>Community Involvement:</i> enjoy being part of, consuming with, and providing to the community.  <i>Prior Fandom Experience:</i> Not much, if any the experience is limited, most of them state it's their first time
	Product Related	Acquisition and consumption of <i>Lost</i> related merchandise	Diegetic Brands, Action Figures, Ring Tones, Screen Savers		
Grounding	To Professional Domain	Adopting and borrowing threads, plots, performances, or merchandise from the story and use in a career, job related	Priest-mass, TV producer-cooking recipes, professor — lecture, office space		

<sup>29</sup> Use of blog, websites, or Internet to enhance the experience of another medium such as TV program. Use of media in conjunction with Internet ( Yahoo Media Report 2009)

<sup>30</sup> Refer to the perceived relationship between the transmedia fiction and our everyday experiences. Extractability: the fan takes aspects of the story away with them as resources they deploy in the spaces of their everyday life. ([http://henryjenkins.org/2009/12/vengeance\\_of\\_the\\_origami\\_unicorn.html](http://henryjenkins.org/2009/12/vengeance_of_the_origami_unicorn.html))

<b>Table 2 (cont'd)</b>		activity			relating to a show this intense way. There are exceptions(some have some prior fan experience)
	To Personal Domain	Adopting and borrowing threads, plots, performances, or merchandise from the story and use in sacred or everyday life activities	Honeymoon theme, wedding theme, pet names, kids names, <i>Lost</i> theme parties, Halloween costumes	<b>Narrative as Cultural Activator</b>  Setting into motion consumers' decipherment, speculation, and elaboration	
<b>Patching</b>	Mapping	Awareness of the existence of the secondary texts	ARGs, intertextually linked popular literary titles, spin off novels, video games		<p><i>Focal Narrative Aspect:</i> Characters, Easter Eggs(candies); Secondary Texts</p> <p><i>Community Involvement:</i> Very intense, some intensely identify with their <i>Lost</i> communities</p> <p><i>Prior Fandom Experience:</i> Some to very experienced. They draw a lot of skills and experience from prior fan experiences</p> <p><i>Expectation from the Producer:</i> provide a good playground with sufficient story elements, continuous despite the hiatuses of the show, although criticize at times most have faith in the puppet master</p>
	Dipping	Reading the recaps, synopsis of the secondary texts from other resources like forums, blogs, or hyperlinks (e.g., consuming without playing)			
	Digging	Consume the secondary texts, play ARGs, read books, etc. and try to solve mysteries and find extra information	ARGs, intertextually linked popular literary titles, spin off novels, video games, extra resources on physics, religion, etc, and bird view materials ( <i>Lost</i> Connections, Island maps)		
	Stitching	Combine all the info from the consumption of secondary texts, make an overarching analysis			
<b>Pooling</b>		grouping of resources, talents, and knowledge of consumers, in a community, for the common advantage of the community members	Forums, blogs, <i>Lostpedia</i> , ARGs (to decode photos, screens, sounds, codes etc.)		<p>Focal Narrative Aspect: Characters, Easter Eggs(candies), rabbit holes in the story</p> <p>Community Involvement: Very intense, they are mostly leaders of their own communities</p>
<b>Creating</b>	Producers	Produce Texts, images, art, and other forms	Theories, Fan Fiction, Fan Art, Fan Music, Fan Movies		<p>Prior Fandom Experience: Some to very experienced and skilled. They draw a lot of skills and experience from</p>

**Table 2 (cont'd)**

	Performers	Performance related production	Dancing, Dressing up, Conventions  (and some of the grounding activities mentioned above)		prior fan experiences  Expectation from the Producer: provide a good playground with sufficient story elements, tolerance and encouragement for a creative space around the franchise
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## APPENDIX A

### TOUCHPOINTS OF THE EXPANDED TELEVISION TEXT

Askwith lists touchpoints that are used to expand the modern television text. These touchpoints are:

*Formal Program Qualities:* The characteristics of the core text that determine how audiences can and are likely to engage with the franchise.

*Expanded Access:* As the name implies, expanded-access touchpoints do not offer new or original show-related content, but instead provide additional points of access to the show's core content (i.e., full-length episodes) through a range of distribution platforms. Expanded-access touchpoints empower media consumers to access content whenever and wherever they want, through whatever device or medium is available. DVD, Internet, or mobile devices are examples of expanded-access touchpoints.

*Repackaged Content:* This category refers to any content offering that manipulates, re-organizes, excerpts, replicates, reuses, repurposes or adapts a show's core content (i.e., the original televised episodes). Repackaged content provides viewers with continuous access to information first provided during episodes of the broadcast program. Repackaging often makes this content more useful or appealing by reconfiguring and reorganizing it, but does not supplement it with new information or new content. Common examples of repackaged (or repurposed) informational extensions include episode guides, character biographies and plot summaries. In television programming, for example, the repackaged content helps to ensure that even

television's most complex and serialized programming remains accessible (or at least comprehensible) to new and occasional viewers. "Repackaged informational extensions function largely as a method of keeping content accessible to 'less engaged' viewers, allowing them to 'catch themselves up,' figure out what they missed, or — in the case of more complex shows — review what they saw." (Askwith 2007, 58).

*Ancillary Content:* This category refers to any and all content created or made available to audiences that provide content or information beyond that which was presented in the television episodes themselves. The difference between repackaged content and ancillary content is; that while the first reorganizes and re-contextualizes the core content of a television series, but offers nothing new, the other introduces new material and/or information that supplements, extends or expands the consumer's overall knowledge. Ancillary content is an important tool that helps expand the transmedia narrative, as it adds value to the original content.

*Branded Products:* The term "branded products" refers to show-related objects that do not function as "content," but that bear the brand identity of a television program. In general, branded products are those items viewers can collect and own, and that are distinguished from comparable products and items by their branded affiliation with the show. Branded extensions prominently display the show's brand y including such recognizable markers as characters, memorable phrases and identifiable logos. Common examples of branded extensions include both free and inexpensive promotional items, such as downloadable desktop pictures, buddy icons, screensavers, mobile wallpapers and ring-tones, and commodified merchandise, such as apparel, key chains and posters.

*Related Activities:* Activities refer to a range of touchpoints that provide media consumers with opportunities to engage in structured, show-related activities. Activities, in this context, describe pursuits that require media consumers to take an active role and participate, but that are not necessarily delivered through a media platform.

*Social Interaction:* Fan studies have long indicated that for many consumers, television viewing is a fundamentally social experience. The social practice of watching television with family and friends is as old as the medium itself, and some of the first active Internet communities arose as spaces where fans of specific television programs could congregate to engage in discussions with other like-minded viewers, and on rare occasions, with “celebrities” involved in the production of these programs. Chapter 3 will further discuss these activities.

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

I am studying consumption of media for my dissertation. I am interested in the ways people watch/consume the TV series, *Lost*. In this interview, I want to learn about the ways you consume *Lost* and your related practices.

#### SCREENING QUESTIONS:

1. Do you engage in viewing, reading, or creating any material that relates to *Lost*?
2. Do you watch *Lost*?
3. Do you consider yourself as a fan? (I do not mean this question as a filter but more like a distinguishing dimension between *Lost* audience. I will ask the same question again in the proceeding parts of the interview. But, as a screening question, it might give me a quick overview of how many fans I have interviewed. Also, it clarifies my position on the operational definition of a ‘fan’ that I adopt in my study.)

#### CONSUMPTION PATTERNS:

Tell me about the ways you experience *Lost*.

How did you start experiencing *Lost*? (Probe: Did you start reading Wiki, from friends?) When did you start watching *Lost*? (Probe whether they started First Season First Episode). If not, did you catch up? If so, how did you catch up? How long did it take you to catch up? Do you watch it the first day it is aired (on Wednesdays)? Do you watch it all at once on TV from beginning to end? Do you watch it again? Which medium do you prefer? How come? When? What made you become interested in the series? Can you explain the experience of *Lost*? (Any difficulty answering this, probe for analogies from sports, or any other entertainment experience) What does keep you engaged with the series? Do you identify with any of the characters in the show? Which one?

Do you consider yourself as a fan? What type of a *Lost* fan do you consider yourself? Are you a member of any fan communities or any Facebook groups? What do you think about the show?

***During the show:*** Take me through a typical *Lost* watching day/night/scene with you. Are there any specific ways you watch *Lost*?

Some probing questions: Do you watch it alone? Which one do you prefer most? Why? At which room do you watch the TV show? Do you have specific rituals that you are engaged when watching the TV show (e.g. pop corn, refreshments)? Do you read spoilers before the show? Do you think DVD/DVR, Internet, TiVo, or any other medium are essential to understand the *Lost* narrative? Do you rewind to go back to a scene? Frequently? At what incidences?

Do you have your computer on your side when watching the show? Do you use Internet during the show? For what reasons? (Probe: Do you communicate with the other viewers online? Which

websites, blogs, or fan communities do you use during the show? Do you simultaneously refer to the blogs, wiki, *Lostpedia* or any other sources while watching the series?)

***After the show:*** How do you engage with *Lost* after the weekly episodes of the show?

Some probing questions: Do you write or read any spoilers after the show? Do you ask questions about the plot to your friends? post questions on websites? Engage in discussions with online communities? Do you use *Lostwiki*, *Lostpedia* or any other similar resources that provide in-depth information about *Lost*? Why? Do you develop theories to predict what will happen in the coming episodes or to explain some of the ambiguous parts of the narrative? Can you give me an example of a similar incidence.

***In-between seasons:*** What do you do in between seasons? Do you watch previous seasons? How (download, DVD)? What other ways do you consume watch during off-seasons?

***Other Media:*** What are the other media platforms you prefer for consuming *Lost*? How many other *Lost* extensions are you aware? Which ones are you using? In which frequency? What do you expect from these additional activities?

***Switching between media:*** Does it help you read about the show (before or after)? How? What do you like about the show? Do you have a favorite season? What don't you like about the show? (Probe: canon consistency) What do you think about the plot? Do you come across any difficulties? Any difficulties about following the narrative? What do you do then? How do you solve it? Which media platforms are you more comfortable with? Probe on the basis of starting point, frequency, and literacy. Which medium do you use more frequently? What is your motivation for going to other media to consume *Lost*? What does lead you to Internet, wiki, and fan fiction? Do you go back and watch the episodes after you learn something new about the story?

General Media Consumption Patterns: How would you describe your own media consumption and habits? Take me through how you use media on an everyday basis. (Probe: Do you have a smart phone? Do you have a data plan with it? For what type of things do you rely in your cell phone?) What is your favorite medium for entertainment purposes? On an average day, how much time do you spend on TV, on Internet, or on your phone? Do you like to purchase new gadgets related to media and entertainment? Can you give an example of one your recent ones? Would you describe yourself as an early adopter regarding media gadgets?

## **TRANSMEDIA CONSUMER:**

***Emotional Engagement:*** How do you define your relation to the *Lost* franchise? (Probe Fournier's relationship analogies). Does it have any impact in your life? In what ways? Do you follow additional news about *Lost*? Do you like filling gaps in the narrative? Do you try to predict the future events? Do you have any rituals regarding the consumption of the *Lost* franchise? Do you belong to any *Lost* clubs?

*Cultural Competence (fan's depth of knowledge and skills):* What are some of the other TV shows you like? What is your preferred media? Are you comfortable with the resources on the Net that provides information about the *Lost* franchise? Do you gather info beyond the TV show? How? From where? Do you identify any references to the other literature, TV shows, mythology, etc in *Lost*'s plot?

*Auxiliary Consumption:* Do you collect memorabilia of the show? Do you save any info on your computer? Do you help others understand the narrative? What about for predicting the events? Do you have any T-shirts, screen savers, Facebook profile picture with *Lost* merchandise?

*Production (active, enthusiastic, partisan, participatory engagement with the text):* Do you write new texts? Any fan fiction, blogs, something about you? Any what if scenarios? Any alternative scenes? Do you know the director, screen writer and their any other work? Are you interested in those types of details? Does *Lost* affect your daily life in any way? Do you post videos on YouTube, Flickr about *Lost*? Do you try to guess /identify of each season's winner before the results are aired on television?

<b>Extensions of <i>Lost</i></b>	<b>Yes/No?</b>	<b>Some probing questions</b>
<i>Lost</i> - official website		
<b>(Expanded Access)</b>		
DVD		Own? All seasons? Which ones? Download? iTunes? Share? With whom? Rent? From where?
TiVo		On the day? Stream from ABC website? (Broadband)
<b>(Repackaged Content)</b>		
Clip Shows		recap specials, ' <i>Lost: Untangled</i> ' on the official website
Video Clips		' <i>Lost: Back Stories</i> ' – re-edited sequence for given characters
<i>Lost</i> Connections		website
<b>(Textual Extensions)</b>		
<i>Narrative Extensions</i>		
Licensed Spin-off Novels		'Endangered Species'
The <i>Lost</i> Video Diaries		Mobisodes for Sprint subscribers
<i>Diegetic Extensions</i>		
Oceanic Airlines Website		oceanic-air.com
Mystery novel 'Bad Twin'		
ARG 'The <i>Lost</i> Experience'		
<b>(Extratextual Information)</b>		
DVD Bonus Materials		
Official <i>Lost</i> Podcasts		
The <i>Lost</i> Chronicles: Official Companion Book		
<i>Lost: The Official Magazine</i>		
<b>(Branded Products)</b>		
Diegetic Merchandise		Dharma Initiative, Dharma Brand, Dharma Logo –

		Diegetic Brands
Collectible Merchandise		Action Figures, Trading Cards
<b>(Themed Activities)</b>		Jigsaw Puzzles
<b>(Experiential Activities)</b>		<i>Lost</i> : The Board Game <i>Lost</i> : The Mobile Game <i>Lost</i> : The Video Game
<b>(Co-creation extensions)</b>		<i>Lost</i> wiki - Write? Read? Fan Fiction - Write? Read? Spoiler – Write? Read? Predictions – Write? Read? Blogs – write? Read? Video game – aware? Play? Not a canon Novel ‘Signs of Life’

**APPENDIX C**  
**INFORMANT RECRUITMENT AD**

This ad placed on a university weekly e-letter and is used for informant recruitment.

Subject: Let's talk about *LOST* - A doctoral student needs your help

Hi!

My name is Behice Ece Ilhan. I am doing my PhD at the University of Illinois. For my dissertation, I am studying how people engage with *LOST* (the ABC show). If you are engaged with *LOST* in additional ways besides watching the TV show (e.g., blogs, Lost video games, alternate reality games, fan fiction), I would like to conduct a face-to face (if possible) or a Skype interview with you. Please connect me at [bilhan2@illinois.edu](mailto:bilhan2@illinois.edu)

Thanks in advance

Best,

Behice Ece ILHAN  
PhD Candidate in Marketing  
College of Business  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



## APPENDIX D

### INFORMANT DETAILS

*Heidi* (female, late 20s): Heidi is an international graduate student at University of Illinois. She has started watching *Lost* after Season 4 was about to be over on TV. Her consumption of *Lost* is limited to the consumption of TV show that she mostly watches on DVD or via streaming. She watches the episodes with her boyfriend, Asim. She has hard time adapting to the weekly episode schedule after she caught up with the show. So, she waits for a couple of weeks to watch multiple episodes back to back. She expects that producers provide all the answers about the mysteries in the TV show and thinks that reading and theorizing about the show is a waste of time. She hated the finale episode.

*Asim* (male, early 30s): Asim is a graduate student at University of Illinois. He has started watching *Lost* after Season 4 with his girlfriend, Heidi. His consumption practices regarding *Lost* are limited to the TV show and very similar to those of Heidi. They both engaged with binge consumption to catch up with the show. They watched the finale episode together two weeks after it is aired. He also hated the finale episode.

*Abe* (male, early 30s): Abe is a graduate student at University of Illinois. He has started watching the show after Season 2 aired on TV. He re-arranges his schedule on Tuesdays or Wednesdays to watch *Lost* at the time it is aired on national TV. His economy of *Lost* consumption is mostly focused on avoiding the spoilers and on not being disturbed during the show. He couldn't watch the final episode at the time it is aired as he was traveling with his family.

*Dan* (male, early 30s): Dan is a computer technician (college graduate) in Urbana, Illinois. He has started watching *Lost* when Season 2 was still airing on TV. He doesn't have cable

subscription, so he watches *Lost* through Hulu, streamed to his TV screen. Dan's consumption of *Lost* is mostly limited with the weekly TV show. He is a fan of Facebook *Lost* page. He is not sure what he thinks about the finale.

*Anna* (female, early 30s): Anna is an assistant professor at University of Illinois. Annie's interest in the show has been initially sparked by the show's production place, Hawaii, where she went to graduate school. She watches the weekly episodes and uses limited online resources (blogs, ABC website) to understand some of the mysteries. Annie watched the final episode multiple times and she loved it. She also watches some of the episodes she bought from iTunes on her phone.

*Larry* (male, late 30s): Lorenzo is an assistant professor at University of Illinois. He is "religiously" – in his own words – watching the show since the pilot episode. He watches the weekly episodes on TV and re-watches them in between seasons on DVDs or via streaming. He feels proud that he convinced more people to watching the show. He connects with local *Lost* fans through forums, blogs, and *Lost* events. He also throws *Lost* parties in his place, arranges *Lost* happy hours, and comments on local *Lost* community websites. He loved the finale.

*Mark* (male, late 20s) : Mark is an international graduate student at University of Illinois. He has started watching the show just before Season 3 started. He has watched Season 1 via streaming and has read Season 2 synopsis on *Lostpedia*. Since Season 3, he watches the show weekly – not necessarily on the day it is aired – via Hulu. He uses *Lostpedia* to understand the mysteries in the story. He mentions that his curiosity and hence his use of outside resources for that end is getting less and less as he *Lost* faith the producers and the possibility that they would be able to provide answer to each question introduced in the show. He "kinda" likes the finale.

Erwin (male, early 30s): Erwin is a graduate student at University of Illinois. He has started watching the season during the summer before Season 2 started. Since then he is watching the show mostly on delay (DVR) on the day it is aired. He uses *Lostpedia*, Google, IMBD, and other blogs to understand the mysteries of the show. He claims that he would go to other resources and consume extra content if he thinks they would provide something additional about the story. He assumes that there is no such content available. He is upset that the final episode did violate the agreement between the viewers and the producer that would compensate for his time and effort. He had faith in the show but he feels like he is taken advantage after the final episode as most of his questions are still lingering.

Al ( male, late 30s): Al is an assistant professor at University of Illinois. He is the writer of a *Lost* blog in C-U section in smilepolitely dot com, which is a local portal for Champaign-Urbana. He likes reading multiple blogs about the show. He discusses about the show with his micro community that also includes Larry.

Cathy (*female, early 30s*): Cathy is a post doc fellow at University of Illinois. She is watching the show since Season 1. In the early seasons, she has used podcasts, virtual treasure hunt games, and related *Lost* forums. She mostly watches the weekly episode on her TV at the time it is aired. She likes reading about the other viewers' comments on ABC dot com official *Lost* website. Yet, she never posts.

Jill( *female,late 20s*): Jill works for a digital advertising firm in LA. Jamie is a very avid twitter and active *Lost* fan, or *Lostie* (in her own words). She has watched the pilot episode in Comic Con, San Diego two months before the show aired in US and around the world. She watches and re watches the show in several occasions and likes that her friends come to her to learn more about the mysteries in the story. She started the *Lost* Friday movement on Twitter (

#thanksto*Lost* hashtag). She plays ARGs, listen to podcasts, and go to *Lost* events in LA. She said she loved the final episode.

*Juan (male, late 30s)*: Juan is a convergent Media Producer in Austin Texas. He watches the show since season 1 on a weekly basis. He has only missed a single episode when he was on a business trip. Juan heavily uses twitter engage in *Lost*. He also consumes spoilers, podcasts, blogs and forums to learn more about the *Lost* story. He said he loved the final episode.

Tam(female, early 30s) Tam is an editor in one of the local newspapers at Urbana-Champaign. She started the show late in the third season. She is an avid reader of the smile politely column. But her online community or search activity is limited with smile politely. Due to time constraints, she can only engage with one TV show at a time.

Jane (female, early 30s). Jane creates and hosts a cooking program for the local ABC channel. The program airs weekly before the *Lost* episode. Jane creates *Lost*-themed recipes for the show. She is inspired from the script, characters, and geographies of the show. She is particularly interested in the religious stories of the show. She was offended by how the finale was contradicting the Bible stories.

Andy ( male, late 20s): Andy is a game designer in one of the top-notch gaming companies. In his own words, his role is to seamlessly integrate the consumer experience into the games. Andy and his wife are fans of the *Lost* television show. He also consumed several ARGs and the video game but he was very unsatisfied with the experience he got from these secondary media.

Gill (female, mid 30s): Gill is a medical doctor in LA. Gill watched and re-watched the show several times. She likes reading, learning, and researching about the show. She helped her

husband and her in-laws throughout the show with the things she had learned from the online communities. She organized several *Lost* watching parties and *Lost* themed gatherings.

**APPENDIX E:**

**PERFORMANCE RELATED EXTRACTION EXAMPLES**

