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Transmedia narrative and cognitive perception of TVE’s drama series *El Ministerio del Tiempo*

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Abstract

Introduction: This article analyses TVE’s drama series *El Ministerio del tiempo* to determine whether greater knowledge about this TV series, and the use of social networks and multimedia resources influence viewers’ perception of the series. **Methods:** The analysis is based on the information provided by 124 viewers through a questionnaire based on a character identification scale. **Results:** It was concluded that greater knowledge of the TV series and the use of transmedia storytelling increases viewers’ identification with the series’ fictional characters, although this only applies in the items with greater emotional or sentimental charge. **Discussion:** The results indicate that the findings are not applicable to the cognitive evaluation of the most loyal viewers of the series. **Conclusions:** Based on the results, it can be affirmed that transmedia contents influence viewers’ rational and emotional responses. Prior knowledge of the series and the use of transmedia storytelling extend the relationship between viewers and the TV series beyond occasional enjoyment.

Keywords

Audiovisual fiction; transmedia narratives; media entertainment; empathy; cognitive evaluation

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Translation by CA Martínez Arcos (PhD in Communication from the University of London)

1. Introduction

Transmedia stories (or narratives) “are stories told across multiple media. At the present time, the most significant stories tend to flow across multiple media platforms” (Jenkins, Purushotma, Clinton, Weigel and Robison, 2006: 46).

The development of Internet and the participatory Web have made it easier for these new narratives to achieve greater engagement with users and audiences (Costa and Piñeiro, 2015). The term crossmedia refers “to a narrative that is dispersed in systematically across multiple media in order to create a unified and coordinated entertainment experience” (Jenkins 2006: 20-21). On the other hand, transmedia narrative or storytelling sees the start of this multi-platform dispersion as “a guided process” (Hernández-Pérez and Ferreras, 2014: 29). However, it is also possible for this process to be unintentional and non-proactive, but retroactive due to its commercial success (Burn, 2004; Davidson, 2010; Owczarski, 2009; Hernández-Pérez and Ferreras, 2014).

Transmedia storytelling is not a simple system of commercial adaptation. The serialisation or novelisation of a fictional story as a result of its success can be divided into linear sequences or, what is the same, a “serial story” (Thompson and Bordwell, 2007), where “the linear story can lead the receiver from one medium to the next” (Hannele, Kangas, and Vainikainen, 2004: 19).

A transmedia narrative goes beyond the simple combinations of languages and formats. It is based on the development of the story through different media and the user’s units of interpretation. This type of narrative is not a “classic episodic structure along a single time line but rather expands radially around a timeline that we can call the ‘core of the narrative’, forming autonomous time lines of its own” (Hernández-Pérez and Ferreras, 2014: 29). This narrative core (*parent text*) is the point of reference for other products or texts (Brown & Krzywinska, 2009) and can propose new stories, or spin-offs, at some point, which is particularly attractive for such media as television and comics.

Jenkins was the first scholar to explain the concept of transmedia storytelling in the online journal *Technology Review* in 2003, where he points out that “we have entered an era of media convergence that makes the flow of content across multiple media channels almost inevitable” (Scolari, 2013: 24). For this author this kind of storytelling “represents a process where the integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story.”

The notion of a cohesive diegetic infrastructure is particularly important in the architecture of a crossmedia narrative, in addition to being vital for transmedia narratives, which can become endless stories as in video games (Brown and Krzywinska, 2009), or develop into more complex narrative structures (Jenkins, 2006), as for example in the *Star Wars* saga which produces independent contents and highly organic objects (Garín and Pérez, 2009; Tulloch and Jenkins, 1995).

In transmedia narratives, each “medium” uses its best persuasive resources, so that a story can be introduced in a movie, then expanded through TV, novels, and comics, and even explored and experienced through a video game. Each “medium” must be independent, so that, for example, users do not have to watch the film in order to enjoy the video game and vice versa (Jenkins, 2003).

According to Del Río (2015), for a narrative to be considered transmedia it is necessary to have the following characteristics:

- It disperses its stories across multiple channels (Internet, comics, novels, social networks, etc.).
- All media channels offer their own story and in conjunction form a universe whose meaning is greater than the sum of its parts.
- Each channel or medium provides content, which can be enjoyed independently without the help of the rest of the media platforms.
- Its users can generate contents that expand the stories.

The process whereby fictional stories are adapted to different platforms cannot be considered merely technological. On the contrary, it is necessary to adapt new narratives to the different media platforms in order to understand the dimension they are capable of reaching together with new forms of reading and enjoying the story.

The dissemination of fictional series was initially based on narrative repetition and regularity (Stedman, 1971) until the emergence of large media conglomerates (like Disney and Time-Warner), “which now have the capacity to control both the creation and distribution of multiple products, regardless of the media in which they are created” (Hernández-Pérez and Ferreras, 2014: 27).

Currently, the blockbuster production model involves its dissemination across different media, which is a process known as “total entertainment” (Grainge, 2008: 65). Cinematic macro-stories such as *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, *Spiderman* and *Harry Potter*, as well as productions aimed at the small screen, such as *Heroes*, *CSI*, *Lost*, *House* and *The Walking Dead*, and Spanish productions such as *El Barco*, *Águila Roja*, *El Secreto de Puente Viejo* and *El Ministerio del Tiempo*, are examples of serial stories that use several different languages, the so-called crossmedia narrative.

The analysis of this type of fiction requires, therefore, a new methodology, which has already been addressed by Aarseth (2006), Ryan (2001, 2004, 2009), Hernández-Pérez and Grandío-Pérez (2011). Other authors (like Hernández-Pérez and Ferreras, 2014: 28) have developed a methodological approach to crossmedia narratives based on three axes: the first axis highlights the orthodoxy of the narrative features of fiction, such as theme, plot, characters, setting, etc.; the second axis considers the essential elements of the narrative architecture, such as intertextuality and self-reference, which are necessary to achieving a sense of cohesion on the macrostory and to optimise its genre-based assimilation. Finally, the third axis focuses on the role of the audience in the consumption, interpretation and distribution of the cross-media narratives. The authors have theorised about the interaction between the media and society through the role of the public in the construction of the crossmedia serial narrative: “fan contributions are not always faithful enough to canonical texts and, consequently, can damage the saga’s diegetic coherence” (Hernández-Pérez and Ferreras, 2014: 29).

The characteristics of a transmedia production can be summarised as follows (Dena, 2007):

- Its content is generated by one or very few visionaries.
- Its transmediality is planned from the beginning of the life of the franchise.
- Its distribution strategy is established across three or more media platforms.
- Its content is unique and takes advantage of the specific strengths of each platform and is not reused by another.
- It has different stories that share a unique vision of the narrative world.
- It makes a concerted effort to prevent fractures and divisions.
- It involves a vertical integration that takes into account third parties.
- It takes into account the participation of the audience, through websites, social networks and user-generated content.

These characteristics of a transmedia production can be summarised in the following figure:

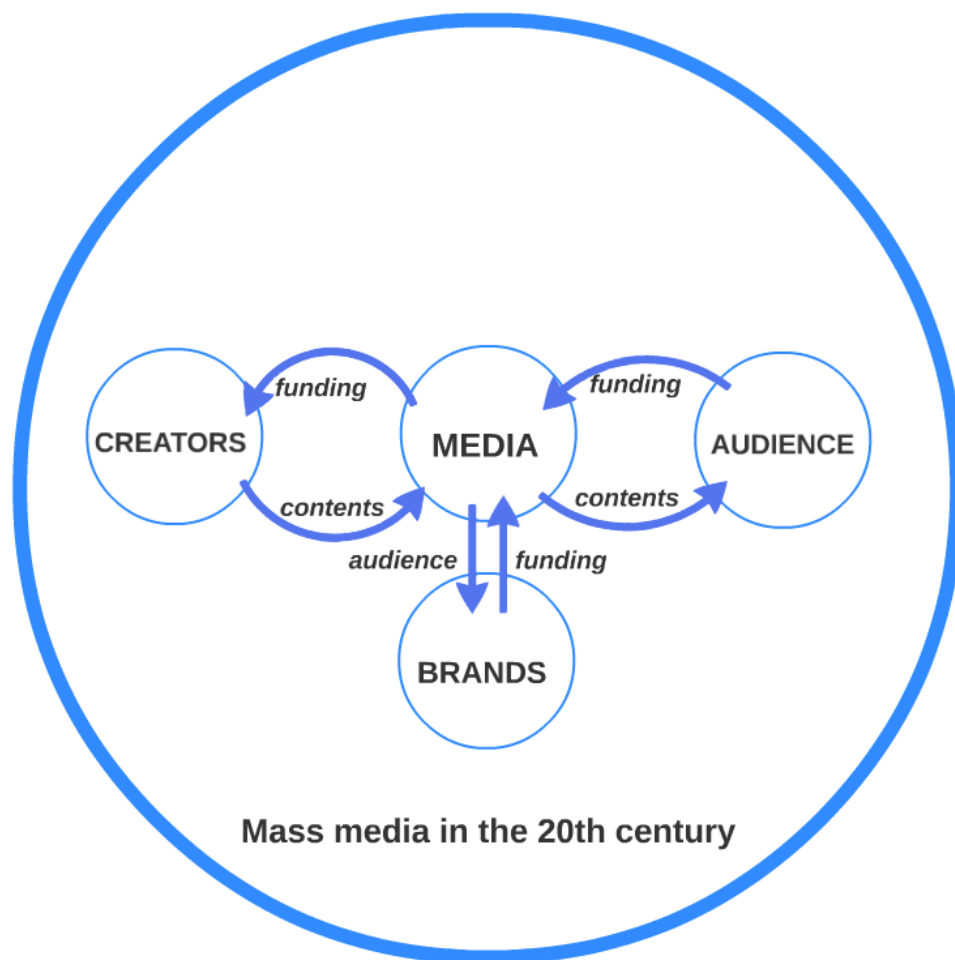
Figure 1: Characteristics of a transmedia production



Source: Authors' own creation, based on Dena (2007). All participants in a transmedia communication process have the possibility of playing an active role.

In order to address the qualitative change posed by the transmedia landscape, it is useful to compare the current scenario with the one from the 20th century. The following diagram represents the mass media communication model that characterised much of the 20th century in which one-way communication was predominant.

Figure 2: Mass media in the 20th century

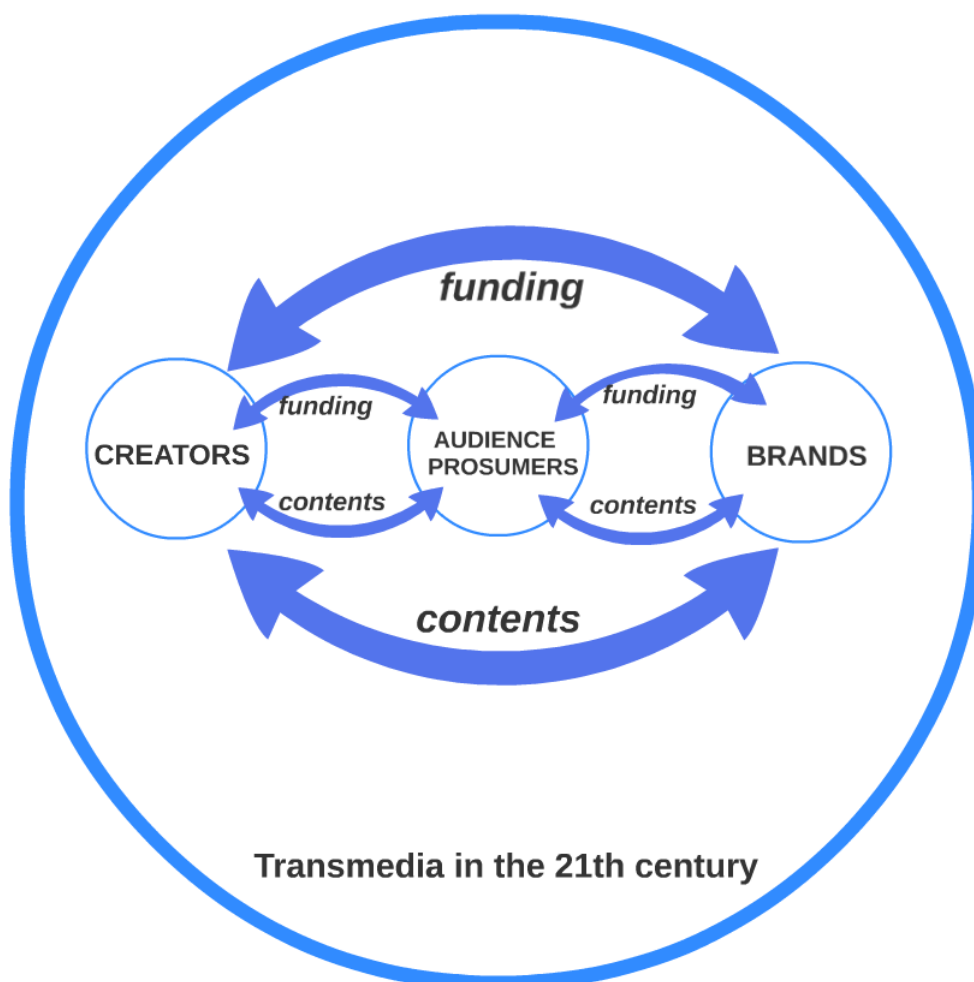


Source: Authors' own creation. This diagram describes the classical relationship between the different actors involved in the mass media communication process in the 20th century. The difficulty faced by the audience to be able to generate content is remarkable.

The diversity of new ways to interact with the media involves a transmedia landscape that has been configured in the present century, and which allows the user to play a greater role and to develop the same communicative possibilities in both interpersonal communication and mediated communication. Until recently, the mass media did not allow the viewer to perform activities such as conversing, sharing and playing. However, the new media have not come to replace the traditional mass media; instead, as discussed in this article, the contents created by traditional radio and television are reinforced and enriched by the interaction with the new platforms offered by the new media (Galán, 2008). *El Ministerio del Tiempo* ("The Ministry of Time") is an excellent example of

this media convergence and an exciting case study to explore the narrative possibilities offered in this new communicative scenario, which are represented in the following diagram.

Figure 3: Transmedia ecosystem in the 21st century



Source: Authors' own creation

In the 21st century, the user has the possibility to create and share in a central position within the creation and consumption of content. All the actors of the communication system (media, brands, audiences and creators) have the ability to create and fund projects. The media are still present in this process but the borders between mediated communication and interpersonal communication have become permeable and therefore it is increasingly more complicated to define the distribution windows of a project.

2. Empathy and fictional characters

Research on identification with fictional characters in the area of communication is not yet regular enough to be able to provide definitive data on audience behaviour towards audiovisual fictional

entertainment. However, Igartua and Páez (1998) and Igartua and Muñiz (2008) have reached some significant conclusions on the matter.

Audiovisual reception studies have correlated data with the objective of confirming that audiences are able to establish relations of admiration, fear, imitation, compassion, among others, with fictional characters, which causes changes in attitudes, values, aspirations and beliefs (Höfner and Buchanan, 2005). One of these forms of relationship is identification, which is “an imaginative process through which an audience member assumes the identity, goals and perspective of a character” (Cohen, 2001: 261).

According to Igartua and Muñiz (2008), the empathetic reception that involves identification with the main characters is one of the main mechanisms that explain the effects of entertainment media (Cohen, 2001; Wied, Zillmann and Ordman, 1994; Igartua and Páez, 1997a; Bryant and Zillmann, 1991).

Understood as the affinity that receivers feel towards media characters, which leads to an empathetic understanding of the feelings, motivations and challenges experienced by receivers (Cohen, 2006), this identification is produced by various factors (Soto-Saniel *et al.*, 2010: 823). The first one, is similarity between viewer and character (Feilitzen y Linne, 1975). The second, is physical appearance (Turner, 1993). The third is gender correspondence between receiver and character (Eyal and Rubin, 2003; Feilitzen and Linne, 1975; Hofner, 1996). The fourth, is social-class correspondence (Eyal and Rubin, 2003) and the fifth is the psychological characteristics of the character (Höfner and Cantor, 1991).

Other researchers have correlated character identification and the innate characteristics of the audience, such as age (Bandura, 1969) and personality (Turner, 1993), with the para-social interaction of receivers (Turner, 1993) associated with the enjoyment of fiction (Igartua and Páez, 1998; Igartua and Muñiz, 2008), with moral values (Sánchez, 2012) as well as with the affective impact and mood (Sánchez and Fabbro, 2014; Sánchez, 2015).

With regards to the cognitive processes involved in the reception of and the empathy with fictional characters in transmedia narratives, there is no research on audience behaviour, which would be extremely important for programming directors and writers involved in this important business model.

3. Transmedia fiction case study: *El Ministerio del Tiempo*

TVE (Spain’s National Public Television Network) premiered in February 2015 the greatest transmedia science fiction project to date. This project revolves around the TV series *El Ministerio del Tiempo* (“The Ministry of Time”), produced by Cliffhanger TV (<http://cliffhangertv.com/web/>) and Onza Partners (<http://onzapartners.com>), and created by Pablo Olivares and Javier Olivares. The first episode was broadcast on 24 February, 2015, and the last on 13 April, 2015. The first season contains 8 episodes.

El Ministerio del Tiempo is an autonomous and secretive government institution that reports directly to Prime Minister of Spain. Like the United States department that guards the secret codes to launch a possible nuclear attack, the existence of the Ministry of Time is the best kept secret of the Spanish State, only known by Kings, Presidents and a very exclusive number of people. Travelling to other

times is done through “the doors of time”, which are guarded by the “Patrols of the Ministry”, whose goal is to prevent intruders travelling from the past to the present -or vice versa- to change history for their own benefit.

The Patrols of the Ministry have included such characters as García Lorca, El Cid, Cervantes, Don Quixote, Napoleon and Houdini. These characters travel through time and face anachronistic adventures with unexpected endings. The script includes jumps from medieval Castile to Barcelona’s Raval district in the early 20th century and many other times, passing through crucial moments of history like the Spanish flu and the infamous Grilo street murders. On the same day its creators won the *Ondas* award for best Spanish fiction series of 2015, TVE released the first teaser of the second season of the series.

The official website of TVE (<http://www.rtve.es/television/ministerio-del-tiempo/>) acts as the main platform to coordinate all the narratives and manage user traffic. In this website viewers can watch the episodes and obtain more information about the historic periods explored in the series, which are explained in an entertaining way (what would have happened if...?) with multimedia resources.

According to TVE, *La Puerta del Tiempo* (“The door of time”) was aired fortnightly with live interviews with the series creators and cast members, including questions sent in by fans through the hashtag #puertadeltiempo. The series also has a forum where fans of all TVE series can learn more about and discuss the fictional world and the history of Spain (www.rtve.es/forohistoria).

El Ministerio del Tiempo has also had a very important presence in social networks: In Facebook it has already more than 5,000 followers and has been considered as an active meeting place; in Twitter, in addition to being a source of information, each episode offers historical data and images of the making off of the series; on Instagram, and following the confidential nature of the Ministry, user have to ask permission to follow the account and gain access to mysterious documents that reveal that the heads of the Ministry were former patrols who participated in special missions.

However, the most innovative aspect in the use of social networks is the group in *WhatsApp*, which is exclusive for ten followers who each week receive exclusive content about the series and the work carried out on the web. The first ten participants have to demonstrate that they know history and that they are active in social networks through a questionnaire made available at www.rtve.es/grupoMDT. Each week the followers that become the best ambassador of the series in social media enter the group while the other five will be replaced by five new fans.

The force of the Ministry is digital and this is demonstrated every Monday on Twitter, where thousands of messages related to the series manage to turn characters as diverse as Velázquez, Rosendo, Lope de Vega and the curious term “retable” into the most talked about topics in the social network. *Tumblr* is filled with images and animated gifs of the series, as well as fanfiction and fanart (stories and illustrations made by fans) dedicated to *El Ministerio del Tiempo*.

For this research study we used the episode 4 of the first season, *Una negociación a tiempo* (“A deal in time”), aired on 16 March 2015 and directed by Jorge Dorado. This episode reached the largest audience share of the series: 9.1% and 1,692,000 viewers.

This episode reveals that the Ministry of Time was founded in 1491 by Isabella I of Castille (a.k.a., Isabella the Catholic) after obtaining the Book of Doors from Rabbi Abraham Levy in exchange of

protection for him and his family. The Queen promised to protect him, but cruel Grand Inquisitor Tomás de Torquemada sentenced him to the stake behind her back. The problem arises when the lawyer of the Rabbi's family discovers documents that prove the Queen did nothing to protect him and demands a huge compensation to the Ministry in exchange of his silence. Therefore, breaking the rules of the Ministry, Salvador sends Julián, Amelia and Alonso to 1491 to save the Rabbi but the door to that year is in a time loop and they have only one day to save the Rabbi and hence the Ministry.

This episode features Paco Obregón (Abraham Levy), Ben Temple (Aaron Stein), Alfonso Vallejo (Beltrán de Montilla), Aitor Mazo (an Inquisition fiscal), Isabel Ayúcar (Abraham's wife), Carlos Álvarez-Nóvoa (Manuel López Castillejo), Alfonso Torregrosa, Rikar Gil (an emissary), Olga Navarro, and had the special collaboration of: Eusebio Poncela (Cardinal Cisneros), Michelle Jenner (Isabella the Catholic).

Users have the possibility to create their own content and stories and to disseminate them and share them across the Internet. This type of consumer is known as active consumer or “prosumer”. The latter term was coined by Toffler and Toffler (2006:221) to refer to “those who routinely create goods, services or experiences for our own use or satisfaction, rather than for sale or exchange. When, as individuals or groups, we both produce and consume our own output, we are ‘prosuming’”.

Following the “models of user participation and roles” developed by Guerrero (2014) we can classify the different types of prosumers of *El Ministerio del Tiempo* in:

- The observatory model, the lurker: with the tools available to us, we were not able to calculate the traffic generated by the website but we can observe that the forum of the series receives thousands of visits for each of the topics that are discussed.
- The argumentative/discursive model, the commenter: this prosumer focuses his activity on social networks and forums, in commenting and sharing his opinion on the series, submitting questions to the online programme *La Puerta del Tiempo* (“The Door of Time”), etc. They are part of the *ministéricos* (“ministerics”) but with less involvement.
- The creative/informative model, the creator: this type of prosumer completely adopts the essence of the term *ministeric*. Although this type of prosumer comments and participate in social networks, his activity is based on content creation: Amelia's Diary on Tumblr, role-playing games, blogs, fan-art, and fan-fiction, the SIMS video game, podcasts, Twitter profiles, etc. In addition, they promote the universe of the series, only motivated by admiration and by the desire to become part of the exclusive WhatsApp group where the objective is to share the contents of the series. The creator prosumer in this series is responsible for expanding the story narratively, and this has been a novel phenomenon with respect to the other case studies.
- Ludic model, the player: this prosumer consumes all contents created by the series and fans, enjoy role-playing games, listens to the podcast, reads the fan fiction, etc.

4. Methods

4.1. Viewers

The study involved n=129 voluntary participants of different age groups (average age= 31.45 years), academic level and gender (63%, N=81, were women) (SD=.528). The youngest participant was 21 years old and the oldest was 58. Three viewing sessions of the episode were carried out on 28 (N=41), 29 (N=38) and 30 (N=50) of September, 2015, in the Blasco Ibáñez Cultural Centre located in the Valencian town of Moncada. To project the episode to participants, we used a NEC projector (NP-M311W HD 1280X800) and a 120-inch 16:9 Globalscreen.

Of all the respondents n=15 acted as fervent followers of the series. The data obtained from n=4 participants were discarded due to their ignorance of the series or because they had never seen any episode. A respondent left the viewing room before finishing the screening so his participation was not taken into account. Based on the previous, the number of valid participants in the study stands at n=124.

4.2. Procedure

The selected episode was screened at the audiovisual projection room of the aforementioned cultural centre. Participants were informed about the episode they were going to watch. After the projection participants were asked to answer a survey voluntarily.

The aforementioned transmedia narrative was examined with the use of a Character Identification Scale (CIS), consisting of 17 items, which used a five-point Likert scale (from 1=nothing to 5=very much). The reliability and validity of the scale was verified by Igartua and Páez (1998) and had an internal consistency of 0.86, calculated with the use of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The identification with the protagonists of the fiction series through a multidimensional concept related to a series of psychological processes was determined through the responses to the following items:

CIS 1: "I liked the way of being or acting of the protagonists".

CIS 2: "I felt emotionally involved with the feelings of the protagonists".

CIS 3: "I felt as if I were one of the main characters".

CIS 4: "I imagined how I would act if I was in the place of the protagonists".

CIS 5: "I tried to carefully observe each of the actions of the protagonists".

CIS 6: "I thought I looked alike or was very similar to the protagonists".

CIS 7: "I was worried about what was happening to the protagonists".

CIS 8: "I understood the way of acting, thinking, or feeling of the protagonists".

CIS 9: "I have experienced the emotional reactions of the protagonists".

CIS 10: "I thought I would like to look or act as the protagonists".

CIS 11: "I tried to imagine the feelings, thoughts and reactions of the protagonists".

CIS 12: “I felt as if I had really lived the story of the protagonists”.

CIS 13: “I understood the feelings and emotions of the protagonists”.

CIS 14: “I felt like I was 'part' of the story”.

CIS 15: “I was able to anticipate what was going to happen to the protagonists.”

CIS 16: “I tried to see things from the point of view of the protagonists”.

CIS 17: “I felt identified with the protagonists”.

This CIS is configured as a multidimensional concept built through the following empathic processes (Igartua and Páez, 1998: 424): a) cognitive empathy, defined as the ability to “understand or perceive the reality from the protagonists’ perspective” (is related to the ability to adopt the point of view of the character and follow the story from its perspective); b) emotional empathy, defined as the possibility of “feeling what the characters feel, engaging emotionally in a vicarious manner or feeling worried about their problems” (related to the possibility of experiencing emotions related to what is happening to characters); c) the ability to fantasise or imagine, defined as the ability of viewers to “anticipate the situations the protagonists of the fictional stories will face and to infer the consequences of their actions”; and d) becoming the protagonist, which is “perceiving oneself as one of the protagonists during the screening of the series or the film”.

The cognitive evaluation (CE) was carried out with the acceptance of the proposals of Igartua and Páez (1997a and 1997b) with the intention of measuring “retrospectively, the degree of cognitive reflection or processing that the episode generated during its viewing” (Igartua and Muñiz, 2008: 39). This scale consists of four items with an internal consistency of 0.83. Like the CIS, the cognitive evaluation employed a five-point Likert scale (from 1=nothing to 5=much). Participants were asked to indicate how much they agreed with the following items:

CE1: “I have thought about the issue explored in the episode”

CE2: “I have thought about the situation and motivations of the characters”

CE3: “I have tried to see how the movie’s plot relates to other subjects that interest me”

CE4: “I have tried to draw conclusions about the central theme of the film”.

Finally, we considered it was necessary to know respondents’ degree of knowledge about the multiplatform contents and various transmedia narratives of *El Ministerio del Tiempo*. In this case, we applied a 10-point Likert scale (from 1=nothing to 10=much) to measure multimedia consumption more accurately. The item presented was: “I have been a major consumer of the fiction series *El Ministerio del Tiempo*, in its TV series format and all other multimedia and social networks formats and contents”.

Data was subjected to descriptive analysis, and null hypothesis correlation analysis, and bivariate, based on Pearson’s correlation coefficient (R_{x-y}). IBM SPSS v.21 was the statistical package used for these analyses.

Based on the aforementioned theoretical basis, this research is guided by the following hypotheses:

H₁: There is a positive correlation between the greater use of the transmedia and multiplatform contents of the fictional series under analysis and viewers' identification with the characters of such series.

H₂: The cognitive evaluation prompted by the series is greater among those viewers who have enjoyed the fiction through multiplatform stories, games and transmedia narratives.

5. Research results

Participants' evaluation of the different contents integrated in the transmedia production of the series and their personal experience on the use of multiplatforms stands at M=6.02 and SD=1.372, which demonstrates that the use of these narratives is normal not high. Not a single respondent assessed any of the transmedia contents with the highest value (10). The most common evaluation was 6 (selected in 38 cases).

The following table presents the results, and shows that the means are different, and that the standard deviations are not similar across all the variables of the CIS.

Table 1. Correlation between CIS and hypothesis 1

	M	SD	H ₁ /Sig.
CIS 1	2.38	1.399	.070
CIS 2	2.62	1.295	.001
CIS 3	3.66	1.104	.089
CIS 4	2.92	1.285	.068
CIS 5	3.51	1.178	.568
CIS 6	2.39	1.362	.472
CIS 7	2.77	1.385	.001
CIS 8	2.17	1.493	.356
CIS 9	2.24	1.222	.001
CIS 10	3.48	1.318	.080
CIS 11	2.22	1.384	.456
CIS 12	3.82	1.299	.070
CIS 13	3.61	1.207	.001
CIS 14	2.01	1.409	.076
CIS 15	3.19	1.129	.570
CIS 16	2.29	1.654	.750
CIS 17	3.61	1.321	.580
N total=124			

Source: Authors' own creation

According to the research hypothesis H₁, which proposes that there is a positive correlation between the greater use of transmedia and multi-platform contents and consumers' identification with fictional characters, it can be concluded that this does not occur in all the variables considered in the CIS. There is a significant correlation only in those variables with sentimental or emotional charge.

Thus, the level of transmedia knowledge correlates or is dependant in a significant way with the following items of the scale; CIS 2: “I felt emotionally involved with the feelings of the protagonists”, [t (124)= .472, p= .001]; CIS 7: “I was worried about what was happening to the protagonists”, [t (124)= 1.256, p= .001]; CIS 9: “I have experienced the emotional reactions of the protagonists”, [t (124)= .521, p=.001]; CIS 13: “I understood the feelings or emotions of the protagonists”, [t (124)= 1.782, p=.001]. It is necessary to indicate that the item CIS 4: “I imagined how I would act if I was in the place of the protagonists” does not shows a clear significant correlation but can be expected to become significant [t (124)= .923, p=.068].

Table 2: Correlation between experience with transmedia narratives and cognitive evaluation.
 Pearson (r)/Sig. (p)

	CE1		CE2		CE3		CE4	
Use of narratives	-.049	.592	-.084	.319	-.045	.583	.059	.646
Pearson (x-y). N total= 124								

Source: Authors’ own creation

With regards to the second hypothesis H₂, which proposes that cognitive evaluation is higher among those viewers who have enjoyed the fiction through multi-platform contents or transmedia narratives, according to data in table 2, there is no correlation between the two variables. Although it is not possible to detect a significant dependence between greater use of transmedia storytelling and the cognitive evaluation, the Pearson’s correlation (-1.+1) resulted negative in CE1, CE2 and CE3, i.e., there is an inverse relationship between the use of these narratives and the cognitive evaluation. In this case, it is demonstrated that the increased use of multi-platform products produces a lower general reflection about the series and a decrease in empathy on the formation and development of the characters, as well as a lower intensity of the fictional plot as a vital experience.

The analysis of data also concluded that in CE4 (“I have tried to draw conclusions about the central theme of the film”), the positive result indicates that greater knowledge and use of these transmedia proposals provides a greater intention of knowledge and general interest about the fiction series, which coincides with Sanchez’s study (2015).

Although the CIS, “as it is semantically formulated, does not measure identification with specific characters” (Soto-Saniel *et al.*, 2010: 825), the experimental design indicates that during the exhibition users adopt parts of the identity of the character and feel or imagine they are the protagonists (Klimmt, Hefner and Vorderer, 2009; Moyer-Gusé, 2008).

Identification is “a socio-psychological process” (Klimmt *et al.*, 2009: 356) related to the self-perception and identity of receivers. Finally, as Soto-Saniel *et al.* (2010: 826) have pointed out, empathy with the character “had the greatest weight in the identification process, which contributes to the debate on its definition”. Our research supports the CIS (Igartua and Páez, 1998) as its results coincide with that study that proposed this scale.

6. Discussion

Increased consumption of transmedia contents is being consolidated in a society that is increasingly more dynamic, cosmopolitan and nomad (Janson and Lindell, 2014), which favours the creation of new stories and the development of complex narratives. The elements that integrate a transmedia fiction are dispersed systematically across multiple distribution channels in order to create a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Each medium or platform makes its own unique contribution to the development of this fiction.

It is necessary to distinguish between adaptation and minimal changes in the original narratives, which are redundant to the primary work, and possible extensions immersed in the understanding of the original narrative through the emergence of new elements or characters in the fictional narrative. According to Jenkins (2010: 945), “we can agree that the Hamlet of Lawrence Olivier is an adaptation, while the Hamlet of Tom Stoppard offers an expansion and refocusing around the secondary characters of the play”.

The eternal discourse of those narratives that are worthy of being considered transmedia and serialised products, must be debated by academic theorists and professionals of the audiovisual industry. We believe it is necessary to explore new processes of transmedia reception with new research methods for audiovisual media and from the perspective of applied social psychology. This is what this research study has aimed to start.

Based on the previous studies that indicate that the success of audiovisual fiction productions depends greatly on viewers’ perception of the main characters (Slater and Rouner, 2002; Cohen, 2001), the first conclusion of this research is that greater knowledge and use of transmedia narratives across various platform is an explanatory variable to ensure a type of reception especially derived from the multidimensional CIS (Character Identification Scale) with a greater empathic charge.

In the current landscape of audiovisual content creation the circulation of transmedia contents is unavoidable as an evolutionary process of production under the crossmedia logic of the 20th century. This definitive paradigm shift makes it necessary to rethink production and creation processes and to consider viewers not only as consumers but as prosumers. Far from being a stationary player, prosumers act upon the initial content and evaluate the cognitive changes that favour their emotional implications.

The results obtained from this study allow us to affirm that transmedia contents influence viewers’ perception in its rational and emotional dimensions. Prior knowledge about the series and the use of transmedia storytelling prolongs the relationship with the content beyond the occasional enjoyment.

In the case of *El Ministerio del Tiempo*, the emotional bond that is established with the fictional characters serves as teaching tool to generate curiosity and knowledge. These products are *gamified* in educational experiences where the user feels persuaded by certain historical characters with which certain emotional relationship or engagement is established. The strategies of *gamification* are key for the interactive experience of the users to reach a higher level of satisfaction. The interactive medium requires instant *feedback* which demands the planning of different interactive stages and itineraries in which the rewards are immediate.

7. Conclusions

It is essential to make audiovisual content producers and creatives aware of the greater efficiency of transmedia content that integrates strong emotional elements and the lower efficiency of transmedia content with complex cognitive narratives. While the classic audiovisual story has always integrated an emotional element that operated through identification with characters, in transmedia storytelling the emotional dimension is even more needed to achieve greater effectiveness in persuasion. This also applies to such formats as *El Ministerio del Tiempo* which, at first sight, seem to have a more pronounced rational and theoretical charge. *El Ministerio del Tiempo* arouses the curiosity of the viewer towards historical knowledge through identification with the main characters, who in turn accompany the viewer through the different platforms involved in the transmedia production of the series.

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