



Construction of a transmedia project for an imagined community

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Abstract. This study reflects on how the processes of content creation and transmedia strategies and the design thinking methodology are compatible to establish digital communication projects in communities with little presence in socio-digital platforms. Based on the analysis of the digital performance of the different accounts of the Ascension Club of the San Gabriel High School, and with a work of co-creation with the members of the directive. A mixed methodology of information gathering was applied and later a content co-creation workshop was conducted. Among the results obtained is the diagnosis of how the accounts work in socio-digital networks and how to generate online communities with the construction of appropriate digital stories for each platform.

Keywords: Transmedia, Digital Communication, Digital Communities.

1 Introduction

Every imagined community [1] converges in a communicative practice [2], that is, in a communicational rite or a structural mediation [3], that uses a means of communication, with the aim of controlling the environment and the social order.

For Piñuel and Lozano [4], there can be no social reproduction without the transmission of information that establishes a forecast of changes in the environment, i.e., all mediated co-communication responds to a structural and/or cognitive adaptation that adapts the informative message to its platform or support.

The historical-mythical-foundational stories are updated and adapted to the media context of the society in which they are told. With the aim of preserving the transcendental facts, but with the structural transformations foreseen, new media, genres and/or platforms are used. This is what Martín Serrano [5] establishes about cognitive and structural mediation.

The imagined communities use the means of communication that correspond to each era. That is, they exploit a media culture according to social use: oral story, written story, audiovisual story, digital story, historical sources or everyday sources, which are called official history of the event, but it also exists, and much more so now with socio-digital networks, the stories to be made [6]. These stories are directly related to the

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participation of users, not necessarily those who make up a community, but those who access information that is in the public domain.

The accounts of events, both official and those to be made, have two important sources: the official historical ones and those configured by the media, which become valid sources after a review of other characteristics of the events by the person analyzing the information. For this validation to exist, Piñuel and Lozano [7] indicate that two situational elements must be considered: those strongly ritualized, such as all institutional products emanating from the authorities, and those weakly ritualized, such as occasional encounters or spontaneous conversations.

Piñuel and Lozano [8] share with Martín Serrano [9] the dialectic perspective of communication, in which they include the vision of how communicative processes evolve from social practices, in this case, social mediations, media and platforms, their participants, and how all this generates an impact on the construction of public communication.

A social representation consists of the proposal of a certain interpretation of what exists or what happens in the environment. Social representation refers precisely to such and such topics, including some data instead of others and suggesting certain evaluations instead of other possible ones. Social representation serves as a model of influence precisely because it clarifies to the subjects which conceptions of reality the Relator distinguishes, among all the alternative representations that will be possible.

Finally, social representation is an interpretation of reality that is integrated in each of the members of the group or community through an extended diffusion [10].

The communities generate their mythical stories and make them public when there is an informative communion. Both official and unofficial among its members, with the purpose of transmitting their imaginaries and positioning them historically in the context of their contemporaneity, that is, each institutional or official historical moment will be told by the users to reaffirm the social imaginary as a group identity.

From Moragas [11] the relationship between media and sport has to do with the ritualization and symbolization of a given practice, since the transmission and/or public information about sport reproduces mythical stories that create an imaginary in certain sectors of the population and, fundamentally, in audiovisual consumption.

The leap from the physical to the digital is marked by mythical, foundational and event stories and their multiple, diverse and complementary configurations in formats appropriate to the logic of digital culture and the interfaces of media platforms on the Internet. Manovich [12] and Bolter and Grusin [13] considering the interface as an element that characterizes the new media, and the new way of presenting and configuring information in a support different and differentiated from the previous ones; a new media is built from the language itself, in this case, that of computer programming and cyberculture.

Already in 2019 [14] cybermedia [15] are considered as collaborative constructions and informative products in constant development and transformation, therefore, not only journalists and information experts intervene, but also computer scientists and multimedia, interactive and web designers are important in informative and journalistic projects.

López-García and Vizoso [16] rethink on the processes of media convergence in the production of information on digital platforms and make an overview of all the elements that build a digital information: "software and hardware, if used properly, allow innovative formats and products that show good journalism" [17].

To this view, we add what Lawrence Lessig [18] argues about the use of technological platforms in the behavior of users, which depends directly on the interface it manages. When we will be generating an informative project for any digital platform, one must start from the usability [19], with which structure and content converge, according to the needs that the information requires and the editorial proposal of the cybermedia or the digital narrative project: it will include photography and 360 video, 3D tours, data visualization.

For the specific case, the following points developed by Nielsen [20] are indispensable, since cultural software systems [21] for content management in media-communication projects come from the same cultural matrix [22] and, therefore, when digitized, they are remediated [23] and produce a new medium [24].

Users and administrators of accounts in sociodigital networks handle these concepts and work at these two levels: the back end and the front end, because cyberculture allows information to be public [25]. Since the co-communicative product has no differentiation from the cultural product, then in each so-ciodigital platform there is a process of symbolic representation and symbolic exchange, which is what generates communicational productions in networks and platforms on the Internet.

Public information in socio-digital spheres and virtual platforms must be in accordance with the social, economic, technological use and access context of a community, so it is important that studies of digital communication and journalism focus not on the tools and devices but on the practices they make of them and with them.

A community differs from another by these aspects mentioned above, and even more condition them to produce and consume information in digital environments. The redata must find a suitable way, a format that responds to the needs and uses of the community, so that the information distributed will be public and disseminated through official channels and informal groups in the communities themselves.

The active participation of community members and platform users is essential in the digital ecosystem of content creation, therefore, co-creation in digital scenarios implies that users contribute personally with organizations and these take into account the proposals of their active recipients [26].

All serial and permanent production in digital spaces deserves a constant ethnographic study in digital spaces and platforms, Hine [27] established about virtual ethnography, since the ethnographer collects information from the user in the real world and in the connected world, so the researcher must consider that the use of the digital tool conditions and shapes the user's behavior. To this decalogue, the author herself [28] would complement it with four more points: 1) all experiences are positive, 2) explore technologies as cultural artifacts, 3) examine taken-for-granted assumptions and highlight the invisible work, and 4) critically examine the formulation of claims as an intrinsic part of technological development and assimilation.

By the way, to Kozinets [29], the media are social, but this does not mean that they have a communal or community characteristic or that co-communication platforms

build communities, as there is a synonymous association of digital social media with communities, which was coined in the late 20th century, and which Kozinets explains the reason for this association and he establishes 12 principles of networked individualism.

Networked individualism is a practice of all members of the Networked Society. Therefore, when looking at and evaluating the 12 points in a particular way, we can conclude that we are part of that individualism and many of our practices respond, if not to all, to more than 50% of the proposed points, which indicates that we are leaving the modern society.

Individual actions in the network create group actions, not necessarily the ideals of the first researchers of virtual communities, but these micro-societies have repercussions in their spaces and times with fundamental changes so that the communities are empowered by technology and make it an engine to change forms of internal action of an organization or social group.

A clear example of this individualism in Network is the study on the existing relationships between fans, collaborators and climbing professionals [30] Which deals with how social interactions occur in the public profiles of climbers between them and their fans, the brands that sponsor them and the community of those interested in the sport they practice, and which, in addition, is their professional work.

2 Materials and Methods

The project had the following general objective: To know the digital narratives used by the community of the group of climbers of the San Gabriel High School of Quito in the construction of transmedia narratives from the photographic and video archives of the members of the group, and in the configuration of an online community.

This study reflects on how the processes of content creation and transmedia strategies and the design thinking methodology are compatible to establish digital communication projects in communities with little presence in socio-digital platforms. Based on the analysis of the digital performance of the different accounts of the Ascension Club of the San Gabriel High School, and with a work of co-creation with the members of the directive. A mixed methodology of information gathering was applied and later a content co-creation workshop was conducted.

Through the application of quantitative research techniques and tools, such as the survey of the club members (36 surveys answered) and the analysis of the digital performance of the accounts in sociodigital networks: Facebook, Youtube and Instagram, from 2019 year to December 2023, in order to evaluate the performance and impact of the content: number of interactions, type of content or post, type of message, frequency, accounts that share the content, and react to the content.

A second moment of data collection were established with three essential informants, who were interviewed in depth, to know the elements that were defined as key for the use and future projection to create content.

For the collection of information, a mixed methodology was developed that included the application of a table that measured six thematic, structural and impact elements in

the Club's sociodigital networks and a quick online survey that was filled out in one of the group's regular meetings. In-depth interviews we were conducted with four informants belonging to different origins and stages of the club.

Based on the description of the San Gabriel High School Mountaineering Group, as an imagined community, and the internal diagnosis of the organization and the form of communication. A methodology for the development of narrative construction and transmedia strategies is established, based on the reality, uses and socio-technological contexts of the club members and the users of digital content related to the mountain.

With this diagnosis, we review theoretically and conceptually what digital ethnography has contributed to social studies and how this methodology is necessary to develop the proposed workshop.

This imagined community was selected because it is the most ancient formal school of climbing in Ecuador (80 years at May 2024), and it has undergone institutional transformations, such as the incorporation of women and family members, outside the school's educational community, which created two internal factions.

3 Results

3.1 Scope for digital accounts

On Instagram, the Club has 137 posts as of 2019. It has 492 followers and follows 151 accounts. On the platform's interface, four sections are visible: club, nevados, climbing and international, with content referring to the clubhouse, photographs of children climbing on the headquarters wall, a summit video and a photograph with music. Interactions are between 2 and 8 interactions per post and each post has between 30 and 40 likes from mountain enthusiasts and club members.

The type of publication is sports and recreational themed, with images set to music and videos that have reference to the club's anniversaries and the challenges of publishing the number of summits related to the club's years. Each anniversary has an identity with the referred years. It also has tips for outings in the field and in the mountains, but there are not many. The most repeated hashtags are #gacsg #SanGabriel #colegiosangabriel and #montaña. The type of message is informative and descriptive, since the place, date and people who participated in the activity are disclosed.

The frequency of publications is 3 to 4 times per month; currently it has 137 publications, the first one on March 21, 2019, and the last one, at the end of the study, on December 3, 2023. The accounts that share content are related to tourism guides, summits, trekking, mountaineering, climbing and mountaineering. The accounts that react to the content are from mountaineering groups, tour guides, the San Gabriel College account, fans and members that prove to be part of the club.

On Facebook there are a greater number of publications related to communiqués, calls to action and recovery of the club's memory. This space has a promise of 2 thousand followers and people who like the content, and interactions are between 15 and 70 per publication.

The type of content is sporting, informative and emotional. Commemorative videos, photographs of summit climbs or camping trips, photographs of José Ribas and other distinguished members of the club, and links to YouTube content.

The type of messages is informative and dissemination. They publish the names or accounts of those who are in the photograph, and they publicize the place and date they were on a mountain, they also publicize mountaineering accidents and inform about the club's corporate activities, with a monthly frequency of publications.

Accounts that share content relate to active members, former members, mountain climbing enthusiasts and outdoor athletes. While accounts reacting to the content relate to city and national climbing groups, huts, mountain equipment brands, tourism businesses, and club members.

On Youtube, the account has 3 videos, 149 subscribers and 3049 views so far, with interactions of 18 likes and the other 30 and 36 likes, respectively.

As for the type of publication, there are three videos, the first has to do with a film recovery when the José Ribas Refuge was built on the Cotopaxi volcano, the second has to do with the expedition in 2010 to the Himalayas and the third about the route of the South Wall of Aconcagua. These are the group's own productions.

The type of messages are expeditions to Aconcagua and the Himalayas, and the group's work on the construction of the refuge. The three videos were upload on the same day, in the year 2022.

The Club's presence on social media is deficient in terms of frequency and key lines or messages. Although all members take photos and videos, they do not circulate them on these networks nor do they increase institutional visibility, although they have improved dissemination on Instagram, based on the practice of photography, which is one of the communication elements that the club has historically developed.

3.2 Digital consumption and content

Identification of users by age: of the 36 members who responded to the survey, the group with the greatest presence is between 41 and over 60 years of age, with 63.6%; while the youngest, between 21 and 40 years of age, account for 30.6%.

The active members are mainly over 40 years of age, while the younger ones, between 16 and 20 years of age, are a very small percentage, related to students at the San Gabriel High School and graduates in their first years of university.

Frequency and sports practiced: mountaineering, hiking, trekking and cycling are the most common sports practiced by those consulted, so this information was relate to the frequency of weekly activity, while daily activity is a form of constant training for hiking, cycling and mountaineering.

Documentation of sports practice: almost 70% of those consulted record or take photographs when performing their sports practice. With which the individual or group documentation has diverse sources to be able to make audiovisual productions or can be use to generate content in the various socio-digital networks of the Club.

Means of information on their sports practice: social networks are the most used and consulted platforms for information on their preferred sports practice, so digital magazines are consulted on web platforms and digital media on mountaineering, cycling,

hiking and mountain outings. The consumption of printed media is non-existent, so traditional media are not preferred by this type of user.

Club information media: most of them recognize that the magazine used to be a good medium, but now the mailing list is the way they find out about all the activities.

Knowledge about the history of the Club: knowledge of the Club's history is the majority among those consulted, but this information will be contrast below with that provided by the informants interviewed.

Types of media consumption on the Internet: messages and content on WhatsApp are the most common among those consulted, and audiovisual content on YouTube are also preferred, which means that audiovisual formats on social-digital and messaging platforms are the most popular and consulted.

Knowledge about the Club's digital media: almost all respondents know that the Club has accounts in social-digital network spaces, but more than half are unaware of the existence of the website, both because there is no autonomous and differentiated corporate identity of the San Gabriel School, as is the club itself, but without renouncing its foundational essence.

Forms of communication and information from and with Club members: WhatsApp is the most used platform to communicate with Club members and to receive institutional information.

Documentation and archiving of outings: outings to camps and excursions are documented with photographs and digital videos, so there is a large archive of input to create content for digital spaces. Similarly, they indicate that they know of associates who have good material to create interesting content that tells the story of the Club.

Generation of narrative workshop: more than 80% of those consulted would be willing to participate in a workshop to generate digital content to share their photo and video files through narratives that contribute to the construction of imaginaries about the club. Complementary to this survey, three informants selected for their activity in the club were interviewed in depth: one for being part of the current board, another for being an active member and professional mountaineer, and the third for having been part of the club but is still aware of its activities through social networks.

Each interviewee is ten years apart in age, between 40 and 60, the largest age group in the online survey sample. All three are alumni of the San Gabriel School and participated in Club activities at each stage of their education.

The first interviewee is R, who at the time was president of the Club, studied communications and is a professional mountain guide. The second interviewee is O, who has no university studies and whose professional life is in the mountains; he is a professional climber and guide with international activity mainly in the Himalayas. The third interviewee is P, who has a university degree in Gastronomy and is currently vice-rector of a public technological institute.

The conversation with each of them revolved around the following topics: Time spent in the club and internal training, Recollection of the first outings, Definition of the club and construction of emotional and fraternal bonds, Relationship between studies, work and mountains. Professionalization or hobby, Use of technology in climbing, commu-

nication and diffusion of activities, Consumption of material on mountaineering: movies, videos, TikTok, etc., Figures that have stood out and are leaders in their field, Significance and importance of the Club.

The first battery of questions, R, O and P indicate that their relationship with the mountain, as a habitual practice, began between 13 and 14 years of age, in the first grades of school, where they were as aspirants, youth and mountaineers. The three were part of the training team, in their respective time, to guide the aspirants.

Both R and O are active members and have been with the Club for an average of 40 years, while P indicates that their relationship ended when the club opened to new members who were not part of the high school.

Each one recalls that their first outings were to summits near the city of Quito: Ruco Pichincha and Fuya Fuya, where they began with basic training on how to set up tents, knot tying, cooking and other usual practices of an outing to the *páramo* and the mountains. The training time as a youth lasts in high school, and in recent years the older members of this section train the newer ones, as a high school, but all agree that the training is constant, permanent and never ends, even if you are an experienced mountaineer.

The sense of camaraderie and trust is very important and the informants emphasize that, from the first outings, bonds of brotherhood are generated and the term "cordada" is something that lasts a lifetime. This concept has to do with being there for the other or others regardless of time or conditions, so for P, with the new members for him, at the time of his departure from the Club, there was no sense of cordada. R indicates that this feeling and attitude is held among related groups, that the cordadas are no longer like when Suco Ribas was present, who united everyone, but that they exist among the different groups existing in the club.

They all indicate that the club is an important part of their current lives, because during their formation as mountaineers they acquired values linked to the practice, but also with the mystique of the school and the Jesuits who founded the club. It is there where they became mountain brothers, with whom they still maintain their ties, and the three of them indicate that when a companion or brother requests collaboration in any area, they all mobilize as in an outing to the moor.

Of the three informants consulted, two are professionals directly linked to their sporting activity: both R and O are certified guides. At the first case, at the national level and, in the second, with guiding and climbing jobs abroad, who have also worked their brand or personal identity in socio-digital networks as part of international and support teams on difficult and high altitude routes such as in the Himalaya. P has a relationship with the mountain and camping as an entertainment and form of recreation to establish ties with his friends and brothers of cordada, as the last ascent of a mountain in the Basque Country with a fellow club member who lives in Spain.

From these clarifications of their current links with the mountain, there are ruptures about what the profession is as an activity of individual media visibility and what it is as group visibility. Although the two guides belong to the club, not all the activities are done in their name or as original affiliation, since institutionally they are not activities that have been devised or generated.

In this sense, R indicates that what O does is too much exposure in networks that does not impact the image of the club, while he, as part of the board, includes his professional and profitable practice as actions directly related to the club.

There is a difference here on the use and profitability of the sporting and professional image, which marks a gap when collaborating or finding initiatives that help to create success stories in the club itself with a view to enhancing the corporate or institutional image.

Related to this issue, it is important to note that each of the interviewees indicate that very little is known about institutional activities in the socio-digital networks and that more is known or found out by WhatsApp messages between their contacts, who do not necessarily disseminate what is in the Club's networks.

As for the use of media and socio-digital platforms, they recognize that Instagram is a good way to disseminate the activities. Since it is a space that exploits photography and video, as there is a very intimate relationship between the mountain activity and photography, recognize the three interviewees. The photography club of the College was closely linked to that of Andinismo, says P, and R confirms that for its communicational practice each outing should have a documentation, which has not been used and that could well be part of the most current memory of the club.

The three informants agree that the visual and audiovisual formats are essential to tell the history of the Club and the news, as well as topics related to outings, excursions and data by way of recommendations, which at some points have been published and are very successful in terms of consumption, according to the interviewees.

It is important to highlight that the three informants repeat names of people, and among them, the name of José Ribas is the most important. He is the one who for more than two decades formed the current informants and, in their words, shaped the real spirit of the club, marked by solidarity, brotherhood and trust, which, according to one of them, was lost with the incorporation of strangers to the school.

They describe that the formats should be audiovisual and photographic to tell the group stories and highlight the importance of the club members, as a space for training and professionalization. More than anything else as a place of camaraderie and even as a place to expand the family, because as one of them indicates, that is the family of the mountain, for which he would give his life and surely they would also give it for him: that is the sense and meaning of the climbing group.

4 Discussion

Co-design is related to co-creation, which is an application of collective creativity to the design process, which in this sense has to do with the presentation of ideas, generation of stories and positioning in various media. People who are not experts in what is proposed, but who have experience based on their feelings, experiences and points of view, participate in this process [31].

The goal of this collaboration is to make the user-creators actively participate in the exploration, development and finding of the final solution, therefore their function is

not one of help or consultation, but rather active creation in the process and in this way, their contribution is reflected in the final general solution [32].

The design of the process, in this case the guide of the project to be worked collaboratively in co-design, is forced to rethink his role, from a more political perspective and position, since he is an agent of dialogue, he is an articulator of discourses, intentions and emotions of the participants [33].

With this background, since people are the center and are actors in their own projects, design thinking is the most appropriate way for participants to define their problems and find solutions based on their needs, realities and practices [34].

Design thinking [35] is an approach that uses the designer's sensitivity and problem-solving methods to meet people's needs in a technologically feasible and commercially viable way. In other words, "design thinking" is a human-centered innovation" [36].

Since it is a process of generating strategies and narrative content in digital spaces, it is important to refer to what Rampazzo et al. [37] propose for the creation of fiction and non-fiction stories in the transmedia field.

Based on the five points described by Gambarato [38] and after several hours of telling stories and redefining themes, formats and dissemination platforms, the following product was established to be prototyped: Miniature stories: stories for WhatsApp.

5 Conclusions

The community imagined in the physical is completely non-existent in social-digital networks, where the presence of prominent figures, who respond to individualism in the Network [39] [40], are the ones who make mentions or are referred to. They refer to the Club, an institution that corporately publishes information without identity or management of heritage culture about who these public figures of mountain sports are, what their attributes are as members of the Club and even less what their history is within the group.

Although, the general objective of the study was to know the digital narratives managed by the community of the group in the construction of transmedia narratives from the photographic, film and video archives of the members of the group. At the configuration of an online community, this collaborative construction could not be carried out with the members of the club for the following reasons:

- 1.- The community is reluctant to the participation of foreign or external agents, which was demonstrated in the interviews, in which there is a gap in distancing between members of the San Gabriel School educational community and those who are not. Thus, the members and participants in the survey mentioned that they are willing to share their files, their time and experience, but with the people of the club as guides or workshop instructors.

- 2.- Collaborative work will be carried out in the future, but without the participation of personnel external to its physical community, since the sense of cordada expands to training tasks or the delivery of information and personal experiences.

The present work was able to study the configuration of the community of the group of ascensionists: its birth, evolution and functioning and its link with technology and the

media. Through observation, evaluation and interviews, the Club itself does not identify and even less prioritize public information to be disseminated on socio-digital networks.

For the stated objective of building digital narratives from the own skills of the members of the group of ascensionists, through a co-creation workshop, this could not be carried out in the way that had been established: with face-to-face sessions of the club members, due to what was explained above and, also, due to the security situation in the country.

The imagined community of the San Gabriel School Ascensionism Group is a composition of microsocieties that are being transformed, and that shows how the valuation or sanction works towards the other, towards the new, towards the unknown. Therein lies the similarity of the origins of nations and their extremisms, because with this study, it is confirmed that in the communities there are conservative groups, groups that are open to novelty and those who want to abolish all the above. It is a function of public communication (Martín Serrano, 2004), much more so now in digital spaces, to achieve a balance through unifying stories that demonstrate that the institutional is in accordance with social changes, but without renouncing its founding origins.

The value of this study lies in the dynamics of the community, its transformations over time, its relationships with technology and the way in which it communicates its history, traditions and future activities, which means that the public communication of a sports community requires valuing and prioritizing elements that transmit its ideals and heritage, in accordance with current forms of communication.

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