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Fish Fight: Transmedia Storytelling Strategies for Food Policy Change

*Renira Rampazzo Gambarato, National Research University Higher School of Economics,
Moscow, Russia*

*Sergei Andreevich Medvedev, National Research University Higher School of Economics,
Moscow, Russia*

ABSTRACT

The 2010–2013 Fish Fight campaign, produced by Channel 4 in the United Kingdom and hosted by chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, is a transmedia experience designed to (1) draw the public's attention to the reckless discarding of caught fish because of the quota system intended to conserve fish stocks in the domain of the European Union; and to (2) pressure the authorities to change the European Common Fisheries Policy. The article analyzes the transmedia strategies of the Fish Fight campaign in order to demonstrate how the multiplatform media production contributed to (1) make the public aware of the wasteful discarding of healthy fish at sea under the European fishing quotas; and (2) to amend the European Union's fishing policies. The research findings point to the effective role of transmedia storytelling strategies in raising awareness in the political sphere through public participation in supporting relevant issues, influencing policy change.

Keywords: Common Fisheries Policy, Fish Fight, Participation, Policy Change, Transmedia Analysis, Transmedia Storytelling, Transmedia Strategies

The *Fish Fight* campaign, initiated in 2010, was produced by the public service broadcaster Channel 4 in the United Kingdom (UK) and hosted by British chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall. The transmedia campaign was designed to (1) draw the public's attention to the reckless discarding of caught fish because of the quota system intended to conserve fish stocks in the domain of the European Union (EU); and to (2) pressure the authorities to change the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). A transmedia campaign comprises a series of coordinated activities and organized efforts designed to achieve a social, political, or commercial goal by means of multiple media platforms (Franco, 2014). Thus, the article analyzes the transmedia strategies of the *Fish Fight* campaign in order to demonstrate how the multiplatform media production contributed to (1) make the public aware of the wasteful discarding of healthy fish at sea under the EU fishing quotas; and (2) to amend EU fishing policies.

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The theoretical framework contemplates the conceptualization of transmedia storytelling in the scope of participatory theory. The methodological approach of the case study is based on the transmedia analytical model by Gambarato (2013) and applied to *Fish Fight* to depict how transmedia strategies collaborated to influence food policy change. The research findings point to the effective role of transmedia storytelling strategies in raising awareness in the political sphere throughout public participation in supporting relevant issues, culminating in policy amendment. It is not surprising that storytelling has become an important tool in facilitating change in society (Maas, 2012; Semetko, 2004) because the human species is addicted to story, and stories touch every aspect of our lives, even saturating it (Gottschall, 2013).

Today's complex media environment is changing audience expectations of how, when, and where information is consumed. Media convergence is driving the development of new forms of storytelling in which integrated narratives are presented across multiple media. Participatory engagement of audiences through games, remixing content, and original user-created content is increasingly common. (von Stackelberg & Jones, 2014, p. 58).

This is the scenario in which transmedia storytelling is inserted. Although transmedia storytelling remains under construction, there are solid indications of its conceptualization. The advent of convergence culture made people's daily contact with media more complex from the viewpoint of the media platforms involved in the process as well as the blurring boundaries between audience consumption and production. Convergence as "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, p. 2) is closely associated with the idea of transmedia storytelling. "Thus, if convergence culture involves a multitude of mediums to provide the consumer with numerous ways of gathering communication and to enhance the participation and enjoyment of the audience, the use of TS [transmedia storytelling] seems the natural way to fulfill these expectations" (Gambarato & Alzamora, 2012, pp. 53–54). In this context, transmedia storytelling contributes to the increasing need for media projects that conform to the new multiscreen and multiplatform modes, content expansion, and audience participation. The transmedia approach provides the audience the opportunity to stay within the scope of a single story universe, while accessing unfolded content through various media channels. The term transmedia storytelling was coined by Henry Jenkins (2003, 2006) and defined as the art of building a storyworld, in which each extension makes a distinctive and valuable contribution to the overall story. Transmedia storytelling is not about repurposing the same content across different platforms but about the meaningful experience that the audience can have by engaging with the content extension of a story spread throughout multiple media channels. Pratten (2011, p. 1) emphasizes the importance of participatory elements inherently incorporated into transmedia narratives: "transmedia storytelling is telling a story across multiple media ... with a degree of audience participation, interaction or collaboration." Hancox (2014) discusses transmedia strategies applied to social change and concludes that this kind of approach highlights "the dignity of the subjects and strives to convey the complexities of the lives and issues by taking advantage of the technology available to challenge audiences to enter, experience and interact with the stories in new ways." Gaming elements and participatory features, often present in transmedia projects, help transmedia producers interest audiences in various topics unrelated to the entertainment industry:

Transmedia storytelling creates experiences that are more than entertainment; it is now possible that personal education and societal transformation can be as entertaining as commercial entertainment properties. Because the story is at the heart of effective transmedia narratives, understanding how and why stories transmit meaning and foster understanding can provide foresight professionals with a framework for effectively integrating narratives into many different types of projects. (von Stackelberg & Jones, 2014, p. 61).

In this article, we analyze how the non-fictional *Fish Fight* campaign took advantage of transmedia storytelling strategies to engage the public and encourage them to take purposeful political action. The structure of the article includes (1) the participation theory framework outlined in the realm of transmedia storytelling; (2) a brief description of the methodological approach; (3) the *Fish Fight* transmedia analysis; (4) the repercussion of the *Fish Fight* case; and (5) the conclusion, in which the key research findings are summarized.

PARTICIPATION THEORY

In the midst of convergence and participatory cultures (Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013), or more precisely participatory theory (Carpentier, 2011; Carpentier & Dahlgren, 2014), participation is the key concept. From Arnstein's (1969, p. 216) definition of participation as "the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic process, to be deliberately included in the future," to Carpentier and Dahlgren's (2014, p. 45) statement that "participation captures a specific set of social practices that deal with the decision-making practices of actors," participation is intertwined with other concepts, such as empowerment, involvement, engagement, and so forth. Jenkins et al. (2013, p. 156) discuss meaningful participation and acknowledge the struggle between corporate conception of participation (which includes within it a promise of making companies more responsive to the needs and desires of their "consumers") and a political conception of participation (which focuses on the desire for us all to exercise greater power over the decisions which impact the quality of our everyday lives as citizens).

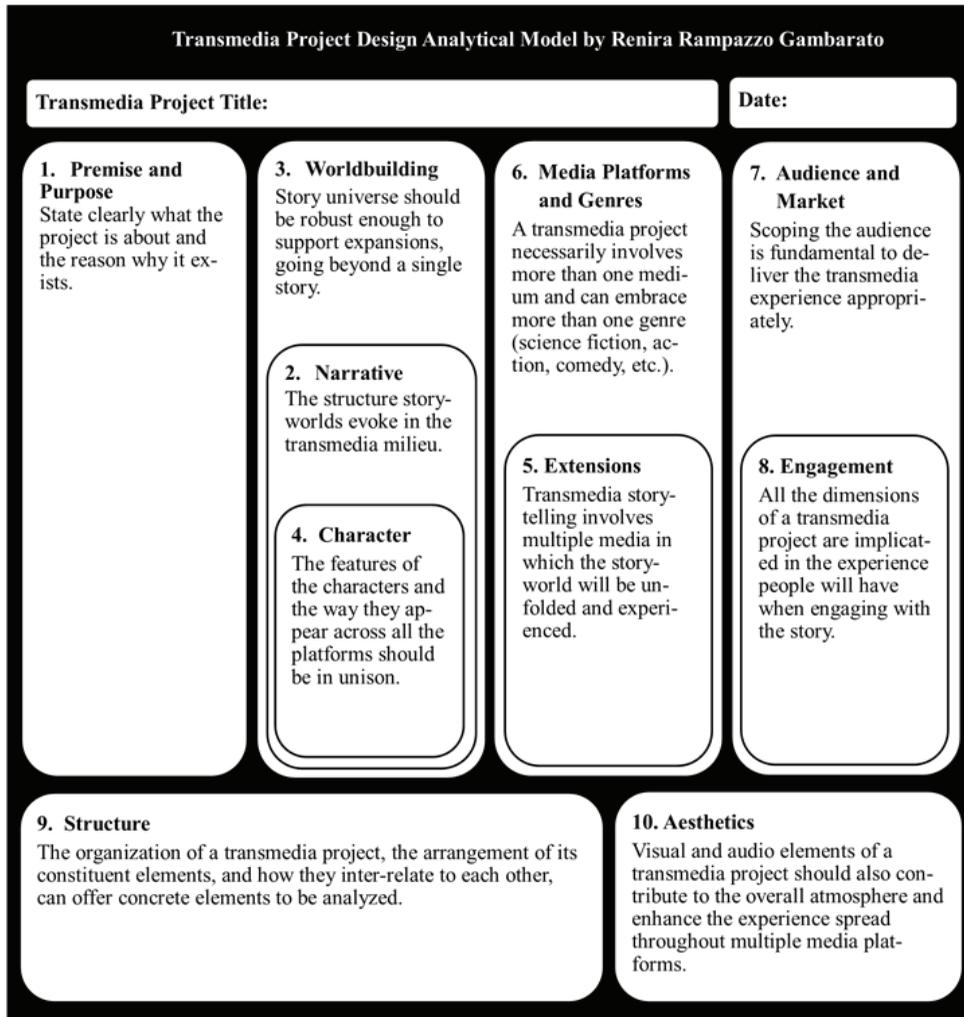
Jenkins et al. (2013, p. 163) also emphasized that political participation reflects "a world where more media power rests in the hands of citizens and audience members, even if the mass media holds a privileged voice in the flow of information." This kind of participation in association with digital technologies leads to participatory political acts, such as being part of online communities, posting and sharing content in the realm of politics on social media networks, voting, and signing petitions online, for instance. According to Cohen, Kahne, Bowyer, Middaugh, and Rogowski (2012), participatory politics can (1) attain large audiences and mobilize networks; (2) support political agendas and provide feedback to politicians; and (3) help circulate political information and produce original user-generated content. Benkler (2006, p. 11) debates the network topology and how the Internet improves the structure of the public sphere. In this sense, he depicts how mechanisms, such as mailing lists, websites, and mobility, are embedded in the social system and become a platform for politically relevant information. These mechanisms enable anyone, anywhere, to go through his or her practical life, observing the social environment through new eyes—the eyes of someone who could actually inject a thought, a criticism, or a concern into the public debate. Individuals become less passive, and thus more engaged observers of social spaces that could potentially become subjects for political conversation; they become more engaged participants in the debates about their observations.

Carpentier and Dahlgren (2014, p.44) also “say that participation implies the involvement with the political, regardless of the character or scope of the context.” Brough and Shresthova (2012) emphasize that younger generations “have become civically and politically engaged in new and different ways, related less to electoral politics or government or civic organizations and more to personal interests, social networks, and cultural or commodity activism.” In this context, *Fish Fight* transmedia strategies establish the role of professional producers as facilitators, who engage the public across multiple media platforms aiming at generating awareness of the fish discard cause and serving as a call to political action. Media producers stimulate the audience’s contribution to achieve their goal, changing the CFP. *Fish Fight* exemplifies grassroots circulation practices in which “a media text becomes material that drives active community discussion and debate at the intersection between popular culture and civic discourse—conversations that might lead to community activism or social change” (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 168). Kligler-Vilenchik, McVeigh-Schultz, Weitbrecht and Tokuhama (2012), in their study of fan activism—that “brings together elements from fandom with elements that have traditionally been attributed to volunteerism and activism,” stress that “shared media experiences, a sense of community, and the wish to help” emerged as characteristics that may unite fandom and the aspiration for social and political change.

However, what motivated people to participate and take action, and embrace the *Fish Fight* campaign? Drawing on Bradham’s (2013, p. 122) list of motivations, individuals, in this particular case, would like (1) to challenge themselves to solve a tough problem; (2) to contribute to a large project of common interest; (3) to share with others; (4) to collaborate on environmental issues; (5) to protect food safety and animal welfare; and (6) to make a difference in society. Nani (2013, p. 20) adds “publics participate and get engaged because of the rise of a new culture that enhances the co-creation of ‘spreadable’ texts.” Among the series of models of engagement, such as the *dragonfly effect* by Aaker and Smith (2010), the equation proposed by Nani (2013, p. 36) seems to clearly describe the major focuses that should be involved in the development of transmedia projects for social (political) change in the scope of participatory culture: “Civic engagement = specific proposition + design to call attention + publics’ empowerment.”

Following the equation, a *specific proposition* refers to offering the public concrete goals. “Goals that are not specific are usually vague, risking, therefore, not being meaningful ... and most likely unclear, ergo lacking engaging power” (Nani, 2013, p. 36). *Design to call attention* concerns the use of text and audiovisual features across multiple media platforms to attract people’s attention to the project and, consequently, to the cause behind it. *Publics’ empowerment* is about “the synergy between producers and publics in the co-production of meaningful texts” (Nani, 2013, p. 37). *Fish Fight* has as its specific proposition the goal to change the CFP because 50% of the fish caught in the North Sea are thrown back dead (*Fish Fight*, 2014). The design of the Channel 4 project calls attention with a contemporary clean layout, the good technical quality of the audiovisual content, and the leadership of a celebrity chef. The public empowerment of *Fish Fight* gives people the opportunity to demonstrate their support by signing an online petition to end fish discarding. More than 870,000 signatures to the petition accompanied by 225,000 emails and 220,000 tweets to members of the European Parliament (MEPs) (*Fish Fight*, 2014) secured discussion of the issue and kept the pressure on the discard ban high. As a result, in 2013, the parliament voted to ban the wasteful practice of throwing away healthy fish at sea. “After significant opposition to the changes from the powerful industrial fishing lobby, and multiple attempts to scupper the process, the final vote was won by an emphatic 502 votes to 137” (Harvey, 2013a).

Figure 1. Schematic representation of the transmedia project design analytical model



TRANSMEDIA ANALYSIS OF *FISH FIGHT*

The *Fish Fight* case study is analyzed with Gambarato's (2013) transmedia project design analytical model. The model aims at outlining the essential features of the campaign, which depicts how multiplatform production, audience participation, and digital technology concretely contribute to food policy change. The analytical model is structured according to 10 distinguishable topics guided by a series of practicable questions. A simplified schematic representation of the model is provided in Figure 1.

THE CASE OF *FISH FIGHT*

Premise and Purpose

For centuries, discarded fish has been an inevitable consequence of the fishing industry, which is justified by numerous economic, political, biological, and technological reasons. European fisheries look for ways to reduce expenses, and landing the whole catch would impose extra costs on the economic sector. Discarding fish allows fisheries to land only the species considered valuable by the final consumers. Undersized or unsellable species are often thrown back into the sea dead, but through this process, final consumers can purchase fish and other marine products they want at more affordable prices. Fishing fleets are also subject to the European CFP, which sets quotas for how much of each species can be caught in a specific area. European fisheries operate under individual quota shares, which, sometimes, do not allow fishing companies to land certain non-target species. In some cases, this bycatch may be reduced by improving gear technology used by fishing vessels. However, common fishing technologies do not completely avoid bycatch, since some fish species swim together.

The current European environmental discourse, which proclaims that society is responsible for protecting nature, was a fertile ground for the *Fish Fight* grassroots campaign and was its fundamental premise. The sustainable fishing campaign developed by Fearnley-Whittingstall benefited from and effectively incorporated the discourse supported by Europeans. The petition launched by the campaign and signed by 870,000 people was intended to demonstrate people's concern about existing discarding practices and current European regulations for the fishing industry (*Fish Fight*, 2014). As declared by *Fish Fight* creators, the specific propositions of the campaign were to stop "environmental crime" and eliminate the practice of the "waste of good food" (*Hugh's Fish Fight*, 2010) by reforming the CFP. The project is non-fictional. It was designed to affect the real lives of millions of people, who are involved with the fishing industry as either producers or consumers, by changing industry regulations and practices as well as people's consumer habits.

Narrative

The narrative of the project began in November 2010, when the campaign's website <http://www.fishfight.net> was launched and the first video was uploaded on the official *Fish Fight* YouTube channel. The video quickly went viral,¹ and therefore, the discard topic entered the agenda. Further developments of the campaign demonstrated how *Fish Fight* was intended to tackle the two purposes of the campaign, as the narrative clearly unfolded in two directions. First, the sustainable fishing campaign tried to popularize bycatch species among consumers. For instance, the *Fish Fight* iOS mobile application included a menu composed exclusively of dishes that contained unpopular, unsellable fish species. Second, *Fish Fight* actively supported the idea of banning discarding practices, which finally resulted in a historical decision made by the European Commission in 2013 (*Fish Fight*, 2014). The narrative also incorporated gaming elements. About 42,000 people took the *Fish Fight* quiz designed to educate consumers about the fish we eat (Peters, 2011). The key factor that led to the positive result was the signed petition along with tweets and emails sent by *Fish Fight* enthusiasts to the members of the European Parliament. The campaign succeeded in its primary goal, but the fight is not over.

Worldbuilding

The *Fish Fight* story developed between 2010 and 2013. The campaign started as a local British project; it soon extended beyond the British borders as thousands of people all over the world participated in the actions generated by *Fish Fight* (*Fish Fight*, 2014). Jenkins et al. (2013, p. 133) stress that “the licensing and coproduction arrangements sustaining transmedia practices have evolved over several decades, and so has audience appreciation of ‘world building.’” Regarding the key stakeholders, which felt an impact from the *Fish Fight* activities, the sustainable fishing campaign was designed to embrace everyone involved in the marine product production to consumption process, that is, final consumers, supermarkets, fish suppliers, fisheries, and the European Commission, which sets the CFP. In particular, as part of the strategy encouraging people to eat a more diverse range of fish, *Fish Fight* initially persuaded about 450 fish and chips shops in the UK to start selling the Mac “Mackerel” Baps. An interactive Mac Map available on www.fishfight.net shows that currently 6,000 additional fish and chips shops consume the undervalued mackerel, promoted by the campaign (*Fish Fight*, 2014). Even more importantly, because of the campaign, major UK supermarket chains finally agreed to change their fish sourcing policies (*Fish Fight*, 2014). The world of *Fish Fight* is robust enough to support extensions. Initially targeted at British society, the campaign influenced the fishing industry throughout the whole EU. The Channel 4 *Fish Fight* TV series was filmed in Thailand, the Philippines, and Antarctica, which expanded the campaign’s borders (Richardson, 2012).

Characters

The celebrity chef, food writer, and television host Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall is the face of *Fish Fight*. He focused on the topic long before the beginning of the campaign discussed in this paper. He received controversial publicity as the host of *River Cottage*, a Channel 4 documentary TV series which portrayed him downsizing to a small English town to create and live on a subsistence farm. As the *Fish Fight* campaign gained momentum, Fearnley-Whittingstall became a symbol of the fight to ban fish discards. However, the audience of *Fish Fight* is a primary character of the project, since people played a crucial role in campaigning. Without the support demonstrated by hundreds of thousands, the campaign would not have succeeded in pressuring the European Parliament. Tens of celebrities, among them Prince Charles, openly supported the sustainable fishing campaign and shared the *Fish Fight* message among millions of their followers on social media. More precisely, the celebrity supporters “carried the message to an online audience of over 16,000,000” (*Fish Fight*, 2014). One of the most influential supporters was the internationally acclaimed British chef, TV host, and restaurateur Gordon Ramsay. He stated:

It just doesn’t make any sense that in this day and age, when we are so aware of the depletion of our fish stocks, thousands of tonnes of dead fish are being thrown back into the sea. Something has to be done and by supporting this campaign, we are one step closer to bringing about reform. (*Fish Fight*, 2014)

Some of the campaign extensions—such as the *Fish Fight* quiz and the Mac Bap campaign—focus on mackerel, emphasizing this specific undervalued species. In addition, *Fish Fight* has spinoffs, such as the *What Are Your Prawns Eating?* campaign and *Hugh’s Fish Fight: Save Our Seas*, which extend the boundaries of the project and exploit a wider range of topics related to the current European environmental discourse.

Table 1. The fish fight extensions

Extension	Media Platform	Date of Launch	Commentary
<i>Hugh's Fish Fight: Join the Fish Fight</i> YouTube video	Web (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2fZcmjbpA)	Nov 2010	Video with more than 350,000 views
<i>Fish Fight</i> website	Web (www.fishfight.net)	Nov 2010	The petition and the mailing and tweeting campaigns are available in the website
Facebook page	Social media https://www.facebook.com/hughsfishfight	Nov 2010	257,000 fans in February 2015
Twitter account	Social media @hughsfishfight	Nov 2010	56,000 followers in February 2015
<i>Hugh's Fish Fight</i> television series	Television	Season 1 = Jan 2011 Season 2 = Feb 2013	Two seasons aired on Channel 4
<i>Fish Fight</i> quiz	Web (<i>The Guardian</i>)	Jan 2011	42,000 players
Mac Bap campaign	Print and Web	Jan 2011	
<i>Fish Fight</i> iOS mobile application	Mobile	Aug 2011	Free app (105,000 downloads)
Full-page newspaper advertisements	Print	June 2012	Ads in four European newspapers targeting key ministers of fisheries
DVDs of <i>Fish Fight</i>	DVD	Autumn 2012	DVDs were sent to hundreds of MEPs across Europe
<i>Hugh's Fish Fight: Save Our Seas</i> campaign	Television and Web	Feb 2013	24,000 emails to the government
<i>What Are Your Prawns Eating?</i> campaign	Television and Web	Feb 2013	About 50,000 tweets to supermarkets

Extensions

The *Fish Fight* campaign, as a transmedia project, has multiple extensions throughout different media platforms. Distinctive and valuable units of content are distributed to provide the audience with the opportunity to explore the narrative in depth and change food policy. *Fish Fight* includes the following extensions (*Fish Fight*, 2014) (see Table 1):

The projects' narrative is consistent along all the extensions, and each one, including the spinoffs, is canonical. The audience is encouraged to spread the content since the extensions,

to a greater or lesser extent, are connected to social media networks. Most importantly, the majority of the extensions are designed to enable the audience to express their opinion and make an impact on relevant environmental issues by signing the petition and flooding officials with emails and tweets.

Media Platforms and Genres

The media involved in *Fish Fight* encompass the Web, television, DVD, mobile, print, and social media. The rollout strategy started with the release of the viral video *Hugh's Fish Fight: Join the Fish Fight* on YouTube, in 2010. The video exposes shocking facts about the fish discard in the North Sea, such as the amount of healthy fish thrown back dead because of the CFP regulations. The video boosted audience interest, directed them to seek more information in the campaign's website, and encouraged further discussions and sharing on social networks. The campaign was followed by the broadcast of the two seasons of *Fish Fight* on Channel 4. The successful television series—the first season with four episodes and the second with three—had a considerable impact on a broader audience and participatory actions. The television series attracted more than 3 million viewers, were re-broadcasted in 28 other countries, and were screened at 11 international film festivals (*Fish Fight*, 2014). During the broadcast of the first series, the petition signatures increased from 30,000 to 500,000 within three days (*Fish Fight*, 2014). In one advertisement break alone, 40,000 people signed the petition, and the website had 12 million page views during the airing of the television series' first season (*Fish Fight*, 2014).

The launch of the iOS mobile application also helped increase audience engagement. The aim of the application was to encourage users to consume sustainable fish by displaying valuable information about a number of fish species, offering 50 recipes with sustainable fish choices, and revealing a guide of restaurants committed to sustainability. "The app proved popular and became Channel 4's second most downloaded app. In addition to this, the app went on to be included in the App Store Rewind 2011—'The Best of the Year', within the Lifestyle section" ("Fish Fight included in App Store Rewind," 2011). Although the application was available only to iOS users, *Fish Fight* made a downloadable .pdf version accessible to everyone. Concerning devices, a computer is required to gain access to the online extensions of the project, a television set in the case of the Channel 4 broadcasting and a smartphone or tablet to better benefit from the mobile application. Documentary is the genre that most appropriately describes the *Fish Fight* approach, uniting old and new media to shape food policy change. The purpose of embracing different media platforms to develop the storyworld is to intensify audience engagement, although an era of transmedia extensions might be criticized by the "decline of any type of storytelling that doesn't lend itself well to a webisode series, co-creation with the audience, or 'user-generated content'" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 140).

Audience and Market

The project, although primarily focused on the UK audience, easily reached international audiences mainly because of (1) the direct involvement of the EU in the discard issue; (2) Channel 4 penetration; and (3) the spreadable potentiality of social media networks. Thus, *Fish Fight* turned into a global call-to-action in the public and private spheres. For instance, people in 195 countries supported the campaign's online petition (*Fish Fight*, 2014). "In a world where audiences now regularly use Twitter, Facebook, blogs, and video-sharing sites to react to mass-media offerings, media producers and marketers increasingly recognize and respect the influence of these grassroots intermediaries" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 142). *Fish Fight* not only recognized the

influence of grassroots intermediaries but also invested in the public's participation to pressure the political authorities and legitimately change fishery policy.

In this context, the actual audience of *Fish Fight* goes beyond a particular demographic group and incorporates savvy online users as well as offline crowds. The objective, clear, and direct specific proposition of *Fish Fight* and the audience's free access to the campaign collaborated to hook different prospective audiences. Within the story universe of the campaign, as Jenkins et al. (2013, p. 148) stated, "producers envision the transmedia space as offering different appeals to different niche audiences: the people playing the games may not be the same people reading the webcomics." Fearnley-Whittingstall's project inspired several other campaigns regarding similar issues, such as ocean conservation. For instance, non-profit organizations (NGOs) like Greenpeace, Marine Conservation Society, World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF), and Client Earth are actively fighting for marine causes. In 2011, the cross-party Fish for the Future group (<http://fishforthefuture.eu/>) was established within the European Parliament to combat overfishing. More recently, Oceana's global campaign *Save the Oceans: Feed the World* was launched with the support of 20 of the top chefs worldwide, including Ferran Adrià and Joan Roca (Embiricos, 2015). Furthermore, Germany, Spain, France, and Poland launched their own fish fights (*Fish Fight*, 2014). In Germany, for instance, chef Tim Mälzer joined the cause and launched *Tims Fish Fight* (www.fishfight.de) in April 2012, in front of the parliament in Berlin. "German politicians have shown strong support for ending discards and overfishing in the new CFP" (*Fish Fight*, 2014). Concomitantly, in Poland, chef Robert Makłowicz launched *Ryba za Burta!* (Fish Overboard!) (www.rybazaburta.pl) in front of the parliament in Warsaw.

The focus on the wasteful practice of discarding was tabled by the European Commission already under the previous Commissioner for Maritime Affairs & Fisheries, Joe Borg. Since then the issue has been influenced by the Fish Fight campaign, which has helped the current Commissioner, Maria Damanaki, highlight the problem of discarding among the general public across Europe. ("Fish Fight campaign launch in Poland," 2012)

In addition, Greenpeace played an important role in *Fish Fight*: "Greenpeace has been proud to fight the good fish fight with Hugh and we have been collaborating with him on a number of issues" (Mackenzie, 2011). For instance, the research by Greenpeace concerning fishing methods was used by the campaign (Bravo, n.d.), as well as the NGO's expertise in dealing with environmental issues and videos and other materials they produce. The organization's international network amplified the *Fish Fight* message. Greenpeace acknowledges that by championing the need for real reform of European fishing laws—something Greenpeace and other groups are working on—and exposing the wasteful reality of discards, Hugh has helped raise awareness at the highest levels in Europe. It now seems that real action to end discarding fish might actually happen. (Mackenzie, 2011)

Engagement

The project turned hundreds of thousands of ordinary people into campaign supporters by informing them about the issue, as seen from the viewpoint of the project's authors, and then turned supporters into activists by supplying them with mechanisms for influencing government decisions related to the issue. *Fish Fight* effectively utilized the campaign's enthusiasts as its driving force and empowered the public. In addition to the call-to-action to sign the petition, in December 2011, when the new CFP was being discussed in the European Parliament, the *Fish Fight* webpage offered the public the opportunity of easily sending thousands of emails to MEPs and, consequently, directly influence the CFP. In March 2012, when the future of the discard ban was threatened by countries such as Spain and France, which did not support the new CFP, and

the major fish suppliers in the EU, *Fish Fight* developed “an online tool allowing Fish Fighters to tweet every fisheries minister across Europe in their own language. Over 135,000 tweets were sent” (*Fish Fight*, 2014). Jenkins et al. (2013, p. 136) discussed the dominant appointment model (dependence on the broadcast schedule) versus the emergent engagement model and stated that “the engagement model suggests that having something to do also gives fans something to talk about and encourages them to spread the word to other potential audience members.” In addition, Jenkins et al. (2013, p. 140) urge us to “think of ‘engagement’ as the emotional connections between viewers and desired content.” The *Fish Fight* storyworld, experienced in the second and third person, emotionally connects the audience to the relevant environmental, political, and economic issues of discard.

Fish Fight operates in participation *in* the media and participation *via* the media levels. The first implies using media and engaging in the creation (or co-creation) of content, specially facilitated by digital technologies. The latter involves the context and the issues to which the media connect the audience. Participation *via* the media surpasses the media and focuses on mediatized social domains (Carpentier & Dahlgren, 2014, p. 44). This is an inherent characteristic of transmedia storytelling. Jenkins et al. (2013, p. 148) have emphasized how “transmedia practices, for example, are designed to give viewers something to do and something to talk about in relation to media content.”

Structure

Fish Fight was designed to embrace multiplatform media production from the beginning in 2010 (the pro-active transmedia project). The transmedia strategy involved launching the website and the viral video on YouTube first, in anticipation of the premiere of the Channel 4 television series, in January 2011. Along with the preparation for the airing of the first episode of the television series, the campaign’s website was updated and re-launched. The success of *Fish Fight* led to the release of the iOS mobile application and the second season on Channel 4. All the social media channels have been available since 2010 and concretely contributed to the effectiveness of the public participation. The different extensions of *Fish Fight* functioned as independent entry points, welcoming the audience to be immersed in the storyworld. The audience could choose their own path throughout the multiple media platforms incorporated in the campaign, without necessarily accessing all of them. The reward in migrating from one extension to another is the enrichment of the overall transmedia experience. Although the campaign officially ended, it is still running online and attracting participation despite the positive results the campaign has already achieved.

Aesthetics

The overall design of the project reflects its documentary nature and its digital appeal. The Channel 4 television series, on the one hand, attracted attention with a high-quality production of audiovisual content (documentary style), and the well-known host Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall as well as other celebrity chefs such as Jamie Oliver and Gordon Ramsay. In addition, the design of the multiple digital extensions, especially the campaign’s website, attracts attention by the profuse use of information graphics—infographics. The combination of data visualization and design to increase engagement and memorability, popularized infographics in recent years. Harrison, Reinecke, and Chang (in press) stress that the infographics’ goal is to provide readers with an overview of a particular topic through data and other available information. Infographics are an effective means for telling stories about data, as they capture a reader’s attention by structuring these data stories with principles of graphic design.

Harrison et al.'s (in press) experiment on the aesthetic appeal of infographics indicates that "the first impression of appeal is based on how colorful and visually complex an infographic is." In addition, in order to optimize the design of infographics to make a good first impression, "designers should aim for a low to medium complexity (e.g., by choosing a limited number of image and text areas), and a medium to high colorfulness (e.g., by increasing the saturation and contrast between colors)." The series of *Fish Fight* infographics operate with low complexity, focusing on a simple, clean, and clear layout, which follows the research results by Harrison et al. (in press). However, regarding the colorfulness, *Fish Fight* infographics mostly rely on blue palettes, and the monotone choice, although coherent to the campaign's topic, does not necessarily take full advantage of color contrast. Notwithstanding this, the design of *Fish Fight* functions as a tool of engagement, disseminating the relevant information around discard issues and calling people to participate actively. The campaign's rhetorical style is persuasive, strong and quite assertive. Expressions such as "crazy EU laws," "senseless waste," and "insane waste" (*Fish Fight*, 2014) describe the issue in the infographics, for instance, and collaborate to sensitize both the general audience and the politicians. Overall, the ample usage of infographics across the digital channels of the campaign is an efficacious measure for engaging the public.

THE CAMPAIGN'S REPERCUSSIONS

The *Fish Fight* campaign motivated people to oppose fish discards as conservation practice. The acclaimed production won several prizes ("Hugh's Fish Fight shortlisted again," 2012), among them the 2011 BAFTA for best program in the features category and the 2013 Maritime Media Award. The fact that the campaign was backed by Channel 4, a significant public service broadcaster, and celebrities such as Stephen Fry, Jamie Oliver, and Gordon Ramsay, definitely contributed to its achievements. Parenthetically, Channel 4, as a pioneer in multiplatform production, made a "significant economic investment" in multiplatform commissioning with "considerable economic and cultural rewards" (Bennett, Strange, Kerr & Medrado, 2012, p. 6) and became a "world leader in multiplatform production" (Bennett et al., 2012, p.18). "The value of multiplatform is connected to the ability of online platforms to provide greater depth of information and opportunities for participation, which at their best, can empower citizens to 'make a difference'" (Bennett et al., 2012, p. 18). In a research report concerning British multiplatforming public service broadcasting, Bennett et al. (2012, p. 14) conclude that the new characteristics of the sector are connected to "its potential to inspire, empower and engage; and an emphasis on innovation in digital production." In the context of *Fish Fight*, as stressed by Blake (2011), "officials are bowing to pressure for reform of Europe's fishing industry after more than 650,000 [870,000 in 2014] people signed a petition calling for 'discards' to be banned following a series of programs publicizing the issue on Channel 4." Although the EU quota system could be considered "bizarre" (Blake, 2011), the ban of this conservation practice advocated by *Fish Fight* was far from unanimous.

On the one hand, the enormous waste of fish because of the CFP is undeniably pernicious. Chivers (2014) stated that, "in one of the European Union's more ludicrous and inexcusable laws, fishermen have to throw away huge amounts of perfectly good fish, because of badly designed and frankly idiotic quota rules." One main reason behind the overfishing and consequent discard is that "in mixed fisheries, it can be impossible for fishermen to control the species that they catch in their nets" (Blake, 2011). Therefore, when they have exceeded their quota or do not have quota for certain species they have caught, the discard occurs. "Discarding ... has been the most striking example of the failures of a common fisheries policy that green groups have said

is 'broken' and encourages overfishing instead of protecting dwindling stocks" (Harvey, 2013a). The result is that "about half of the fish in the North Sea alone [is] being thrown back dead, even though they are edible and healthy" (Harvey, 2013b). In addition, the majority of discarded fish are already dead. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimated that "1.3 million tons of fish and other marine animals are thrown back every year" (Blake, 2011).

On the other hand, the Scottish Fishing Federation (SFF), for instance, opposed the proposals spearheaded by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, saying that it "would do more harm than good and represent a threat to coastal communities across the country" (Johnson, 2011). Spain and France also opposed the policy change because "the reforms could mean fishermen would have to stop fishing when they have reached their quota for a particular species to avoid catching it accidentally" (Blake, 2011). Moreover, there was concern about the enforcement measures. The EU's fishing lobby heavily opposed the changes, particularly the operators of industrial-size vessels, because if they "are forced to land all the fish they net, they could end up with catches of lower value species, or lower quality specimens, so being able to select the highest value fish can help them maximize their profits" (Harvey, 2013a).

Notwithstanding this, Maria Damanaki, the EU fisheries commissioner, proposed changes in the CFP. Her proposal suggested that "all catches should be landed and counted against quota. It is believed to be backed by Richard Benyon, Britain's fishing minister, as well as the Danish, German, French and Belgian ministers" (Blake, 2011). The commissioner praised the work of the *Fish Fight* campaigners in bringing the subject to wider attention and mobilizing citizens to sign the online petition (Harvey, 2013b). However, although the parliament voted to ban discarding in 2013, it must still be passed into law:

The vote makes it highly likely that the biggest shake-up of the common fisheries policy for decades will pass into law, perhaps next year. It is still not quite final, as there must be some further negotiations with member states, but campaigners said the reform proposals were now over the biggest hurdles to their adoption. (Harvey, 2013a)

Nevertheless, the fight continues, as the chief executive of the UK's National Federation of Fishermen's Organizations (NFFO), Barrie Deas, warned that it could be difficult to put the new policies into practice. He said, "the real issue concerns the practical issues of applying such a policy at the level of each individual fishery" (Harvey, 2013a). Greenpeace argues that NFFO is "being dominated by the interests of large industrial fishing companies, many from overseas" (Harvey, 2013a). Meanwhile, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall renewed the campaign in 2013 (Roberts, 2013). The new Channel 4 series *Hugh's Fish Fight: Save Our Seas* highlights the destruction of the seabed:

The dredging of seabeds with nets weighted with huge metal ploughs, tearing up all life, rocks and seaweeds and leaving a barren environment is one of the most destructive ways of gathering seafood, but is legally used to gather scallops and other bottom-dwelling species. (Harvey, 2013b)

The fight now is to persuade EU ministers to define a broader network of marine conservation zones, where fishing would be regulated to preserve stocks and the seabed. In addition, the campaign intends to pressure supermarkets to not commercialize seafood caught with destructive methods such as dredging. The goal is to ban destructive fishing methods (*Fish Fight*, 2014). In anticipation of consumer reaction, at least one retailer, Booths, has stopped selling dredged scallops (Harvey, 2013b). The new campaign also received criticism. Once more, the SFF is against

Fish Fight arguing that “scallop dredging had been portrayed in a way that was ‘inaccurate and negative’” (Harvey, 2013b). Bertie Armstrong, SFF chief executive, stressed that scallop fishermen depend upon abundant scallop stocks and a healthy marine environment and are committed to the protection of marine biodiversity. Scallops prefer to live in less sensitive habitats such as sand and gravel, which are naturally dynamic environments due to the movement of water on the seabed from currents, tides and waves and this is where scallop fishermen concentrate their efforts. Scallop fishermen avoid areas where there are unusual marine features and fully support the need for protecting ecologically important habitats and species. (Harvey, 2013b)

He insisted that scalloping affects a very small part of the seabed, with vessels continuously fishing in the very same area for decades; therefore, it would be disproportionate to imply that scalloping causes major damage (Harvey, 2013b). Despite criticism, *Fish Fight* exceeded its original goal. British Prime Minister David Cameron concluded that “the current regime of discarding fish that are perfectly healthy is not acceptable and needs to change” (*Fish Fight*, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Fish Fight demonstrated how multiplatform media production could raise public awareness and influence policy change with political participation. The synergy between various media platforms resulted in varied options for the audience to access the campaign and motivated them to join the fight to reform the regulations of an outdated fisheries policy. “Transmedia approaches yield more meaningful entertainment experiences” (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 137). Although Jenkins et al. (2013) stressed the entertainment facet of transmedia storytelling, it certainly goes beyond entertainment, as the purposeful experience of this campaign confirms.

Carpentier and Dahlgren (2014, p.43) acknowledge that “we see many citizens engaging politically, but outside the electoral system” and justify that it happens “often propelled by frustrations that the established parties are insufficiently responsive.” That is the case of *Fish Fight*. Citizens were absorbed by the debate about the fishing industry, the market prices, the government quota system, the need to secure fish stocks, and alternative sustainability, and consequently were compelled to act politically. Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall concluded that “when people take action.... Politicians have to listen” (*Fish Fight*, 2014), and they did. Carpentier (2011, p. 17) proposes minimalist and maximalist kinds of participation, and *Fish Fight* exemplifies the maximalist version, which goes beyond the selection of representatives by voting (minimalist) and offers a more extensive form of participation by influencing food policymaking. Participation focuses “on the distribution of power within society” (Carpentier & Dahlgren, 2014, p. 47) and *Fish Fight* represents the viability to achieve it.

Taken together, the phenomena of collective intelligence and participatory culture require media to set the audience into motion. Media projects, which can unite people with common interests and provide them with practical tools to express themselves, were defined by Jenkins (2006, p. 95) as cultural attractors and cultural activators. *Fish Fight* functioned as a cultural attractor and activator. The campaign dealt with an issue relevant to the contemporary European environmental agenda and, therefore, amassed a huge audience interested in the problem and enthusiastic about participating in the problem-solving actions. *Fish Fight* effectively exploited the spectrum of environmental and food issues that people are concerned about and embraced further problems related to the campaign’s initial purpose.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ A viral video is the one that becomes popular through a rapid process of Internet sharing, especially through social media networks (see Jenkins et al., 2013).

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