



## Transmedia Strategies in Journalism

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# TRANSMEDIA STRATEGIES IN JOURNALISM

## An analytical model for the news coverage of planned events

Renira Rampazzo Gambarato  and Lorena Peret Teixeira Tárzia

*The article discusses the meanings of transmedia journalism, which involves the expansion, not the repetition, of news content and then presents the development of a new analytical model that focuses on the coverage of planned events in news media. Planned events are temporal occurrences that are normally well schematized and publicized in advance. The proposed model addresses the fundamental features involved in transmedia strategies for media coverage to contribute to scholars' analytic needs and to guide journalists in developing transmedia strategies in the context of the news coverage of planned events. Multiplatform news media production is already a reality that, although probably more modest than comprehensive, will inevitably grow and improve.*

**KEYWORDS** analytical model; digital journalism; news coverage; planned events; transmedia journalism; transmedia strategies

### Introduction

Since the advent of digitization, the conceptual confusion surrounding the semantic galaxy that comprises the media and journalism universes has increased. Multimedia, cross-media, intermedia, and transmedia storytelling are some of the terms aggregated in the media convergence process involving news in liquid, fluid, participative environments (Bauman 2000).

Transmedia storytelling (TS) is one of the newest terms. It was coined by Henry Jenkins (2003) in the fictional realm. Subsequently, TS has been the focus of several academic studies (Alzamora and Tárzia 2012; Gambarato 2012, 2013; Moloney 2011; Scolari 2013a). In addition to telling a pervasive story/experience across multiple platforms and formats using current digital technologies, TS involves creating content that engages the audience by using techniques to permeate audience members' daily lives (Jenkins 2011; Pratten 2015). The precise differentiation between fiction (the world of imagination) and nonfiction (the world) has been long blurred by writers, novelists, and historians, and terms such as creative nonfiction have emerged (Clark 2001). TS even incorporates the blurring of fact and fiction as a core aspect, especially the portmanteau type of transmedia production, a type of puzzle in which multiple interdependent platforms contribute to a single experience, such as the case of alternate reality games (Pratten 2015, 16). News stories are, however, traditionally an example of nonfiction in the sense that "[j]ournalists should report the truth. Who would deny it? But such a statement does not get us far enough, for it fails to distinguish nonfiction from other forms of expression" (Clark 2001). Nonfiction, as a matter of fact, can make false assertions, fabricate facts, and tell events from a certain perspective.

Therefore, truth? Whose truth? The truth is not the main point in nonfiction, but nonfictional stories, such as news, claim to describe reality.

In journalism, conceptual and terminological confusion also exists. Dominguez (2012) warned against the risk of putting new labels on old practices. Transmedia journalism, according to Dominguez, is an elastic term with a wide variety of theoretical proposals. In this context, we first discuss what can be understood as transmedia journalism and then present a new analytical approach that reflects transmedia strategies in journalism. The aim of this paper is to propose an analytical model that outlines the main features of transmedia strategies focused on the coverage of planned events in news media. Planned events are temporal occurrences that are usually well schematized and publicized in advance. For instance, the Olympics and other major sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup are recurring planned events. According to Getz's (2012) typology of planned events, sporting events are just one type. Cultural, artistic, business, and political events such as festivals, carnivals, shows, and summits are other examples for which this new analytical model is suitable. Focusing on the transmedia developments regarding this kind of event is relevant because major planned events usually (1) attract vast domestic and international audiences; (2) have the potential to engage and integrate the audience in the news making; (3) are planned well in advance; (4) have significant amounts of human, technical, and financial resources available; and (5) involve numerous protagonists and diverse stories. These characteristics create an appropriate environment for the development of transmedia news production, as we will explore in the paper.

Discussing why TS matters, Anita Ondine, creative director of Transmedia Next (a transmedia production and training company in London), stated:

Will we still be talking about transmedia a few years from now? Well, maybe the word itself will go away, but we certainly will be doing transmedia. To me, I like to think about it sort of in the way that we used to talk about e-commerce a few years ago, when we were referring to buy[ing] books or booking flights online. Now, that is just how we do business, it is how we get stuff done. In the same way, we call it transmedia now but in a few years from now, it is just the way we will be telling stories. (Ondine 2012)

The new insight this study adds to the field of journalism and media studies is the development of an original analytical model aimed at unveiling the features of transmedia journalism. The relevance of the model is its contribution to overcoming the difficulty of transposing the concept of TS to the journalism realm, which requires knowledge of what makes quality journalism. The difficulties are related to the complexity of the journalism activity in general (Canavilhas 2014) and the necessity of designing and planning distinct paths and content to be produced across multiple media (Renó 2014), for instance. Concerning the overall relevance of transmedia journalism, Moloney (2011, 58–59) states that telling relevant stories and allowing them to be a conversation “draws people deeper by giving them a sense of ownership in that story. Through transmedia journalism we can, as public journalism hoped, build relevance to the public and engage in a conversation about what news matters.”

### **Transmedia Journalism**

Scolari (2013b) argued that journalism itself was born transmediatic: since the advent of mass media, facts have been reported on a mix of media, starting with radio (before the

internet), then television, and followed by next-day newspapers and weekly magazines. Engagement, in that environment, occurs through telephone calls to the newsroom or letters. Although various media are present in journalism and journalists employ multiple practices to cover multifaceted media events, not every news production is necessarily transmediatic; thus far, the majority of the content spread across different media platforms is simply repurposed. According to Tavares and Mascarenhas (2013, 200), "it is not rare that a news story extends across multiple platforms with mass and post-mass functions. However, this is not enough to call an article as a transmedia narrative." TS is about expanding, not repeating, content. Renó (2014, 6) discusses the difference between transmedia journalism and other forms of news narratives, stressing that TS takes advantage of contemporary communicational possibilities in which mobility, liquidity, and interactivity assume important roles in engaging and attracting the receiver to the participatory interpretation of the message.

In 2009, Jenkins issued *Seven Core Concepts of Transmedia Storytelling*<sup>1</sup> (2009a, 2009b), and later, Moloney (2011, 60–92) proposed applying Jenkins's core principles to journalism, as follows: (1) spreadability, the viral spread of a story through sharing by users; (2) drillability, the search for more details about the news; official content expansion (including social networks); (3) continuity and seriality, maintaining continuity and exploiting the characteristics of each medium; keeping the audience's attention for a longer period of time; (4) diversity, adding other points of view to information, including those of the public; (5) immersion, generating alternative forms of storytelling for the public to delve deeper into the story; (6) extractability, applying the journalist's work in everyday life with the public's commitment; (7) real world, showing all shades of news, without ever focusing on simplification; and (8) inspiration to action, pursuing the intervention of the public in real actions that seek solutions to problems. The last topic (inspiration to action) can cause controversy in the sense since some may question whether the role of journalism is to lead the public to take meaningful action. However, digital journalism is currently moving toward user-generated content and concrete action. For instance, in April 2014 the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) used WhatsApp and WeChat (private mobile messaging services) during the Indian elections to distribute news and to crowd-source information (Reid 2014). Nevertheless, Moloney's proposition reinforces audience engagement and content expansion, which are fundamental characteristics of TS.

In addition, Looney (2013) presented five suggestions for building transmedia news features:

1. Keep the content unique. Instead of repeating information on different media platforms (which is not a TS characteristic), use different parts of the story to match the strength of each medium and maximize the user experience.
2. Provide seamless points of entry. Ensure that the media platforms make the audience interact simply and directly.
3. Partner up. Transmedia news are often complex and require the involvement of other companies, producers, and businessmen.
4. Keep it cost-effective. There are costly projects, but it is possible to produce transmedia news cheaply, for instance, by introducing social media to expand the story.
5. The story is number one. Many creative tools may do more harm than help. Always put the story first.

These direct and apparently simple features (difficult to achieve) could concretely contribute to understanding transmedia journalism as well as guide its potential production. Apropos of the difficulty of producing transmedia journalism, Renó (2014, 9) emphasizes the necessity of designing and planning the distinct paths and content to be produced. According to Renó,

the construction of content must be developed from a transmedia script, which is programmed so that all the linked fragments relate cognitively to each other and, at the same time, does not assume the role of cross-media content, in other words, the same content in distinct platforms. (Renó 2014, 11)

Pernisa (2010, 8) proposed an “opened monads model” to be used on building transmediatic news features, “where each vehicle would be taken as the smallest field in structure and would bind the other, forming a network of contextualized material for the user’s query in various ways.” Canavilhas (2014, 60–64) describes the main characteristics of transmedia journalism as (1) interactivity, (2) hypertextuality, (3) integrated multimodality, and (4) contextualization.

Spreading the story through different complementary platforms has been the goal of many news companies. By using television, radio, mobile media, and the internet, for instance, the BBC reached 90 percent of the British population during the 2012 London Summer Olympics. During the Summer Olympic Games, 47.4 million accessed the BBC coverage online (BBC 2013). The challenge is more evident when it comes to building an interactive and engaging environment, turning journalism into a conversation, as proposed by Anderson, Dardenne, and Killenberg (1994). Even though the 2012 Summer Games were called “the Social Olympics” by the media, the attempts to build narratives collectively were still modest. Spreading the news through different screens (the one-four-ten strategy<sup>2</sup>), giving control to the user, multiplied the same content on different devices and created a video hub instead of an engaging atmosphere.

The way in which news and information are gathered, produced, and disseminated has been profoundly altered and challenges the transmissive tradition of mass media. The “increasing number of producers and disseminators of news as well as the instantaneity of global news flow indicate that journalistic practice is changing” (Heinrich 2011, 2). Coping with this new paradigm includes not only thinking about multiple media, cross-production, and different platforms but also rethinking copyright, remixability (Lessig 2008), crowdsourcing, crowdfunding, and diverse funding modes. Moreover, limited time and staff must be considered in order to make sense of the disparate parts of multiple stories from different sources (Craig 2011).

Another important aspect of the mutating journalism environment is the increasing tendency of the news consumer to quickly change habits when getting information. When journalism goes mobile, for instance, alternative methods of news production and consumption change people’s relationships with the news they access on the move (Herreros and Vivar 2011; Jones and Salter 2012; Renó and Flores 2012). Mobile phones change the relationships among journalists, news, and what we used to call the audience. Mobile technologies include other modes of communication and enrich traditional journalism (Herreros and Vivar 2011, 12). Bauman’s (2000) liquid society is characterized by mobility and the individualization of media consumption. Incorporating mobile devices into news processes brings the potential for enhanced localness, customization, and mobility. A relevant example is *The Great British Property Scandal* (<http://www.channel4.com/programmes/the->

[great-british-property-scandal](#)) by Channel 4, in the United Kingdom. The television channel launched special investigative journalism programs to examine the British housing crisis and discuss alternative solutions, including audience participation via a mobile application. The goal was to engage people to report empty properties they knew about and lobby the government and local councils to provide low-cost loans for the owners of empty homes who were struggling to renovate their properties. The results included 120,000 petition signatures, about 8000 empty homes reported (many of which have been brought back into use), and £17 million allocated for new national low-cost loans (Gambarato 2013, 88).

Although corporations are still learning how to listen, filter, and engage with social news, and make better use of Twitter, Facebook, and other social networks, such as YouTube, Storify, and Instagram, citizens are also learning “how to harness the power of social news flows, very often to create news reports that challenge those of the mainstream” (Jones and Salter 2012, 126). Technological forces are often close to political and cultural changes, and the increase in mobile phone penetration has significant potential to disrupt political process, forcing alternative ways of framing the news, as occurred with the Madrid bombings (2004) and the Iranian elections (2009). This type of social news and information flow is characterized by unpredictability, classlessness, and a lack of hierarchy, a source of spin-offs<sup>3</sup> to any transmedia planned coverage that must be addressed by journalism.

Although every newsworthy event has the potential to be transmediatic, transmedia journalism is optimized when it becomes a proactive planned process with journalists assuming responsibility for building a storyworld in which the prosumers (Toffler 1980), consumers who are also media producers, are engaged. Moloney (2011, 12) emphasizes that “daily journalism, with its time-constrained brevity, is not a viable option. Transmedia must be designed carefully and developed with a lengthy lead time to be effective.” Nevertheless, transmedia-breaking news journalism is possible; however, to get the best of its possibilities, a transmedia mind-set is necessary in the newsroom, as Janet Kolodzy (2012) proposed regarding media convergence. According to Kolodzy, telling stories across media platforms requires journalists to be audience-centric, story-driven, tool-neutral, and very professional. Notwithstanding, Canavilhas (2014, 64) suggests that the journalism styles truly adapted to TS are the native styles of online journalism, such as reportage, newsgames, and interactive infographics because of the digital nature of the content and the possibility of producing deeper news. The opportunity to offer deeper and contextualized content, according to Jenkins (2009a), is one of the core principles of TS and, consequently, of transmedia journalism. This aspect alone can definitely make a difference in a superficially saturated online news scenario.

Another variant of the optimization of transmedia news production is slow journalism. Slow journalism (Le Masurier 2015), inspired by the slow food movement (Petrini 2007) from the 1980s, is an alternative to conventional reporting in which more time is necessary for the production and consumption of slow news stories. The transmedia experience The Sochi Project (<http://www.thesochiproject.org>), an example of slow journalism, is analyzed by Gambarato (2015). The project depicts the hidden story behind the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia, and involves an interactive documentary, numerous print media extensions, digital publications, and an exhibition. Regarding the intrinsic relationship between TS and slow journalism, Gambarato emphasizes that:

The connections between TS and slow journalism start from the focus on the story and the power of narrative. The story is number one and works on multiple levels, or dimensions, creating a dynamic storytelling experience and leaving space for the content to expand across different media platforms. A storyworld is developed to support the expansion of content and multiplicity of media channels. Both TS and slow journalism embrace new technologies (mobile, locative media, for instance) and devices (smartphones, tablets, etc.) to tell compelling stories able to reach a diversified public. The audience engagement is a central point for both to involve the audience as collaborators and create a more valuable experience. In order to do so, more time is invested from the side of authors/producers as well as from the public. (Gambarato 2015, 4–5)

In sum, we consider that transmedia journalism, as well as other applications of TS in fictional and nonfictional realms, is characterized by the involvement of (1) multiple media platforms, (2) content expansion, and (3) audience engagement. Transmedia journalism can take advantage of different media platforms such as television, radio, print media, and, above all, the internet and mobile media to tell deeper stories. Content expansion, as opposed to the repetition of the same message across multiple platforms, is the essence of TS and, therefore, should be the focal point of transmedia journalism as well. The enrichment of the narrative is facilitated by the extended content. Audience engagement involves mechanisms of interactivity, such as the selection of the elements to be explored, the option to read a text, watch a video, enlarge photographs, access maps, click on hyperlinks, and share information through social networks. Audience engagement deals with participation via, for instance, remixing content and creating original user-generated content. For Carpentier and Dahlgren (2014, 45), “participation captures a specific set of social practices that deal with the decision-making practices of actors.” Participation is intertwined with other concepts, especially empowerment and involvement, enhancing the journalistic experience. These three basic characteristics of transmedia journalism (multiple media platforms, content expansion, and audience engagement) are contemplated in the analytical model we propose and support the analysis of transmedia strategies in news coverage of planned events.

### **An Analytical Model for Transmedia News Coverage of Planned Events**

Theoretical and especially analytical approaches related to TS and what could be considered transmedia strategies in journalism are still looser instead of tighter but are evolving (Alzamora and Tárca 2012; Barbosa, da Silva, and Nogueira 2013; Moloney 2011; Renó and Flores 2012). In this scenario, the closest proposal in terms of establishing a clear but comprehensive analytical model that embraces direct aspects of developing transmediatic experiences is the transmedia project design analytical model developed by Gambarato (2013). This model relies on the features of the design process behind transmedia projects. The model is organized according to 10 main dimensions of transmedia projects, such as premise and purpose, extensions, media platforms, and engagement, among others. This construct is the foundation we follow to present a new model now aimed at outlining transmedia strategies regarding coverage of planned events in journalism. As Moloney (2011, 12) suggested, the brevity of daily news production does not necessarily align with transmedia production, which requires planning and designing the

spread of news content across multiple media platforms. Therefore, the analytical model proposed here is focused on the transmedia coverage of planned events.

Planned events are “temporal phenomena ... generally planned in detail and well publicized in advance. [They] are also usually confined to particular places ... or many locations simultaneously or in sequence” (Getz 2012, 37). Planned events are mostly social and unique. “No matter how hard one tries, it is literally impossible to replicate an event” (37). Even if they are repeated over the years with the same structure, planned events are always experienced differently by the audience, which naturally indicates the need to produce different coverage strategies. If we consider the Olympics an example of a recurring planned event, in terms of digital advancement and social networks during the four years between the Games, changes can occur and directly affect the news coverage of the subsequent event. For instance, at the 2004 Athens Summer Games, Twitter (2006) did not exist, and at the 2008 Beijing Games, Instagram (2010) had not been released.

Getz (2012, 40) proposed a typology of planned events, although he stressed that any event can have multiple functions, offer similar experiences, and have diversified meanings. Based primarily on forms and the way they are programmed, he suggested six groups: (1) cultural celebrations (festivals, heritage commemorations, carnivals, religious rites, pilgrimage, parades, etc.); (2) business and trade (meetings, conventions, fairs, exhibitions, markets, corporate events, educational/scientific congresses, etc.); (3) arts and entertainment (scheduled concerts, shows, theater, art exhibits, installations and temporary art shows, award ceremonies, etc.); (4) political and state (summits, royal spectacles, VIP visits, military and political congresses, etc.); (5) private functions (rites of passage, parties, reunions, weddings, etc.); and (6) sport and recreation (league play, championships, one-off meets, tours, fun events, sport festivals, etc.). Bowdin et al. (2006, 9–20) proposed categorizing events by size: (1) major events (events that by their scale and media interest attract significant visitor numbers, media coverage, and economic benefits); (2) hallmark events (those identified with the “spirit or ethos” of a town); and (3) megaevents (which affect entire economies and reverberate in the global media).

In the context of media studies, Dayan and Katz (1992, 4–11) discussed the term media event as “live, real time, television transmission of an extraordinary, pre-planned public event, which occurs outside of the broadcasting facilities.” The authors distinguished three basic scripts of media events: contests, conquests, and coronations. Contests, such as the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup, embody “rule-governed battles of champions”; conquests are found in “the live broadcasting of ‘giant leaps for mankind,’” while coronations are ceremonies seen during royal weddings and funerals (Dayan and Katz 1992, 26). The meanings of media events are framed by the organizers, and the media work as a bridge for the viewers, joined in front of the television, although, today, marked by a more multicentered power structure, due to the internet and different screens (Hepp and Couldry 2010).

In this context, it is also important to emphasize that some events—and particularly megaevents<sup>4</sup> (Roche 2000)—are mediated phenomena, planned to be broadcast in a positive manner, which means that journalism strategies must cope with restrictions by promoters and public relations strategies. Scholars such as Moragas, Rivenburg, and Larson (1995) and Panagiotopoulou (2010) discussed how the Olympic Games became the most watched global television program and how each city and country hosting them pays much attention to producing and broadcasting the best possible television program. Commercial and institutional interests also contribute to the complexity of these events, which are sometimes sponsored by global organizations that control the images broadcasted. Usually,

journalists must be accredited and are not free to walk around and interview central figures such as the athletes, for instance. With organization and big media centers also comes standardization of the news, a restriction on transmediatic coverage. “At many major sporting events, the journalists themselves are not actually watching the sport live; they are simply watching television feeds of the action and basing their copy, in part, on this” (Boyle 2006, 80). Considering other sources of information, engaging in social media with athletes and the public can be a good strategy for avoiding the sameness and surpass the greater control promoters have over the public media image of this type of event. However, in elite sports, even an athlete’s Twitter account might be mostly managed by public relations personnel. Nonetheless, having a well-planned infrastructure and the help of professional press relations can be very useful and make coordinating transmedia coverage easy.

Our analytical model for planned events has been developed to address fundamental features involved in transmedia strategies of journalistic coverage in order to contribute to the analytic needs of scholars and journalists and applied research in the interest of the news media industry. Analysis can lead to synthesis (Liestøl 2003)—the third stage of argument in the Hegelian dialectic; that is, analyzing transmedia strategies can improve transmedia journalism practices. Therefore, this model helps scholars analyze transmedia strategies of planned events and helps journalists develop transmedia strategies in this context.

The analytical model examines the strategies behind journalistic coverage, inserted in the transmedia space.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the model is not restrictive. To facilitate the understanding and application of the model, the description of each topic is accompanied by a series of related questions (see Table 1). Other questions and layers could be added. Qualitative eye and quantitative methods, such as interviews, documentary research, and data mining, for instance, could be applicable depending on the nature of the question and the availability of data.

Gambarato, Alzamora, and Tárchia (forthcoming) applied this proposed model to a transmedia analysis of the Russian news coverage of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games. We incorporate this particular example of transmedia coverage of a planned event to clarify the model. However, we stress that the analytical model is not restricted to sporting events, and encompass a pleiad of planned events as classified by Getz (2012).

### *Premise and Purpose*

The nature of the planned event, its magnitude and comprehensiveness, and its premise and purpose can directly influence and potentially frame the journalistic coverage. The involvement of different news sections and multiple media platforms in the coverage is connected to the event itself. For instance, a global sporting event naturally involves other sections in addition to Sports, considering the event’s massive international penetration and interests beyond the sports competition. In the case of the Sochi Olympics, for example, apart from sports, the news coverage focused on controversies, such as security, and political and economic issues.

### *Structure and Context*

This analytical model focuses on the transmediatic strategies in the news coverage of planned events. Therefore, one or more media enterprises behind the coverage are analyzed. The organization of the transmedia journalistic coverage, the professionals involved, and the

**TABLE 1**

Analytical model regarding transmedia news coverage of planned events

Topic	Practicable questions
1. Premise and purpose The nature of the event, its magnitude, and comprehensiveness influence the journalistic coverage.	What is the planned event agenda? What is its core theme? What is the fundamental purpose of the event? What is the magnitude of the event? Is it a local, regional, or global event? Which areas are involved in the coverage (sports, culture, politics, economics, etc.)?
2. Structure and context The organization of the transmedia journalistic coverage, the professionals involved, and the infrastructure available depict how the operations were planned and executed.	Which media enterprise is covering the event? How big is it? What is the available coverage infrastructure offered by the event organizers? What is the media enterprise budget for the news coverage of the event? Is the journalistic coverage planned to be transmediatic? How does the coverage end? Do some extensions continue to be active after the event ends?
3. News storytelling The news coverage of the event involves primary and parallel stories.	Primary and parallel news stories What elements of the news story (who, what, where, when, why, and how) of the event are involved in the coverage? What is the timeframe of the news story? Does the news coverage utilize gaming elements? Does it involve winning or losing? Is it possible to identify intermedial texts in the news stories?
4. Worldbuilding The storyworld in which the news is placed should be robust enough to support multiplatform expansions.	Where is the event set? Does the storyworld involve any fictional characteristics? Are different time zones involved in the news coverage? If yes, what are the potential issues related to it and the alternative strategies for each platform? What are the regulations and policies related to the journalistic coverage? Is the event big enough to support expansions throughout multiplatform coverage?
5. Characters The characters implicated in the coverage could be journalists, characters of the news stories <i>per se</i> , sources of information to be reported, and the audience as collaborators.	Who are the main characters presented by the coverage? How many? Are they aggregated to the coverage <i>a posteriori</i> ? Who are the primary and secondary sources of information regarding the event? What is the approach of these sources? Are the sources official, nonofficial, or both? Can the audience be considered a character as well?

(Continued)

**TABLE 1**  
(Continued)

Topic	Practicable questions
<p>6. Extensions News stories meant to spread throughout multiple media platforms should not simply transpose or repurpose the content from one medium to another but expand the news, taking advantage of the media platforms available.</p>	<p>How many extensions are included in the news coverage? Are the extensions mere reproductions of the same content or genuine expansions of the news stories across various media? Is there a plan to keep content updated in each extension (for instance, on blogs and social media networks)? Do the extensions have the ability to spread the content and provide the possibility to explore the narrative in depth? How long does the event last? If the event is overlong, how does the coverage proceed to maintain audience interest throughout the entire period?</p>
<p>7. Media platforms and genres In addition to telling news stories with more than one medium, transmedia news coverage can embrace several journalism styles, such as news articles, reports, and opinions; a number of journalism genres; and different technological devices.</p>	<p>What kind of media platforms (television, radio, print media, Web, mobile) are involved in the news coverage? Which devices (computer, tablet, mobile phone, etc.) are required by the coverage? Is there a roll-out strategy for launching each coverage extension? If yes, what is the plan to release the platforms? Which journalism styles (news articles, reportages, opinions, etc.) are included in the coverage? Which journalistic genres (sports, celebrity, investigative journalism, etc.) are presented by the coverage?</p>
<p>8. Audience and market Scoping the audience is fundamental for a more appropriate delivery of the transmedia news coverage.</p>	<p>What is the target audience of the coverage? Who is the intended reader/user/viewer/listener? What kind of readers (methodical or scanner; intimate or detached) does the project attract? Does other journalistic coverage like this exist? Do they succeed in achieving their purpose? What is the coverage business model? Does it involve open platforms, open television channels, cable television, satellite, pay-per-view, monopoly, etc.? Is the event coverage successful revenue-wise?</p>

(Continued)

**TABLE 1**  
(Continued)

Topic	Practicable questions
<p>9. Engagement The relationship between the story and the people interested in it is an essential aspect of transmedia strategies.</p>	<p>What percentage of the public participates in the event <i>in loco</i>, and what percentage of the audience accesses the event via news coverage? What are the mechanisms of interaction in the transmedia strategy of coverage? Is participation involved in the coverage? If so, how can the reader/user/viewer/listener participate in the open system? Is there user-generated content (UGC) related to the event (parodies, recaps, mashups, fan communities, etc.)? Are there any policies restricting the disclosure of UGC? What activities are available to the audience within social media networks related to the event? Is there a system of rewards and penalties? For example, can the audience have its comments/photos published, can people get rewards for social media activities, and can they have comments blocked/removed?</p>
<p>10. Aesthetics The visual and audio elements contribute to the news coverage and enhance the overall transmedia experience unfolded across multiple media platforms.</p>	<p>What kinds of visuals (video, photo, infographics, news games, animation, holography, etc.) are used in the coverage? Is the overall look of the coverage realistic or a composed environment (usage of graphism, holography, immersive journalism, augmented reality)? Is it possible to identify specific design styles in the coverage? How does audio work in the coverage? Is there ambient sound, sound effects, music, and so forth?</p>

infrastructure available indicate how the operations were planned and executed. Visual solutions, such as maps, charts, and infographics synthesizing the coverage elements in space and time, can also help visualize the entire process. Referring to transmedia production, Hayes (2011, 13) outlined that “one or two very detailed charts will show how platforms, and the channels within them, are interconnected and how content and data flows around this technical ecosystem.” In the case of the 2014 Winter Olympics, an autonomous nonprofit organization called ANO Sports Broadcasting was created to be the local official broadcaster. The broadcasting pool encompassed Channel One, Russia 1, and the satellite broadcaster NTV +, and the channels shared broadcasting time (Gambarato, Alzamora, and Tárchia, forthcoming).

### *News Storytelling*

News stories, as nonfictional reports, even when directly connected to a planned event, are about how people are affected. In this sense, coverage of planned events can

and probably will involve parallel news stories in addition to the primary stories. For instance, a cultural event can be surrounded by economic issues and social movements and have political implications. All these stories could be involved in the news coverage of the event. During the coverage of the Sochi Olympic Games, the primary stories broadcasted, especially on television, were related to sports, such as competitions, games' results, and portrayals of the athletes as heroes. Parallel stories, especially when shared via social media networks, have widely diffused themes such as international pressure regarding the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual (LGBT) community due to the Russian government's controversial political position and campaigns to boycott the Sochi Games (Gambarato, Alzamora, and Tárchia, forthcoming).

### *Worldbuilding*

Transmedia strategies necessarily comprehend the unfolding of a storyworld across various media platforms. The storyworld goes beyond a single story and characterizes the potential of the content to be expanded. News stories inserted in the transmedia space are not different: the storyworld in which the news stories are placed should be robust enough to support multiplatform expansions. In terms of news stories, it is possible to understand the storyworld as it is presented geographically (location) and metaphorically (set of news stories).

Geographically, the 2014 Winter Olympics took place in a complicated region around the city of Sochi, in Russia. Sochi is located on the Black Sea coast, has a subtropical climate, and is known as a summer holiday mecca. The mountain venues for the Games were 50 kilometers away in the North Caucasus, which historically has been involved in conflicts and battles for independence. Therefore, Sochi was a very peculiar choice for the Winter Olympic Games and became one of the central themes of the news coverage. Metaphorically, Sochi represents President Vladimir Putin's triumph in holding the Olympics in this problematic area. The bidding process to host the Olympics occurred right after Putin's victory over the rebels during the so-called Second Chechnya War (Gambarato, Alzamora, and Tárchia, forthcoming). Moreover, as Putin announced in January 2014, a certain moral aspect is involved in hosting the Olympics, and it "strengthens the morale of the nation" (RT 2014).

### *Characters*

The characters implicated in transmediatic news coverage include (1) journalists and professionals reporting the event; (2) characters in the news stories *per se*; (3) sources of information to be reported; (4) the audience members as collaborators, as prosumers; and (5) the location of the news itself. If we consider primary and parallel news stories, we can have primary and parallel characters, too.

In addition to the group of international athletes, who were the primary focus of the news coverage in Sochi, another relevant character in broadcasting of the Olympics is the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The IOC imposes restrictions and controlling regulations, especially regarding social media use during the Games. The excess control, accompanied by the IOC's economic interests, restricted the audience participation and affected the coverage. Moreover, Sochi itself was a protagonist of the Winter Games, making headlines before, during, and after the event because of climate matters, terrorist

threats, and corruption, among other issues (Gambarato, Alzamora, and Tárca, forthcoming).

### *Extensions*

Transmedia strategies are based on pervasive stories that attract audience engagement. "It is not about offering the same content in different media platforms, but it is the worldbuilding experience, unfolding content and generating the possibilities for the story to evolve with new and pertinent content" (Gambarato 2013, 82). News stories meant to be spread throughout multiple media platforms should not simply transpose or repurpose content from one medium to another but expand the news, taking advantage of the media platforms available. "Spreadability of media, if not at first embraced, is now an element of nearly every journalism production" (Moloney 2011, 64).

The Russia Olympics coverage involved television broadcasting, online live streaming, the website [olymp.1tv.ru](http://olymp.1tv.ru), social media networks (Facebook, Twitter, VKontakte, and Odnoklassniki), and mobile applications. Although the focus of the coverage was television, for instance, the six online live streaming channels expanded the content (not broadcasted on television), enlarging the audience options and characterizing a transmedia strategy (Gambarato, Alzamora, and Tárca, forthcoming).

### *Media Platforms and Genres*

"When done well, transmedia journalism would distribute the narrative of real-world events across a variety of online, print and even brick-and-mortar media, and thereby engage the public in the media where it already circulates" (Moloney 2011, 106). Each medium has its own distinctive characteristics (limitations inclusive) and should contribute to the whole transmedia experience. In addition to telling news stories with more than one medium, transmedia news coverage can, and probably will, embrace several journalistic styles, such as news articles, reportage, and opinions, and a number of journalistic genres, including sports, celebrity, and investigative journalism. The platform timing (roll-out), that is, when each platform is launched according to the coverage strategy, business model, and resources available, is also a relevant aspect of the transmedia news coverage.

The Russian news coverage of the 2014 Sochi Olympics converged television, the internet, and mobile media platforms. Mobile technology took center stage, contributing to expanding the audience and the content production. In Sochi 2014, there was more social media activity than ever; for example, there were 7.7 million Facebook fans (International Olympic Committee 2014). The prevalent journalism genre of the coverage was sports, including a series of documentaries, not concentrated on the economic, social, and political issues around the Sochi 2014 Winter Games but centered on the glory of the Olympics (Gambarato, Alzamora, and Tárca, forthcoming).

### *Audience and Market*

In the transmedia realm, the audience assumes various roles that are much more complex than those of passive spectators. Thus, even the term *audience*, understood as a group of spectators, may not be the most appropriate term to refer to the various ways people can engage in transmedia experiences, including journalistic experiences. Various

designations are applicable to transmedia productions, for instance, prosumers, “wreaders” (reader and writer; coined by George Landow), and “VUP” (viewer/user/player; coined by Stephen Dinehart) (Gambarato 2013). Following the vocabulary of online journalism, we prefer the compound term reader/user/viewer/listener (Bradshaw and Rohumaa 2011).

News readers on computers, according to Poynter Institute eye-tracking<sup>6</sup> studies, can be *methodical* (readers who do not scan very often when viewing online news, using drop-down menus and navigation bars to locate stories) or *scanners* (they read part of a story, look at photos or other package items, but generally do not return once they have left the text). When reading on tablets, news readers can be *intimates* (keeping nearly constant contact while touching, tapping, pinching, and swiping to adjust their view) or *detached* (carefully arranging a full screen of text before physically detaching as they sit back to read).

According to the International Olympic Committee (2014, 2), the number of viewers during the Sochi Games was 4.1 billion. Because of the large-scale audience (domestic and global) for the Olympic Games, the Sochi coverage embraced methodical, scanners, intimate, and detached audiences worldwide. The 2014 Olympics dealt with great financial sums. Together, Channel One and Russia 1 earned 136.2 million rubles (US\$4.2 million) from the Opening Ceremony broadcast alone (“Russian TV Earned” 2014).

### *Engagement*

“The audience is dead,” stated the transmedia pioneer Lance Weiler, and “what was once an audience is now what I consider to be collaborators,” he continued (Giovagnoli 2011, 92). The relationship between the story and the people interested in it is an essential aspect of transmedia strategies connected not only to entertainment but also to journalism, branding, education, etc. Interaction and participation are basic actions, strategic mechanisms for engaging people in (news) stories. Interactivity allows the audience to relate to the story somehow, for instance, by pressing a button, deciding the path to experience it, inserting comments, but not influence or change the news stories. Participation invites readers/users/viewers/listeners to engage in a way that expresses their thoughts and configures co-creation, allowing them to influence the final result of the news coverage, for example, by sending questions or requests that are incorporated in the coverage, expressing their thoughts by wearing costumes, carrying posters/messages, producing their own photographs and videos, etc. Transmedia productions that allow participation are characterized as open systems, in which audience members can influence the result and change the news. Closed systems, in contrast, are transmedia initiatives that do not allow participation. The audience can act, react, or interact but cannot interfere with the news. A closed system involves interaction but not participation (Gambarato 2012).

During the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi, audiences interacted, for instance, by posting comments on social networks and voting in online polls organized by Channel One. The audience could follow the hyperlinks displayed on the channel’s website, social media communities, and mobile applications, characterizing interaction but not participation via what the official coverage of the event was offering. However, major events such as the Olympics stimulate user-generated content, and Sochi was not an exception, generating uncountable internet memes, parodies, illustrations, games, and more (Gambarato, Alzamora, and Tárca, forthcoming).

### *Aesthetics*

Visual and audio elements, such as photo, video, three-dimensional animation, holography, static or interactive infographics, static or interactive maps, illustrations, 360-degree imagery, static or interactive timelines, slideshows, newsgames, and more (Barbosa, da Silva, and Nogueira 2013), contribute to the news coverage and enhance the overall transmedia experience unfolded across multiple media platforms. For instance, “games as a method for experiencing a piece of the news are also starting to appear more frequently” (Moloney 2011, 81). Games are used as immersive opportunities for the audience to experience the sensation of being part of the news stories. All these elements can serve as powerful tools to attract and retain audience engagement.

During Sochi 2014, Channel One, for instance, changed its logo and incorporated the Olympic Flame. Nevertheless, the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the Winter Games were protagonists in the aesthetics of the coverage and the user-generated content. The most emphatic example is the malfunction of the Olympic rings during the Opening Ceremony, when four of the five rings materialized in the opening scene. Although the Russian television viewers did not see the malfunction because it was replaced by rehearsal footage, the “episode” became a trend and engaged the audience more on social media than the primary stories related to the Opening Ceremony. During the Closing Ceremony, Russia made fun of itself and amusingly reproduced the Olympic ring malfunction (Gambarato, Alzamora, and Tárca, forthcoming).

### **Conclusion**

Transmedia journalism is an elastic term with various theoretical approaches (Dominguez 2012). The conceptual confusion can eventually blur the real scope, practices, and principles. However, independently of the terminology and the elusive understanding that can be depicted, the multiplatform method of *produsage* (Bruns 2008, 2), which refers to the user-led content creation available in online environments, has a global perspective.

Planned events can vary in scale (Bowdin et al. 2006) and in terms of function (Getz 2012). News coverage of planned events can vary in all dimensions, such as the size of the news company involved, the technological apparatus, the number and variety of professionals, the strategies behind it, and so forth. Large broadcasters and independent news companies are likely already aware of the developments of transmedia strategies in journalism and can incorporate more or less participatory as well as spreadable core characteristics of TS in the journalism realm. Multiplatform news media production is already a reality that, although probably more modest than comprehensive, inevitably tends to grow and improve. “Actually, our brain is transmedia” (Renó 2014, 8). In this scenario, the model of analysis of transmedia strategies for the news coverage of planned events presented in this paper can contribute to this process of growth and improvement in the transmedia journalism realm. Analysis potentially leads to synthesis (Liestøl 2003) and thus could advance transmedia practices in journalism. The 10 dimensions involved in the model (premise and purpose, structure and context, news storytelling, worldbuilding, characters, extensions, media platforms and genres, audience and market, engagement, and aesthetics) specify the minutiae incorporated in transmedia strategies for journalism in the midst of applied research in the interest of the news media industry. Therefore, the

model exposes the transmedia features behind news media coverage, serving scholars' analysis and guiding journalists within the transmedia strategies praxis.

The practice of journalism does not exist in isolation but in symbiotic relation to political, legal, economic, and technological structures. Therefore, understanding the structural context in which journalism is produced is important. The convergence process is not homogenous and happens differently according to the culture, news company conditions, access to digital technologies, and the public's and journalists' mind-set, for instance (Kolodzy 2012; Quinn 2005). The recently launched BBC iWonder, for instance, points in this direction. Presented in 2014 as an interactive guide, BBC iWonder organizes audiovisual content, infographics, written summaries, and more in order to tell stories in an optimized way on the Web. Above all, in transmedia strategies of news coverage as well as in any practice of news media, the principles of good journalism should prevail. "TS is both a reality and a tendency worldwide and the prospect of TS is to grow and to improve rapidly. TS analysis can help this process" (Gambarato 2013, 98). Ultimately, "the purpose of a transmedia news story is to inform the readers in the best way possible" (Ford 2007).

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## NOTES

1. Seven Core Concepts of Transmedia Storytelling (Jenkins 2009a, 2009b): (1) spreadability versus drillability, (2) continuity versus multiplicity, (3) immersion versus extractability, (4) worldbuilding; (5) seriality, (6) subjectivity (diversity of perspectives), and (7) performance (user-generated content).
2. The strategy for BBC Online since 2011 has been to offer one service, four screens, and ten products.
3. Spin-offs are media outlets derived from existing storylines. The specific characteristic of a spin-off is the shift to a new protagonist who originally appeared in the main storyline as a minor or supporting character. A secondary character in a medium becomes the protagonist in the spin-off, adding a new perspective to the storyworld.
4. Roche (2000, 1) defines megaevents as "large scale cultural (including commercial and sporting) events, which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance."
5. "Transmedia space appears as a notion that integrates meta- and intercommunicative levels, presuming the interpretation of the same message as the sequence of proto- and metatexts described in different discourses and fixed in different signs systems and media" (Saldre and Torop 2012, 41).
6. Eye-tracking research captures and analyzes the eye's gaze, fixations, and movements. It has been conducted for decades and applied to automated teller machine (ATM) design, cars, and other engineering challenges. The Poynter Institute has been a pioneer in eye-tracking research for journalists since 1990. To read more, visit <http://www.poynter.org/>.

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