Section «Journalism»

Transmedia Storytelling on the Channel One (Russia). The case of "The Voice"

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1. Introduction to the issue

In the beginning of XX century it becomes clear that people make their choice favorable towards online communicative practices. As a technological platform, broadcasting television outdates hopelessly, when offering linear and passive way of media consumption. Since it doesn't work anymore, TV channels are struggling to find a new "common language"with a media prosumer. They already stream their content online and their evening shows are now widely presented in social networks. But the person of participatory culture still wants more than just a web-copy of traditional TV content with minimal level of involvement. A VUP (viewer/user/player [2]) got used to consuming a content in multiple media platforms and he wants to expand the boundaries of project constantly, exploring anything he wants in its universe. Transmedia storytelling is a technique created to deal with the demand.

According to Henry Jenkins "A transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole. In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best—so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics; its world might be explored through game play or experienced as an amusement park attraction". [6, p. 95–96] But is that the case for the audience of Russian broadcasting TV channels?

The analitical report by iKS-Consulting states that 59% of Russians aged over 45 consume video content exclusively on television, while the same is valid only for 5% of Russians aged 15 to 24. Moreover, the report notes that the cross-platform video consumption is detected among those respondents only who do not consume video content on television at all. [11]

Despite the data, I argue that transmedia approach still can be unilized by Russian TV channels to attract online audience. To prove the hypothesis, I will analyse the transmedia methods utilized by the Channel One (Russia) in the second season of its adoptation of "The Voice"format. The limitations imposed on transmedia approach by the key features of Russian TV audience are also analyzed in the study.

2. Methodology

To explore the transmedia features of the second season of "The Voice" (Russia), the project was placed into the analytical model by Renira Gambarato.[5, p.81] The model presents the basics of transmedia theory generalized and systematized. In the model, the project to analyze can be compared with a transmedia project theoretically seen by Henry Jenkins, Geoffrey Long, Robert Pratten, another researchers on transmedia and the author of the model herself, of course. Ten topics of the model include Premises and purposes, Narrative, Worlbuilding, Characters, Extensions, Media platforms and genres, Audience and market, Engagement, Structure and Aesthetics.

Method of expert interviews was utilized to collect the data for analysis. Among the key experts, there are Mauritz Briet, "The Voice" format consultant, Talpa (Netherland); Elena

Afanasyeva, Creative Director, Channel One (Russia); Valeria Buravina, SMM-manager of "The Voice" (Russia), Channel One (Russia).

3. Main Findings

Transmedia project is always composed of various kinds of content, distributed through several media platforms, where the boundaries of a content do not necessarily match the boundaries of a platform. The format approach describes a media project as a whole. The analytical model let us go beyond the concept of format.

The second season of "The Voice" project unfolds across multiple platforms: TV broadcast of Channel One, online streaming on the web-site of the channel, the web-site of "The Voice" project, its official communities in Vkontakte, Facebook and Odnoklassniki social networks, accounts of the project in Twitter and Instagram, its official channel in YouTube.

The second season of "The Voice" includes several extensions: TV series of the show, "Behind the Scenes"documentory episodes, V-reports, online conferences with the participants of the project, fan-art aggregation and spoiler discussions in social networks.

The project has a "complex"transmedia structure.[10, p.14] TV episodes are the only extention of "The Voice"(Russia) with its own all-sufficient storyline. The self-sufficiency of TV episodes make the show attractive to the traditional viewers of the Channel One, since they are not cross-platform consumers of media content.

The project follows five key principles of participatory culture [7, p.7]. Online audience participates in online extensions of the project actively. Thus the extensions can effectively attract Internet users to the episodes of "The Voice" (Russia) and keep their attention on the project between TV episodes.

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