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Adaptation Techniques in Digital Environment

Collective Brand Engagement via Camera Drone/Video-Game Design

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Abstract. Emerging technologies are testing us. Besides other elements, smart devices and innovative digital services are teaching us to live in a transit of – or illusions of – realities. Collective and personal practices are looking for adaptation techniques in comparison with offline or initial online experience. Experimental digital tools and their impact are interpreted via contexts. These interpretations produce feedbacks on possible adaptations of emerging technologies with gathering customers/users/audiences or with the lack of them. The digital environment reveals dynamic changes and temporary adaptations with associations with well-known popular cultural products and with science fiction.
The article analyses this phenomenon through a case study of a special emerging media technology, the camera drone (Stahl, 2013) in promotion context. The goal is to focus on adaptation techniques both by the market perspective and by the customers' reflections. The question is how open we are for new technologies and how we can manage mixed virtual-real contexts via digital innovation.

Keywords: camera drone, collective adaptation, creative marketing idea, game design, prosumer, running culture, transmedia storytelling

Introduction

The Internet, smart technology (Sylvain 2013) and network society (Castells 1996) rewrite previous praxis. Technology, advanced digital services (Komninos & Tsarchopoulos 2012), automatization (Manovich 2001), and online content industry add new layers to reality. The logic of hypermedia (Nelson 1965) and virtual contexts bring up more sophisticated phenomena that users have to live together with. Devices, sensors, social media platforms, and other productions are connected to digital networks such as navigation services, big data analysis, or automatized targets in marketing techniques. New digital markets increasingly

push digital complexity towards a point when science fiction may as well become real.

Digital systems write with smart data applications and draw digitally visualized patterns. Both of them have connections with earlier features and associations with popular cultural products and, also, with science fiction. Meanwhile, users are looking for their choices for fun and functionality in a rapidly changing digital environment. Virtualization trends are multiplying around them raising further questions. More sophisticated adaptive techniques are needed in order to find more special/unique solutions and ideas. The narrow life span of devices, platforms, software, and applications marks the need for renewable solutions. Marketing and PR have been among the emerging fields of creative methods for the purpose of engaging customers. Based on automatized and networked online culture and communities, they have multiple tools to reach audiences. We are heading to a detailed case study with the conclusion that innovative-creative solutions highlight various outcomes and consequences. The focus is on mixed layers of reality and virtuality. The blended context and its interpretation determine what is relevant for digital market and for customers' interest. The case study emphasizes a best practice: the adaptation techniques are working via creative ideas and digital tools.

Conceptual Framework

Adaptation is a biological term referring to 'a form of living in a different environment'. The purpose of adaptation techniques is either to make advantage or avoid the disadvantages of particular uses. Relevant and/or future-oriented reflections prepare particular opportunities for collective and personal agents for the purpose of reinterpreting digital environments increasingly further. The market goal meets with customers' demand if the concept of mixed real-virtual layers is clear.

Online entertaining and *content industry* (Oestreicher-Singer et al. 2013, Carah & Louw 2015) have answers for new challenges of digitalization. The first mission is to find a common frame of reference where the meanings and feelings are compatible with the goal of content/message creators and demand of content/message consumers.

The universal toolkit is presented by *transmedia storytelling* (Jenkins 2010, 2006). The classical form of the complex digital storytelling is based on blockbuster movies and video games. If their content is well-known and if they have numerous fans in offline/online communities, the original content is extended by further genres and stories. The added creations by professional or amateur sources generate further meanings and interpretation flow. In the case of a created story-

world, the participants have multiple connections with the original and extended narratives. Platforms, contents, and genres meet in transmedia storytelling. The result is a reflected and evaluated piece of networked culture (Hay and Couldry 2011) that provides shared stories in one frame of interpretation.

The phenomenon of transmedia storytelling assumes a *participation culture* (Jarvis 2011, Deuze 2006). The common playground is a magnet for customers and users, and also for experimental innovations such as unique marketing promotions via new digital tools. Consumers try to find their special experience in communication and (social) media noise. Participation culture facilitates the interconnectivity by platforms, contents, and users (Richards, 2015). If the participants find their own goals or demands in this process, the adaptation techniques can meet with common playground.

Simultaneous digital and non-digital presence (Feher, 2014a) or blended roles in digital–non-digital contexts (Baker, 2009) produce an *amphibian*. The ancient Greeks used for 'both life' the 'amphi' (αμφι) = both and bios (βιος) = life. Amphibian is an animal that lives in different ecosystems. The metaphor flashes the dual nature of online–offline presence via relevant adaption techniques (Feher 2014b). When two layers of storytelling are merging into a new and unique dimension, it is created with its own rules and contents.

If storytelling is open for extensions (see above) and participants meet in a framework of a specialized blended context, they transform to be prosumers. P*rosumer phenomenon* means a practice when a producer become a consumer and vice versa (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010; Ritzer et al., 2012; Seran & Izvercian, 2014). The contents and interpretations are moving via ongoing bottom-up and top-down movements. An event or a story is produced by market/marketing goals and also by consumer activities. Reflections are in close connection. The highlight is on the interaction between producer and consumer, where the roles are changing all the time. This phenomenon gives a chance for cultural and social self-reflections in collective thinking by digitally-supported logics.

Transmedia storytelling, participation culture, and prosumer phenomenon support to discover new and creative ideas in digital environments. Activities and events mainly by marketing goals are looking for opportunities to challenge. There is a great opportunity to select a relevant device/tool to reach the audience with social media sharing and further interactive reflections. A unique and creative idea provides a context and a relevant framework to application. The congruence and convergence of all these elements support successful and future-oriented adaptation techniques. Our case study represents a successful creative idea that provides the adaptation of a blended digital and non-digital environment for prosumers.

Case Study: 100Plus Running Race with Video-Game Design

Our case study sums up a creative idea in a promotion via camera drones in Malaysia in 2015. The background of this unique action contains phenomena with consequences that we can summarize in the following points.

(A) Emerging devices/tools can be appreciable and interesting magnet for Millennials (Howe & Strauss) and also for early adopters (Rogers, 1962) who are more involved in outdoor/activity programmes.

(B) Popular runner culture with segmented market from glow-in-the-dark to colour themes has become an emerging market with several choices for promotion and sales.

(C) "Fun run" style with a maximum of 4–6 km distance can engage a wide range of customers more deeply and a relevant theme can support to anchor brand to the mind. Unique solutions with understandable and admitted patterns provide stimulus via creativity to reach bigger mass supporting social media sharing and virus communication.

Our case study presents this digital/popular/emerging creative scope to raise questions and let them float. The following summary focuses on (1) emerging digital devices in popular culture with advantages and disadvantages, (2) the brand-building concept background, and (3) details of creative ideas as a collective adaptation.

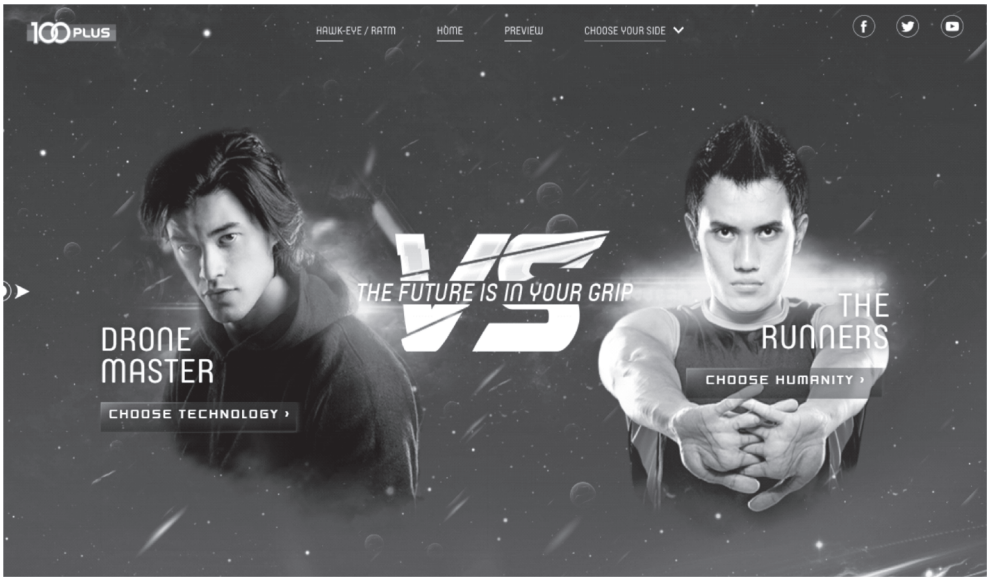

Illustration 1. Website of the running event in the registration period

First, the tools were drones. The connection is simple: runners have a speed and drones can move together with them. A drone is an unmanned/non-piloted flying object/aerial vehicle or a remote-controlled air vehicle that originates in the military industry environment and robotics. Several cases of detections, observations, and target designations have been spreading out of military applications during the time of writing this paper.

The camera drone is an emerging technology: it is actually a flying, remote-controlled drone with a built-in video recorder. Picture-flow recorded by and transmitted via a camera drone can appear in real time on users' smart phones synchronic with flying, via applications. It can be a simple toy, a special media device, or, also, a marketing tool – to mention just a few of the functions. It provides a new perspective for professionals and also for hobbyists.

Illustration 2. Camera drone

The early development of camera drones promises the wide usage of this technology in popular culture. In addition, technical questions such as battery time, maximum and lowest altitude, physical hazards such as "flying lawnmower" effect, and, also, ethical/legal issues are involved. Reasons to regulate camera drone usage is as clearly necessary as drawing attention to consequences of surveillance phenomena. This tool means a remarkable challenge where drones are available for anyone to purchase at any shopping mall or when small flying devices can reach government buildings without a splurge. In this case study, we focus on the entertaining function, assuming the responsibility of the organizers.

Secondly, the brand has connections with outdoor programmes and is also connected with speed experience. The Malaysian 100PLUS supports sports and active/healthy lifestyle. It is an absolutely popular brand in South-East Asia, and it sells isotonic drink products. The brand-building concept by 100Plus – and its integrated agency, Mitosis – was linked, via camera drones, to a running race. This provided an individual and unique character to the international running event concerned.

Third, the creative idea was labelled "Race Against the Machines". The feature was simple, understandable, and trendy for the customers of the brand "100Plus": a running race could become a game for fun where the event simulates a science fiction vision. The running distance was 6 km and the event took place at night. That, in any case, means monotony for a "fun run" category for amateur runners. In this case, promotion was designed in a special gaming style for more interesting moments.

Runners had already had to step out of the comfort zone by entering the race because it had created a hunting situation. Participants received a barcode instead of a run number for 'running tee' design. That was the tool to identify them. Drones appeared and were following runners in order to scan their barcodes during the running race. With this feature of a video game, the feeling of real-world environment was being restructured.

Participants could detect deep voice sounds familiar from blockbuster sci-fi movies around the drone areas on the road while paying attention to flying objects. Drones were armed with powerful searchlights, with high definition video cameras, and, also, with electrically-powered propellers providing a nearly 60 km/h speed.

The captured runners lost a life if their barcodes got scanned. Participants had only three lives. Symbolically, participants were running for their lives. The venue of the programme was so scenic that could as well have been an episode from a sci-fi/action movie: it was organized in the Malaysian Capital's government district, "Putrajaya", and the race started out from the Palace of Justice. From the total of 3,000 runners, only 100 did actually run over the finish line "alive".

Participants could follow a scenario by a brand event and they had adaptation techniques of their own in this projected context. Runners were taking pictures and selfies in order to share them via social networks – they had personal stories and experiences to be spread inside and outside the programme. The creative idea and the cumulative stories generated transmedia storytelling via brand communication mixed with runners' photo/story sharing online. The prosumer phenomenon spoke for itself. This adaptation technique was working. The brand reached the targeted audience and provided them with the reality of a relevant sci-fi movie/video-game context.

Illustration 3. Live video game with drones

Discussion

Digital devices and environments meet well-known popular cultural patterns such as science fiction, videogames, and action movies. Adaptation techniques arise from familiar experiences and collective memories supported by storytelling and participation culture. The case study focuses on three aspects:

(I) a collective brand adaptation technique in entertaining industry with an innovative event in the culture of participation,

(II) joint and engaged personal attitudes implying challenges of an innovative brand event, and

(III) extended social media and mass media sharing of relevant transmedia storytelling by prosumers.

Openness in B2C communication was completed for future technologies and application in a positive atmosphere. The case study represents a serious game (Steiner et al., 2015) without virtual game design by a computer. The reality is played out via live actions. The game design was an additional concept to create a unique marketing promotion.

The blended "running race" vs. "live video game" experience in reality raises a question concerning adaptation: What is the form of adaptation in a similar case without the framework of the race and that of promotion? How extreme or negative can a situation be for human nature? We let functional and moral issues

stretch as far as they may have surfaced in the event "drones against machines." The emphasis is on the phenomenon. The future devices and their applications raise further questions about adaptation techniques.

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