ABSTRACT

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The Poetics of German Transmedia Storytelling and World-building

The art of storytelling has always been subject to change. In this era of media convergence, transmedia storytelling has emerged as a distinct new form of narrative activity taking place across multiple interconnected media platforms. Textual components of a complex narrative, called a 'world,' are distributed and thereby serialised: Each media platform can be interpreted as one instalment of a serial transmedia world, and the story told in one platform is different from the one in another.

The challenge of transmedia world-building is to provide added narrative value as well as perform narrative coherence across platforms. This serial expansion of media and texts requires a new approach to the creation of transmedia narrative worlds, and new forms of collaboration. Creators from different industries have to work together from as early as the initial phase of content development.

Research on transmedia storytelling and world-building has thus far neglected the German market; equally, the creative process has received hardly any sustained analytical attention. This thesis sheds light on German transmedia storytelling and world-building by examining the changing art of storytelling against the background of wider changes affecting the content development process. It examines the complex relationship between the creative process and the finished product of a transmedia series by following an interdisciplinary approach, based on poetics, combining the qualitative analysis of existing transmedia texts with interviews with German creators of transmedia series.

This study shows that transmedia storytelling and transmedia world-building cannot be analysed separately. It demonstrates that what goes on during the creative process inscribed itself in every aspect of transmedia world-building. The enquiry into German production culture provides new empirical knowledge on current transmedia practices. This study establishes a coherent methodology of textual analysis that is suitable for the full scope and depth of transmedia stories and worlds.