Handbook of Research on Transmedia Storytelling and Narrative Strategies

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Chapter 4
Playing With the Dead:
Transmedia Narratives and the Walking Dead Games

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the theory and practice of transmedia narratives within the storyworld created by Robert Kirkman, Tony Moore and Charlie Adlard's comics series The Walking Dead. It examines key aspects from the comics series and AMC's adaptive television franchise to consider how both have been utilized and adapted for games. Particular focus will be paid to Telltale Games' The Walking Dead, Gamagio's The Walking Dead Assault and Terminal Reality's The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct. The chapter explains the core concepts of transmedia narratives as they relate to The Walking Dead, places the games in the context of both the comics and television franchise, examines the significance of commercial and grassroot extensions and considers the role gaming and interactive narratives have within rich storyworlds. In examining The Walking Dead as a transmedia property, the authors demonstrate how vast narratives are adopted, modified and transformed in contemporary popular culture.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the theory and practice of vast transmedia narratives focusing on the storyworld created by Robert Kirkman, Tony Moore and Charlie Adlard's comics series *The Walking Dead* and adapted by the AMC television series of the same name. The overall aim will be to examine key aspects from the comics series, with the television franchise and consider how both have been utilized and adopted for analogue and digital games. Particular focus will be paid to Telltale Games *The Walking Dead* (2012), Gamagio's *The Walking Dead Assault* (2012) and Terminal Reality's *The Walking Dead*: *Survival Instinct* (2013). The chapter will explain the core concepts of transmedia narratives as

they relate to *The Walking Dead*, place the games in the context of both the comics series and the television franchise, examine the significance of commercial and grassroots extensions and consider the role that gaming and interactive narratives have within rich storyworlds. In order to do so, the authors will examine key moments/characterizations and assess the extent to which they are depicted across different media. In examining *The Walking Dead* as a transmedia property, the authors will demonstrate how vast narratives are adopted, modified and transformed in contemporary popular culture. They will explain the core concepts of transmedia storytelling across media delivery channels, and consider how these vast narratives are created and modified. Finally, the authors will explore the creation process of these experiences, and highlight how there is an increasing reliance on user discovery, participation, and collaboration that blurs the distinction between producer and consumer.

The concept of transmedia storytelling itself is not a new one and the entertainment industry has a long history of developing licensed products across multiple media channels (Mittell, 2012). However, this often took the form of reproducing the same stories across different media formats. Films have always utilized fiction and non-fiction, and subsequently encouraged novelization where the source was not already published. With the increasing utilization of digital streaming and online content by broadcast media, the ground has shifted again. There are now multiple channels for delivering content and this expansion has coincided with an increasing array of tools allowing fans to participate in the storyworld. The acceptance of fan culture and increasing development of commercial and grassroots extensions to the original storyworld has resulted in a resurgence of story elements being conveyed systematically across multiple media platforms, each making their own unique contribution to the whole. *The Walking Dead,* with its roots in the comic book and commercial success of the television series, has now developed numerous videogames and other media in order to interact with the fan base. As a whole, *The Walking Dead* lends itself to the exploration of transmedial worlds, but the games allow an immersive experience not found in comics or television. Games can occupy the space between the linear storytelling of established canon and new expressions within the storyworld. Fundamentally they allow fans to play within the constructed universe but also open up the possibilities of the canon, allowing the player more control over the characters they portray or interact with and the narratives that they wish to explore.

BACKGROUND

Transmedia

Over the past decade, the multitude of media platforms and the accessibility of creating content has resulted in a resurgence in the popularity of transmedia storytelling. The concept of transmedia storytelling itself is not a new one and the entertainment industry has a long history of developing licensed products across multiple media channels. Previously this often took the form of reproducing the same stories across different media formats with prohibitive licensing agreements. Increasingly the control of the story has become less restrictive and the actuality of transmedia has gained significant traction in both the media industries and in academic circles. Henry Jenkins (2007) has defined 'transmedia storytelling' as:

…a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story.

Transmedia storytelling necessitates the creation of 'vast narratives'. These can be recognized partly by their sustaining of open-ended narratives over long periods of time, and the creation of narrative universes across media relying less on one form being considered 'canonical' but on all elements functioning as part of a vast fictional quilt (Harrigan and Wardrup-Fruin, 2009). It is now possible for these vast narratives and distributed worlds to harness fans' encyclopedic impulses, encouraging them to journey across media channels in an attempt to completely know an imaginary world or story. Ultimately this proves impossible; for as transmedia experiences expand, 'gaps' open up in their fictional worlds that create spaces for creative participation by their intended 'audience'. Networked technology transforms consumers into producers who can then add and change meaning in these worlds more easily than ever. Through fan-fiction, machinima, game mods (modifications), social media and many other forms, what was once termed 'the audience' has turned co-creator, constantly evolving and growing fictional universes through grassroots participation. For today's audiences, transmedia storytelling is not only expected to be facilitated by 'media convergence' (Jenkins 2006) but also participatory (Rose, 2012) where fans can synergize with the brand (Jenkins, 2013).

User-Generated Content and Fandom

Indeed, part of the fundamental makeup of a transmedia storyworld is the accessibility of the world to the fanbase or fandom. According to Jenkins (2007), fandom is the active participation of users in the expansive process of the canon. Max Giovagnoli (2011) posits that, keeping in mind the foundational narrative as defined by Brenda Laurel (2004), the basic element of fandoms includes narrative voluntarism, strict internal rules (narratively, but also within keeping a brand image), anonymous and explicit testing, and opposition to external aggregation. Developing multiple extensions both commercially and through grassroots encourages the fanbase to expand and maintain an active interest in the storyworld while also deepening engagement through participation. For Lisbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca (2004), what characterizes a transmedial world is that "audience and designers share a mental image of the 'worldness' (a number of distinguishing features of its universe)." However, alongside the need to share an image of the storyworld, is the need for the fans to create their own content. Jenkins has explained the correlation between transmedia storytelling and fan fiction as:

Fan fiction can be seen as an unauthorized expansion of these media franchises into new directions which reflect the reader's desire to 'fill in the gaps' they have discovered in the commercially produced material (Jenkins, 2007).

While the storyworld is agreed upon, often the storyline or vagueness of the story is not. Thus, fans create their own versions of what happened or what they believe could happen within the constraints of both the storyworld as well as the fandom itself. According to Giovagnoli (2011), fandom generated content (such as fanfiction, short films, cartoons and graphics) is the largest area in the creation of new transmedia narratives. Fundamental to their success is the use of open source publishing platforms, such

as Tumblr, YouTube, Reddit or DeviantArt, which enables their fandom quick and easy access to the created content.

Storyworld and Canon

The Walking Dead storyworld has become increasingly accessible, composed of the universe created in the comics and expanded by the television series. Now populated with commercial extensions from additional TV spin-offs, videogames, mobile applications, board games, and novels all overseen or produced by Robert Kirkman. However, due to the differences between the storyline and characters in the comics and the television series, there has become a distinct separation between two canons. According to Julie Sanders (2006), "Adaptation both appears to require and to perpetuate the existence of canon, although it may in turn contribute to its ongoing reformulation and expansion." In this regard, AMC's *The Walking Dead* becomes an adaptation through which the storyworld's canon becomes convoluted. While the television series attempts to expand upon the original canonical universe, it simultaneously creates a canon of its own that perpetuates other transmedial expansions. The videogames, board games, mobile apps and novels must choose, then, between falling in line with the original canon of the comics or the newly adapted canon of the television series. Table 1 gives an overview of the number of new commercial extensions based upon the license holder and the year.

However, the franchise has found ways other than transmedial output in which to engage the readers/viewers of *The Walking Dead*. Utilizing social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, the franchise is able to engage and record the interest of the consumers. For example, the official *Walking Dead* television series' Facebook page has been liked by over 36 million people (*The Walking Dead AMC,* 2017a), while it's official Twitter account has over 6 million followers (*The Walking Dead*, 2017b). These accounts allow the creators to share exclusive content and events to their followers. The characters in the show also have their own unofficial accounts where fans can pose as their favorite characters and tweet or post things they believe the character would. Comparatively, the companion series *Fear the Walking Dead* launched in 2015 has been liked by 3 million people on Facebook (*Fear the Walking Dead,* 2017) and has just over 250,000 followers on Twitter (*Fear TWD,* 2017). With regards to the games and their popularity, by 2015 Telltale announced they had sold some 44 million episodes and won over 90 Game

Table 1. Commercial Extensions and Licensor

Year	Total Commercial Extensions	AMC	Skybound
2010	2	2	1
2011	6	4	2
2012	7	4	3
2013	8	3	5
2014	4	2	2
2015	6	3	3
2016	5	1	4
2017*	*2*	*0*	*2*
2018*	*2*	*Not Known*	*2*

* Currently Announced

of the Year awards. The success of the television series as well as the game establishes the universe as a cultural phenomenon. However, in order to understand how this success developed, the canon and its creation must be considered.

FLESHING OUT THE WALKING DEAD

Comics and Canons

Robert Kirkman, Tony Moore and Charlie Adlard's comics *The Walking Dead* (2003-present) follow Kentucky police officer Rick Grimes and his family as they meet other survivors and traverse rural and urban Georgia in an attempt to find food, shelter, and safety during the zombie apocalypse. The story arcs for each volume of the series show the survivors as they go from Atlanta, to a gated community, to a farm, to a prison, to a refuge town, and so on, in the hopes of finally finding a sustainable and safe place away from the 'walkers'. However, a major theme running across the comics is that the characters are forced from one place of refuge to another due to their human flaws, as opposed to the threat of the zombies or 'walkers'. Tensions build as Rick and others vie for a leadership position in the group, which leads to scheming, sex, and violence in nearly every issue.

Stylistically, the comics are drawn using a black and white color palette. This not only made *The Walking Dead* comics cheaper to produce, but also positioned the comics within and paid homage to the horror comics genre as well as the horror movie industry. One of the most dynamic parts unique to a comic book is the anticipation of the reader turning the page and being immediately surprised by what it reveals. *The Walking Dead* picks up on this and often builds tension on the right-hand page so that the reader is left questioning what will happen next and will turn the page. The comic book medium complicates the creation of horror, as it cannot rely on sound or jump scares, unlike film, television or videogames. Instead, *The Walking Dead* comics rely on a page turn to produce suspense and horror.

One of the most striking instances of this happens in the first issue after Rick wakes up in the hospital, an image that alludes to both Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* (2002) as well as John Wyndham's classic *Day of the Triffids* (1951). After stumbling over a body in the elevator, the final panel of the comic page depicts Rick opening the doors to the cafeteria (Kirkman, 2003, Issue 1). Suspense and tension are created when the reader must physically turn the page in order to find out what happens next. Once they do, the design of the following splash page creates surprise, immersiveness, and horror. The lines created by the ceiling tiles as well as the turned tables lead the reader's eyes to a vantage point at the back of the cafeteria. However, there is a hulking zombie in the periphery of the page that startles the reader as their eyes are led to the back of the cafeteria. He takes up nearly a third of the page, creating an uncomfortable and claustrophobic sensation in the reader. The shading and black and white style mixed with the gore and surprise of the zombies creates a sense of suspense and horror in the comic. This technique is utilized multiple times throughout the rest of the on-going comics series. Unlike television or videogames, comics as a medium utilize the tactility of the page, alongside the compelling storyline, in order to create feelings of fear, suspense and horror.

With the continued success of the still ongoing comic, it was only natural to want to adapt it to the screen. This was largely possible due to Kirkman's publishing the comics through *Image Comics,* a company that unlike *Marvel* or *DC Comics,* gives the creator full licensing and rights over their characters. The comics created the original storyworld, but it was the expansion of the story through other media, and

fundamentally the adaptation for the AMC television series *The Walking Dead* and later the companion television series *Fear the Walking Dead* that has established the franchise as a successful transmedia property. However, because they were created first, the comics series is often considered canon for *The Walking Dead* universe. Due to the adaptive nature of the television series, however, characters and storylines were changed. This has created two different kinds of canon in *The Walking Dead* franchise; one from the original comics and one from the television adaptation. The games, books, and apps that followed have had to choose to pull from either canon, thus, creating a two-pronged storyworld within *The Walking Dead* Universe. The differences between the two are too numerous to detail but have added to the sense that the Walking Dead is truly transmedial. There remains enough commonality that the TV series is clearly an adaptation, but enough difference that fans can engage with the comics at a different level. It is not simply the case of a rehashing of the established canon but an interpretation that fans can augment their detailed understanding of the universe by engaging in both mediums and canons.

Made for Television

Aptly, on 31 October 2010, Kirkman's comic series was adapted to television as AMC's *The Walking Dead*. While the main characters, ideas and threads were present from the first episode of the series, the television adaptation used the medium to its advantage, using lighting, music, and jump scares to create suspense and fear. As in the comics, the television series begins with Rick waking up in the hospital, and disorientated and alone he decides to leave to find his family. However, the scenes of him wandering the hallway utilize lighting and suspense that work better for television than in comics. Rather than take the elevator, he takes the fire escape stairs in the hospital. The cafeteria scene that was so pivotal in the comics is changed. Rather than open the door and reveal the zombies inside, Rick reads an inscription on the door saying, "Do not open, dead inside" and sees hands pushing through the gap in the doors. He chooses then to take the staircase leading outside of the hospital. Once he closes the door, he is completely shrouded in darkness. The viewer can hear his struggling, and then there is a close-up of Rick's hands as they light a match, relieving a bit of tension. The match does not last long, however, illuminating a medium shot of Rick just enough so that the viewer sees him attempt some of the stairs, it quickly goes out again leaving him immersed in darkness. Cutting back and forth between the dark and light, together with the perspective and size of the shot, not only produces a sense of fear in the viewer, but also mimics the uneasiness and incoherence Rick is feeling. Once Rick opens the emergency exit door, the whole shot is oversaturated in light, effectively blinding Rick and the viewer. The brightness makes it so that the background is completely saturated and indecipherable, creating an atmosphere that is suspenseful and disorienting. The television series manipulates the lighting in the frame in order to confuse the viewer as well as mimic the confusion of the main character. It then goes over the top creating too much light, which is just as blinding as the pitch black before. By taking away the sight of the viewer, the television series forces them to feel disoriented and confused like Rick. This would not work effectively in comics, as having an all-white or all-black panel does not create the same suspense in a purely visual medium.

Another device used in the television show is music or sound effects to induce suspense and fear. After Rick opens the door outside of the hospital, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, he walks through dozens of wrapped bodies lined up in rows. At first, the viewer hears the cicadas chirping in the background as well as Rick's feet hitting the ground. However, as he begins to realize the extent of the horror that he is witnessing, eerie violin music begins playing. It gets more and more intense as he walks past the bodies and climbs a hill outside the hospital. The music reaches a peak pitch and cli-

max as a helicopter and the full extent of the scale of the disaster comes into focus. The cicadas' noise continues, blending with the music. The music is used to portray the horror Rick feels as he begins to figure out some sort of disaster has happened, but also prompts the viewer to feel the same way, as they are also experiencing the scale of the horror that happened in the hospital for the first time. The music adds suspense and leads the viewer to understand the scale of the horror of the zombie apocalypse in time with Rick's unfolding comprehension.

The television series also changes Rick's encounter with his former police partner, Shane. In the comics, Rick chases Shane after a member of their party is bitten by a walker (Kirkman, 2003, Issue 6). Shane pulls a gun on Rick and threatens to shoot him because Rick was not meant to survive in the hospital. As Rick is trying to calm his friend down, his son, Carl, comes out of the woods and shoots Shane through the neck (Kirkman, 2003, Issue 6). This scene plays out differently in the television series in that it happens in the twelfth episode of the second series rather than the sixth comic. The mood and tensions are different as well, as Shane lures Rick into the woods in order to kill him. Rick feigns surrender and then stabs Shane. Shane stands back up as a walker, and Carl shoots him before he can hurt his father. The television series keeps Shane in order to create more tension between he and Rick, but changes the timeline of the original canon. AMC's *The Walking Dead* adapts the comics not just into the television format, but changes the original canon of the storyworld in order to create its own. T.S. Eliot's (1921) delineation of the term "historical sense" suggests that meaning is created in the relationship between texts, a relationship that inherently encourages contrast and comparison. In this regard the relationship between the comics and television series, as an adaptation that came about seven years after the comics, encourages comparison. Adrienne Rich (1971) defines re-vision as "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction… We need to know the writing of the past and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us." In this case, Kirkman has looked upon his first work, and the medium through which it was told, and is able to further manipulate the storyline and canon through its adaptation to the television series format. In doing so, Kirkman manipulates the idea of a canon and expands the storyworld to encompass not only other mediums, but also other versions of the storyline.

The television series continues to change the timeline by combining two major events and locations that are separate in the comics: the prison and Woodbury. In the comics, Rick and his group stumble upon a prison at the end of issue #12 (the end of volume 2) and attempt to use it as a safe house. Later, in issue 25 (volume 5), the characters encounter a crashed helicopter and follow the footprints to the Woodbury community ruled by a man called 'The Governor'. These two communities do not fully interact until the end of the 7th volume in issue #42 in which Woodbury attacks the prison. However, the television series conflates these two storylines, having them occur simultaneously throughout the third season. Characters' relationships with one another are changed, and AMC's version of Woodbury is much more idealistic than the way it is depicted in the comics. While these changes could constitute the television series as unfaithful to the comics, Julie Sanders argues that "it is usually at the very point of infidelity that the most creative acts of adaptation and appropriation take place" (Sanders, 2006). In this regard, the television series creatively adapts the comics through the conflation of these storylines, allowing it to become a canon in and of itself. In the television series, Kirkman is able to reimagine and re-characterize various comic characters, like Glenn and Michonne. In the comics, Glenn is a younger man who, as a skilled supply runner, is able to single-handedly save Rick in his first encounter with the dead in Atlanta (Kirkman, 2003, Issue #2). He is young and naive, but also strong and able. The television series characterizes him as older and less capable, as in the second episode of the first Season

"Guts" (2010) he helps Rick, but is aided by other survivors. He is also given the last name "Rhee" in the television series, but remains without a second name in the comics. However, Glenn has become a fan favorite and is one of the only characters to appear in almost all forms of media, including the comics, television series, and various games including Telltale videogame, *Assault* mobile game, and *The Walking Dead* social game (*AMC The Walking Dead Social Game: Chronicles*, n.d.).

Other characters that are not present in the comics are introduced and fleshed out in the television show. The most notable added character, and fan favorite, is Daryl Dixon. The character won IGN's "Best TV Hero" award in 2012 and has the second highest number of appearances on the show, behind Rick (IGN, 2012). The character was created specifically for the actor Norman Reedus after his audition. This demonstrates the relationship between the franchise/author and the fans, the power of the fanbase has kept him as a main protagonist in the television series, even if Kirkman has stated that he will not bring the character into the comic (Johnson, 2013).

The success of the TV series has seen AMC expand upon its own offering of the universe with the creation of companion content that further develops Kirkman's storyworld. Most notably AMC created the television series AMC's *Fear the Walking Dead* (2015), which takes place within *The Walking Dead* universe as a prequel to the original, but remains separate from canonical characters in both the comics as well as the first television series. Both *Fear the Walking Dead* and *The Walking Dead* also have webisodes released exclusively on AMC.com that give background information and storylines to the characters within their respective series. They also air a talk show on AMC after each new episode, called *The Talking Dead,* in which the series actors are interviewed in order to get more details on the episode. Similarly, the Woodbury community as well as the Governor's backgrounds are more fully fleshed out in an ongoing series of novels created by Kirkman and Jay Bonansinga. However, the novels take the character as he is portrayed in the comics rather than the television series.

Films have always utilized fiction and non-fiction, and subsequently encouraged other novelization where the source was not already published. With the increasing utilization of digital streaming and online content by broadcast media, the ground has shifted again. We now have multiple channels for delivering content and this expansion has coincided with an increasing array of tools allowing fans to participate in the storyworld. The acceptance of fan culture and increasing development of commercial and grassroots extensions to the original storyworld has resulted in a resurgence of story elements being conveyed systematically across multiple media platforms, each making their own unique contribution to the whole. *The Walking Dead,* with its roots in the comic series and the commercial success of the television series, has now delivered a breadth of content that raises interesting questions about the development of brands, franchises and their correlation to the storyworld. Few contemporary television dramas exist solely on television; their worlds, characters and story arcs are distributed and added-to using other media such as online webisodes, digital games, animations, comics, social media, and much more. This goes for story experiences originating from any medium; they are soon augmented by content dispersed across multiple channels, often to a point where no one form can claim to be the definitive text. It is this opportunity to create and play with the storyworld that allows fans to connect and engage at different levels. Crucially, the number of entry points ensures fans can create their own stories within the established storyworld.

WE WALKING DEAD

The Walking Dead provides a rich source for the study of transmedia storytelling with over twenty commercial games having been created. There are multiple analogue versions (dice, card and board games) and digital offerings on multiple platforms. There now exist multiple narrative threads, and while the comic is technically canon, the popularity of the television series has resulted in parallel and overlapping storyworlds. The games that have developed provide different perspectives of these universes. Despite the inherent interactivity of the medium the story is still often largely directed, but the player is given the illusion of control. In examining the games, the focus of this chapter is on those digital versions that emerged after the initial success of the TV Series. These are Telltale Games' *The Walking Dead* (2012), Gamagio's *The Walking Dead Assault* (2012) and Terminal Reality's *The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct* (2013).

Telltale's *The Walking Dead* was episodic and first released for PC, Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 in April 2012 and ported to mobile (iOS) in July. Over the next two years it was ported to multiple other platforms including PlayStation Vita, Amazon Fire, Android, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, OS X and Linux. Gamagio's *The Walking Dead Assault* was released for iOS in November 2012, and Android the following year. Despite initial success, only the first episode was ever released and it therefore provides an interesting contrast to Telltale's success. Activision published *The Walking Dead Survival Instinct* in March 2013 although critically panned it sold better than expected and again provides a different perspective to understanding the gaming contribution to the arching storyworld. Each of these games were part of the initial offerings licensed via Skybound Entertainment (Kirkman's production company) or AMC. Reflecting on these several years after release helps provide an insight into the role that games can play in transmedia franchises. With Skybound *The Walking Dead* games have always strived to demonstrate the power of the medium. This is unlike other franchises where games are often regarded as marketing extensions of the original comic or TV show. For Skybound, games have genuinely taken the series in different directions. Arguably, it is this uniqueness that games can provide the fan as both a familiar form and an opportunity for some creative freedom that has led to their success. Fans and players can find their own stories in the universe within carefully constructed metes and bounds. Since *The Walking Dead*, Telltale has continued to see further success with the franchise, but has also seen the success replicated in providing narrative-driven episodic gaming editions of *Game of Thrones*, *Batman*, *Guardians of the Galaxy* and the very meta game of a game with the storymode version of *Minecraft*, a game that established itself largely because of its embrace of creative freedom and complete lack of narrative. Telltale have clearly established themselves as the market leader in the genre, but multiple other gaming companies have built on the early successes and failures of the franchise to deliver a digitally-rich world for fans to embrace. It is worthwhile to consider how the varying range of quality and different commercial successes of *The Walking Dead* games impacts the overall storyworld.

From movies to digital games, theatre performances to LEGO, there is a distinct movement towards everything becoming transmedia, or at least aspiring towards it. Creators and producers increasingly conceive of a fictional world as transmedial from the outset. They seek to generate multiple interconnected texts that stitch together imaginary transmedia worlds that differ from traditional self-contained media entities by encompassing books, films, games, website, and even reference works like dictionaries, glossaries, atlases, encyclopedias and more (Wolf, 2012). It is not just imaginary worlds and storytelling that have become transmedia; Jenkins (2011) suggests "Transmedia storytelling describes one logic for thinking about the flow of content across media. We might also think about transmedia branding, trans-

media performance, transmedia ritual, transmedia play, transmedia activism, and transmedia spectacle, as other logics". It is therefore essential to consider where brands, franchises and the storyworld differentiate. How the perceived gaps are filled and disconnects connected is of academic interest. For the fans the driving force for engagement with content would appear to be the perceived authenticity it holds with the rest of the franchise. Arguably, how *The Walking Dead* franchise has evolved as a commercial entity and its impact upon fan affiliation and the development of further extensions has been significant in shaping the rest of *The Walking Dead* universe. Games are both a potential driver of new narratives as well as retainers for fans of the existing narratives. The core text of the games (whether based on the comic or television narrative), as well as the type of game (adventure, strategy or first-person shooter) affects the overall narratives. Success or failure of the game in turn impacts fan engagement and potential future narratives. By having such a complex and interweaving narratives with multiple storylines and adaptations, *The Walking Dead* provides an excellent example of transmedial successes and failures.

Telltale Games' The Walking Dead

The first digital game release, *The Walking Dead* by Telltale Games, utilizes the universe of the comic book and delivered content over five episodes. The game was a considerable success for Telltale in terms of both sales and critical acclaim, and has been the recipient of over 90 Game of the Year awards (Telltale Games, n.d.). For a licensed property releasing in 2012, the game took the unusual step in that it was based off of the original comic book series, and not the hit TV series and, even then, used few characters from the comics. Whilst this could have had a significantly negative impact upon the reception, it allowed Telltale to hone a unique story. Within *The Walking Dead* storyworld, the game is located as a prequel with the events taking place during the period where Rick Grimes is still in a coma (Telltale Games, n.d.). Uniquely, it can be considered to be 'canonical' to the television series and the comic book, as Robert Kirkman was involved in the creation of the game events. Kirkman has subsequently spoken about how he got on board with the project after being informed of the gameplay's attempt to have a direct emotional impact. Specifically, it was the potential impact on the game player when they were faced with having to kill the protagonist's brother during the first episode (Workman, 2013). The events within the game and the design of the player interaction provide an intense user experience, yet the control mechanisms remain particularly player friendly. From the outset, Telltale placed the player at the core of the story and set out to allow the player to experience the tension within the storyworld.

You won't be mowing down hordes of the undead as a super-powered killing machine with unlimited ammo; ... When you do tangle with the undead, it's going to be harrowing (Telltale Games, 2012).

Telltale emphasized that players faced difficult situations and would be forced to make decisions that are not only hard but that require the player to make an almost immediate choice. There's no time to ponder what various outcomes might result in. Instead, the player must choose and those decisions impact later gameplay. These were brave decisions for the development team to make. Designing a multi-faceted experience, or the illusion of one, is not a straightforward task. However, it was immensely successful. As the review site Polygon stated

…if you care about games at all, where they're going, where they've been, you have to play The Walking Dead, … Even If you couldn't care less, if you've never played a game before, then The Walking Dead is a wonderful place to start. (McElroy, 2012)

Polygon added that the reason that *The Walking Dead* succeeds is "by inventing an entirely new kind of game structure" (McElroy, 2012). It relies on the fact that it is a hybrid of game and story where "both of those facets are absolutely dependent on one another" (McElroy, 2012).

The game Telltale created fits almost seamlessly into the extant storyworld. It is a new experience with fresh characters but one that from the outset is familiar to fans. The art style is clearly influenced by the origin source: comics. Telltale cite the artistic style of the comic book artists as an influence, but crucially they also chose color palettes that immediately help audiences locate the game within the AMC franchise. From the narrative side, the main goal of the player is to take care of a little girl 'Clementine'. This makes the player feel a degree of guardianship or protective instinct. This is further exemplified by the ability to engage in more dialogue with Clementine than other characters. The player can also find food items and choose who gets them. Giving these to specific characters develops the player relationship with that character whilst hurting the development of other relationships.

The Walking Dead also makes the player feel a sense of horror that is inherent in the storyworld as well as a need to do 'what needs to be done' in order to survive. Yet, the violence is not gratuitous. One example of this is towards the end of the first episode where the protagonist, Lee, must kill his reanimated brother in order to progress. At this point, Lee has an axe as a weapon. In the process of acquiring this axe the player had to fight two enemies. Each of these enemies are dispatched in a single swing. In comparison, the player now called on to dispatch his brother faces a different gameplay situation: one that requires five individual axe swings to kill the zombified brother. In terms of gameplay this is a deliberate design to lengthen the scenario in order to get the player to empathize with the protagonist. This explanation appears even more likely as the protagonist's brother is pinned down and unable to move freely, therefore posing very little threat. The emphasis on making the player think about their actions reinforces engagement with the storyworld. It is this form of interaction, where there are no obvious forms of reward or penalty that makes the Telltale game a different type of gaming experience. The fact that the player is discovering the protagonist's backstory through play, and having to make grim decisions and experience harrowing events, adds comprehension of the transmedia storyworld and allows them to try and comprehend that world. The result is an absorbing and immersive experience.

Another significant element of *The Walking Dead* is the necessity of companionship throughout the story arc. The player meets several people in a similar situation also looking for help. The player then has the option to further develop relationships with these characters through various actions. The game makes use of these developments by informing the player that an action they have just performed 'has been remembered'. How and to what extent this may affect later events is left to the player to determine. For example, there are points where the player must choose between two companions to save. The first is less than thirty minutes in and a companion's child, a young boy, needs rescuing, as does an adult. No matter the actions of the player, the adult dies; the only difference is that by saving the child the player's relationship with the father develops. An example of the knock-on impact your decisions can have comes later in the final sections of the episode where the player is knocked down and needs rescue. The child's father comes to the protagonist's aid, but his reaction is dependent on whether the player chose to save the child earlier or not. It is these mechanics that make the game player feel more engaged and as a result the experience the game offers a more harrowing and reflective one. It stays with the player, and makes

them question the decisions they have made. As many of these decisions have to be made quickly and are not always straightforward, the player can be left wondering how the decisions they have made might affect the game later. That sense of foreboding and need to understand decisions from all perspectives in a single game moment makes the experience emotionally powerful. The episodic release of the game content not only added to that sense of engagement from the player, but continued with the release of a specific downloadable content (DLC) pack "400 Days" and subsequent series. While much has been made about the idea that decisions made by the player affect the decisions in later episodes and even Telltale's subsequent sequels, the reality is slightly different. Certainly, the decisions made by the player affect the gameplay experience but not the narrative outcomes. In fact, one of the main criticisms leveled at the series is that choices are irrelevant and lead to the same end points. You can change the journey but not the destination. This brings us back to the central difficulty that games have in allowing players to modify the storyworld: allow too much and it breaks the narrative, immersion and desired endings, but allow too little and players feel aggrieved that their decisions do not matter. The phenomenal success of Telltales' game demonstrates that it got the balance commercially and critically correct. However, other games show that it is an incredibly difficult achievement.

Gamagio's The Walking Dead Assault

The Walking Dead Assault was a mobile and tablet game developed by Gamagio and published by Sky-bound Entertainment, Robert Kirkman's multiplatform entertainment company and the licensor holder for the comic. *Assault* is a top-down strategy game and in some ways stayed truer to the comic book counterpart. Like the comic and TV Show, the game begins with the iconic moment of Rick awakening from his coma in the hospital. Players can play through missions as their favorite characters from the storyworld – Rick, Glenn, Shane, Carl, Andrea, Lori and Michonne. Each event (or Chapter) is based around the events through Atlanta, ending with the camp invasion. The game's ability to look and feel like that of the comic was amplified by the hand-drawn art style, featuring a black and white palette with only occasional splashes of color for emphasis.

In terms of the story, *Assault* initially runs parallel to the comic books' story with the first mission to escape the hospital where Rick (the main protagonist) wakes up. Shortly after that, the story diverges through the introduction of characters and mission order. However, the final mission is the initial attack on the group's campsite; this mirrors events in Issue 5 of the comic series. The game clearly wants to appeal to new and old fans of the series, and the primary method of doing this is through the characters. From the outset, players can purchase additional characters, with the first available being Michonne who makes no appearance in the comics until Issue 19, and not until the Season 2 finale of the TV series (Michonne - Walking Dead Wiki, n.d.).

Assault capitalizes on the player's familiarity with *The Walking Dead* storyworld and characters by creating unique abilities based on the known character traits. For example, Rick has the in-game ability to deal substantially higher damage to enemies, while also improving his team members' accuracy and firepower, thus, typifying the leader role and 'rallying the troops'. Conversely, the character Shane is shown throughout *The Walking Dead* media to be less balanced, impulsive and reckless. His in-game ability is entitled 'Freakout', where for a short period he is restricted to melee weapons but his damage increases vastly. This ability parallels his actions both in the TV series and the comic series, although his story arc within the comics is much shorter. Certain aspects of *The Walking Dead Assault*, including character portrayals are considered canonical to the comics, with just some structural and order differ-

ences. One key difference is that due to the nature of the extension, it is a game and requires some risk/reward elements, the game design allows for characters to perish during missions. Thus, the game can allow for are non-canonical elements. It is this balance between canon and non-canon that has to be carefully designed in any transmedia gaming experience. The game has to feel that it belongs and works within the storyworld. To that end, *The Walking Dead Assault* places both storyline and artistic style in the context of the comic book series, closely mirroring it with some exceptions. The result is that the game is neither prequel nor extension, but more a parallel telling with a reasonable degree of canonicity. A review from Android Police sums up the game overall.

It's fun, challenging, and does The Walking Dead justice. The best part, however, it's that it's a good game overall – not just a good game for Walking Dead fans. I think that anyone who enjoys this type of game could pick it up and have a good time playing, though TWD fans are more likely to get into (and appreciate) the storyline since they're already familiar with the characters. (Summerson, 2013)

Assault was ranked as a number one Strategy game, was featured and rated as a Top 5 Paid App in 2012. It won praise for faithfully following several of the story arcs of the comic and for its overall capture of the tone and feel of the comic book. Yet, the game has simply vanished with no further episodes or announcements from either the developer or publisher. This is perhaps because it competed with Telltale's game on the same platforms or because top-down squad based strategy games are too niche that the games sales were insufficient to support further episodes. What is clear is that the game pushed the franchise in a different direction. Unlike the comics, TV series and Telltale's game, *Assault* was less narrative-focused as one review put it, "It isn't about the end of the world, it isn't about the horror of humanity stretched to its limits. It's about obliterating zombies and living to tell the tale" (Campbell, 2012). The question arises as to whether it is the narrative and immersion in the storyworld that then drives fans to the content.

Terminal Reality's The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct

If the first two Walking Dead games gave clear examples of adding to a transmedia experience, the final game, *The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct* developed by Terminal Reality, provides insight into the difficulty of managing a franchise and maintaining a coherent transmedia storyworld. The game was released for consoles in March 2013 and is a single-player first-person shooter game. On paper, it should be a perfect fit for adding to *The Walking Dead* universe. The game acts as a prequel to the TV series again set in the Georgia countryside, and focuses on the core TV series characters Daryl and Merle Dixon as they make their way to Atlanta during the early days of the zombie apocalypse. Unfortunately, the game's development suffered and the release was critically maligned (Stanton, 2013; McElroy, 2013; Hamilton, 2013; Metacritic, n.d.):

The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct is the exact sort of lazy, cheap cash-grab that gave licensed games a bad name in the first place… [It's like] listening to a roomful of barely competent musicians, each of whom is playing a completely different song. And every once in a while one kicks you in the groin. And you have sunburn (McElroy, 2013).

The *Polygon* reviewer, Justin McElroy, was the same person who reviewed Telltale's *The Walking Dead*. The criticism is primarily concerned with the gameplay and it is worth stating that for another developer to follow-up any game as successful as Telltale's success was always going to be a significant challenge. Viewed purely as an addition to the transmedia experience, there are a number of core elements that make *Survival Instinct* interesting. For example, the primary characters are Daryl and his brother Merle, characters that only exist in the TV series, and the game is therefore canonically tied to the TV series, whereas *Assault* is canonically tied to the comic. The differences in licensing are key. Kirkman is on record as saying that *Survival Instinct*, came out of "very unique licensing situation" (Crecente, 2015) where Skybound has licensing control of *The Walking Dead* outside of the television series and AMC has their own licensing division that can license additional properties from the television series.

For many fans the distinction between the comic and the TV series can be a difficult one to make and even within the merchandising it remains complicated. This may well be due to the success of *The Walking Dead* as a transmedia franchise. Another example of this diverging canonicity are the two board games, again one ties to the television series and features the actors and the other to the comic. The management of both and their respective storyworlds is undoubtedly impacted by the various licensing agreements. Development of a console tie-in is undoubtedly affected by these agreements and the budget. That the game was developed suggests that the story of the Dixon brothers was one that was worth telling. Daryl is one of the most popular characters from the television series, therefore an experience that acts as a prequel to his story might have been desired by the market. It is also uniquely an aspect that AMC controls more directly as the characters do not exist within the comic universe.

However, the execution of that story has meant the game has been a critical failure though commercially it sold reasonably well, with approximately over a million sales (VGChartz.com, 2017). The main criticisms are that the game is not developed to the standard that players would expect, whether as the result of a lack of time, limited budget or simply poor development is unknown. Core gameplay mechanics are often buggy, repetitive and lack innovative ideas. Where new ideas are attempted they are not implemented successfully. As such the poor critical reception resulted in the game being classified as a 'cash-grab' by reviewers. Many reviews actively encouraging fans to avoid playing for fear of tarnishing their own experience of *The Walking Dead* storyworld. This is particularly interesting to the transmedia scholar primarily because of the disconnect or perceived inauthenticity from the rest of the franchise. The prospect that this could potentially affect the continuing success of *The Walking Dead* as a transmedia storyworld and commercial entity, devaluing the 'brand' and reducing coherence seems misplaced. Although not successful, it has generally been regarded by the fanbase simply as an aberration. Indeed, conversely it may actually have strengthened fan affiliation to the rest of the canon and new game offerings.

Other Notable Games

Since that first digital game release, *The Walking Dead*, has witnessed a plethora of games. Telltale have had two additional full series, there are multiple mobile offerings including Next Games hugely successful *No Man's Land* (2015) with over 4 million downloads (Grothaus, 2015) and there is a new console game in the works. The gaming sphere of *The Walking Dead* universe has always been and remains split between those licensed from Skybound and those from AMC. Undoubtedly some confusion is inevitable. There is *The Walking Dead Board Game* (2011) and *The Walking Dead: The Board Game* (2011), there are further licensed versions in both analogue and digital format. You can play strategy game versions

in analogue form, *Risk: The Walking Dead Survival Edition* (2013) or digital, *The Escapists* (2015). You can purchase the Atlanta Survival camp as a property in *The Walking Dead Monopoly* (2013) or defend it in *Assault* (2012). You can play as Glenn in *The Walking Dead: Atlanta Run* (2010) or more obviously as Michonne in *The Walking Dead: Michonne* (2016). More commonly you can join the comic or TV show and play alongside the characters you are familiar with. You can fight alongside your favorites or carve out your own stories and moments within the universe. The real strength of games is that they provide a bridge for players to interact with the universe and play with the storyworld without fear of impacting upon the canon. Whilst several games are no longer available the appetite of fans for new interactive experiences has not dimmed. There are at least three games due for launch in the next year, and these shadow the three discussed in this chapter. A new mobile offering *The Walking Dead: March to War* is due to launch this year with a new console game by the developer Overkill slated for 2018. Next year will also see the final series of Telltale's game offering. Each will be licensed from Skybound and borne from the comic canon, and with Skybound's commitment to allowing creators to maintain creative control, fans seem reassured that the integrity of Kirkman's vision is upheld.

Fandom and User-Generated Content

The vast and complex storyworld of *The Walking Dead* seeks to harness the encyclopedic impulse of its audience, but also, through leaving gaps and disconnects, leaves room for them to participate. The generated content exists in different forms: from the official *Walking Dead Wikipedia* boasting "every facet of *The Walking Dead* from the comic series, novels, videogames, and television show, including character statuses and current storyline plot-points" (Walking Dead Wiki, n.d.), to the forum *Roamersandlurkers.com*, to *fanfiction.net*, and *undeadfanstories*, the fan audience can share their own content with fellow fans of *The Walking Dead*. These extensions from the content itself provide multiple points of entry for the audience to discover the storyworld, or other aspects of the storyworld. For example, a viewer only familiar with the television series can discover the comics or vice versa. Each extension offers up a different selection of story and adaption for the audience to flesh out the fictional world and/or enhance realism and depth.

If the commercial extensions have been largely successful, it is the grassroots extensions that have demonstrated the breadth of the storyworld. Grassroots extensions have expanded to focus on perceived gaps and are mainly categorized as knowledge production, social texts and creative works. The vast and complex fictional world of *The Walking Dead* both seeks to harness the encyclopedic impulse of its audience but also, through leaving gaps and disconnects, leaves room for them to participate. Examples of this participation are plentiful, and while it is not possible to provide a definitive list here, some key grassroots extensions are briefly described in this section.

The Walking Dead universe has found itself an expansive world for fans to fill in the gaps, and the examples are plentiful with fans elaborating on the world, characters and plot gaps for both the TV series and Games in fan fiction (fanfiction.net, n.d.; undeadfanstories, 2012). More visual expressions are video mashups and parodies combining multiple sources of videos, with very little or no relation with each other, to lampoon the various component sources. Mashups are increasing in popularity with the availability of source material and easy to use video editors. Some of the best examples for *The Walking Dead* are: *The Walking Dead 80's Sitcom Intro* (Matincomedy, 2013), *The Trotting Dead* – a mashup of My Little Pony and *The Walking Dead* (Birdy Love, n.d.), and *The Walking Dumb – a Dumb Ways to*

Die Parody (Teddiefilms, 2012). Each of these provide a humorous take on the universe but there are multiple examples available on YouTube which can be used to demonstrate the expansive nature that fans are engaging with the content. To that extent, fan fiction and mashups may be considered 'transformative' of original content, and as such may find protection from copyright claims under the "fair use" doctrine of U.S. copyright law. From the gaming side, fans have created replicas of *The Walking Dead* prison in *Minecraft* and opened the level up for people to play (ZackScottGames, 2013). It is the wealth of tools available for fans to utilize that has enabled the breadth of content to be developed. The grassroots expansions of *The Walking Dead* demonstrate the increasing difficulty in differentiating between fan and consumer and demonstrate that traditional perceptions of each are blurring in today's increasingly 'participatory' media and entertainment landscape.

CONCLUSION

The Walking Dead provides an example of how games can evolve transmedia narratives beyond the established canon. They serve to provide fans the opportunity to create their own stories (within the carefully designed limits and bounds of the game world), play as their favorite character or to see the impact of their decisions upon the storyworld without directly affecting the canon. Games are increasingly pivotal to transmedia properties in that they provide an alternate but immediate form for fans to immerse themselves within the storyworld.

Arguably, it is this immersion level that separates games from the other forms of media. For fans, that ability to affect the world and narratives makes games an essential offering in any transmedia franchise. The significance of how the format is consumed is the defining factor. Games rely on active consumption. It does not matter how fantastic the writing is in a game if the experience is crafted in such a way that players can avoid it. In contrast the comics, television series, and novels rely upon passive consumption. The narrative is directed to the consumer through the carefully constructed linear story. However, for games to engage in the storyworld they need to rely fundamentally on good, intelligent, story-driven design for these to be successful. Telltale Games give just enough choice to the player for them to feel they are meaningfully contributing to the world and that it is a narrative that is directly affected by their own actions. In contrast, *The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct* through flaws in the design did not inspire players to engage with the prequel narrative and was marred by technical difficulties. If the gameplay does not bring the connection with immersion to the overarching storyworld then it damages the overall experience. Reviews of *Survival Instinct* frequently state not to play the game if you are a fan of *The Walking Dead*, surely the worst possible indictment a reviewer can give on a licensed game of a popular franchise.

An additional factor that games within a transmedia property have to navigate is the inherent challenge within the medium. For gamers, that challenge typically has to be scalable - one of the main criticisms of Telltale's games is that there is little challenge. Yet, for the fan and potentially non-gamer that challenge has to be balanced well enough that the maintain engagement in the storyworld. If the tasks or actions required are too challenging, then the fan has multiple other mediums in which to engage with and spend their time. Indeed, one of the fundamental differences about *The Walking Dead* games is that they often provide limited or carefully balanced challenge. There are multiple examples of games based on films and other media properties that add little to the narrative experience. However, what *The Walking Dead*

has is a multitude of smaller experiences that each add a different form of engagement for the fan/player. What Telltale does so well is in making an experience that adds to the world. The episodic content allows the fan and player to collect more of the wider storyworld experience, without significant challenge.

The Walking Dead provides a rich source for the study of transmedia storytelling. From the core comic book and TV series through the commercial and grassroots extensions there is a plethora of content for the reader, writer, teacher, academic and transmedia scholar to utilize. Examination of the transmedia content provides many interesting questions regarding the development of brands, franchises and their correlation to the storyworld. Given the wide range of quality within the transmedia content for *The Walking Dead* there are several questions to consider the ways in which content in one area or platform has the potential to affect future stories within this context. The overwhelming success of Telltale's *The Walking Dead* suggested that game offerings would be a particularly interesting platform for further development. In contrast the poor reception of Terminal Reality's *Survival Instinct* did result in a general backing away of specific console offerings. However, any suggestion that any game similar in 'goal' to *Survival Instinct* (i.e. looking at character back stories, canonically tied to TV series) might be potentially viewed with a sense of trepidation and wariness, seem to have passed.

However, with all of these various adaptations and transmedial worlds, the reader must keep in mind Sanders' suggestion that "while it may enrich and deepen our understanding of the new cultural product to be aware of its shaping intertext, it may not be entirely necessary to enjoy the work independently" (Sanders, 2006). Even amongst all of the various adaptations, spin offs, and transmedial sources, the viewer or reader is still able to enjoy the consumption of one part of the storyworld without having to be familiar with the other modes. A fan of AMC's *The Walking Dead* does not need the comics in order to enjoy or understand the show. A fan is able to delve into any part of *The Walking Dead* storyworld and understand the world with little to no background information. However, if their interest is piqued, the fan is able to explore multiple transmedial modes, canons, storylines and characters made by franchise and fan alike. As Carlos A. Scolari posits, "Two practices converge and, at the same time, challenge each other in transmedia storytelling: the strategies of the media industry and the tactics of users and fans" (Solari, 2014). It is important to consider where brands, franchises and the storyworld differentiate. How the perceived gaps are filled and disconnects connected is of particular interest. For the fans the driving force for engagement with content would appear to be the perceived authenticity it holds with rest of the franchise and for the transmedia scholar there remains a plethora of work to study within *The Walking Dead* storyworld. How the franchise evolves as a commercial entity and its impact upon fan affiliation and the development of further grassroots extensions continues to be significant in shaping the rest of *The Walking Dead* universe.

The complexity of developing and controlling a transmedia franchise, such as *The Walking Dead*, is undoubtedly challenging. Robert Kirkman continues to receive praise and criticism about the development of the storyworld and accused of cashing in on the various extensions of his creation. Historically, it was Hollywood (or rather films) that provided the backbone to transmedia franchises. Games, novels and comics were spun out from film and typically it was the content from the film that was replicated in other media, often using the same universe and characters from the core film-based narrative. The production pipelines for films were typically similar to games but as the game production started later and often had additional technical challenges licensed games were often poor additions to the storyworld universe when they were launched. Licenses were often prohibitively restrictive with the rights to the property

often requiring separate negotiation with the actors. The result was for many years game production could simply not align itself in terms of time and information confidentiality with the core properties.

In many ways, the success (and failings) of *The Walking Dead* as a transmedia property comes down to the licensing agreements. Robert Kirkman set up Skybound within Image Comics prior to the launch of the television show. It is Skybound that retains the control of licensing *The Walking Dead* outside of the television show. In contrast, it is AMC that licenses the television show. How much control Robert Kirkman has over the licensing of the AMC franchise appears minimal, and Kirkman has been clear to distance himself and Skybound from any involvement with *Survival Instinct.* Kirkman's vision and ethos on allowing the medium creators more freedom is certainly a contributing factor to the transmedia success of *The Walking Dead*. It is this differentiation from other transmedia models and the element of control that Kirkman has been able to exert that is particularly appealing for fans and the storyworld.

This chapter illustrates the transmedial nature of Kirkman's *The Walking Dead* series, from comic to television series and the subsequent boom of other narratives through various mediums. The success of the games highlights the importance of fan culture and the ability of the audience to be fully immersed in the storyworld. This has led to an innumerable amount of fan generated content, attempting to further position themselves within Kirkman's storyworld. In this respect, Kirkman's vision allows, and encourages, creativity from his franchise partners as well as his fans within his carefully constructed world. He creates not only a storyworld, but a level of engagement that allows others to toy with his characters and play with the dead.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Canon: The material that is accepted as officially a part of an individual universe or story. In the case of *The Walking Dead*, the comics create the first official material while the television series creates its own material.

Fandom: A group of people who are fans of a particular person, character, or series. It is often considered a community with its own unique culture.

Franchise: A type of business that holds the rights to different properties.

Grassroot Extensions: The marketing of products to ordinary people who are regarded as the main focus of the franchise.

Storyworld: The shared universe in which the settings, characters, objects, event, and actions of one or more narratives exist.

Transmedia: The telling of a single story or experience across multiple platforms, mediums, and formats.

Webisode: An original episode derived from a television series that is made exclusively for online viewing.