

**CREATING A TRANSMEDIA EXPERIENCE
THE HANDBOOK GUIDEMAP**

Creating a transmedia experience - the guidemap handbook is a guidemap for developing a manuscript and timeline for a transmedia experience.

The handbook is created as a part of a master's thesis on Interactive Digital Media 2012, by Vashanth Selvadurai and Ronni Nedergaard Nielsen. This handbook act as a visual guidemap for developing a transmedia experience, and is based on a concept, created in the thesis. A use case example of a timeline, created upon this handbook can be seen on the enclosed DVD with the masters' thesis, together with a video sketch.

The concept is based upon a theoretical study of transmedia storytelling and alternate reality games, where this study focus was on exploring the potentials of implementing social media platforms as a central interaction utility, smartphones as the liason between the physical and virtual space and incorporating game mechanics and gamification methods as motivational factors to create engaging experiences.

The handbook is split into five parts, each focusing on a different aspect for creating a transmedia experience. It is necessary to read the entire guidemap, before starting the actual development, as it is important to have an overview of the each development process.

When reading the handbook, each page are displayed with the information of the subject being on the left page, and further details, notes and examples of the given subject being shown on the right side.

Happy reading! :)

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INTRODUCTION

CREATING A TRANSMEDIA EXPERIENCE:

Creating a transmedia experience - a guidemap handbook is a guidemap for developing a manuscript and timeline for a transmedia experience. It does not specifically explain which components to implement, but help the developer focus on the important considerations, when choosing relevant input for a transmedia experience.

It should be noted that the examples this handbook use, in terms of social media platforms and smartphone features, that could be put into use in a transmedia experience should not be seen as restrictions, but merely suggestions. Social media platforms and the capabilities of smartphones are rapidly evolving, and therefore it is recommended to gain an overview of the current state of the art social media and smartphone capabilities, before developing.

A more detailed description and explanation regarding the development of a transmedia experience can be found in the master's thesis; *Creating a Transmedia Experience*, Interactive Digital Media, Aalborg University 2012, by Ronni Nedergaard Nielsen & Vashanth Selvadurai.

READING GUIDE:

When reading the handbook, each page are displayed with the information of the subject being on the left page, and further details, notes and examples of the given subject being shown on the right side.

The handbook is split into five parts, each focusing on a different aspect for creating a transmedia experience. It is necessary to read the entire guidemap, before starting the actual development, as it is important to have an overview of the each development process.

INTRODUCTION

■ INITIAL DEVELOPMENT

Identify the purpose of creating a transmedia experience, collect data of the initial product, its target group, etc.

■ TRANSMEDIA STORY DEVELOPMENT

Develop the storyline throughout the transmedia experience, with focus on building a story across multiple platforms, both physical and digital.

■ GAME DEVELOPMENT

Choose game genres, game mechanics and gamification aspects, which fits the transmedia storyline and the initial product.

■ MOTIVATION DEVELOPMENT

Decide how to use the transmedia storyline and the chosen game aspects, with focus on how to motivate and engage the target group through the experience process.

■ INTERACTIVITY DEVELOPMENT

Consider how the interactions within the transmedia experience is utilised, based on; social collaboration between the target group, the fictional characters, the game elements and the entire transmedia experience all-together.

■ PLANNING

Plan the entire transmedia experience, through a manuscript and a detailed timeline.

INITIAL DEVELOPMENT

• THE PURPOSE

Identify the purpose for creating the transmedia experience; the purpose defines which focus areas from the initial product are relevant to implement.

• TARGET GROUP

Gather relevant information regarding the target group.

• INITIAL PRODUCT

Study the initial product for elements that can be used in the transmedia experience, which reflects the initial product, and thereby ties the products together.

• PLATFORMS

Consider the best suited platform, based on the initial product, the purpose and the target group.

INITIAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Promotional Tool:** Promote the initial product through the transmedia experience
- **Extention:** The initial product is extended extended
- **Stand Alone:** Creating the transmedia experience as a stand alone product



- **Content Distribution:** Consider which platforms to use for distributing the content; like, blogs, posters, movie theatres, tv-advertisement, etc.
- **Social Communication:** Choose the best suited social media platforms for the social interactions.

TRANSMEDIA STORYLINE

• FUNCTIONALITY

Consider which kind of storyline to create and how the storyline should be unfold across the different media platforms.

• STORY UNIVERSE

Make sure the content within the initial storyline is respresented in the transmedia experience

• CHARACTER SELECTION

Select or create the set of characters to use throughout the transmedia experience.

• MEDIA PLATFORMS

Select the media platforms to distribute the storyline on, based on the strong features and possibilities to utilise.

TRANSMEDIA STORYLINE

- **Prequel:** Creating a storyline, which takes place before the initial storyline
- **Extend:** Create a new storyline, which takes place in the same universe.
- **Alternate:** Creating a story in an alternate universe, but with the initial characters.



- **Main Characters:** Select the main characters for the storyline.
- **Side Characters:** Consider implementing side characters.
- **New Characters:** Consider if it is necessary to create new characters to the storyline.



TRANSMEDIA STORYLINE

- CHARACTER PRESENTATION**
 Determine how the selected characters are presented in the transmedia experience.
- INTERACTION CONSIDERATIONS**
 Consider the interaction possibilities in the storyline and how the participants can affect the storyline.
- EVENTS**
 Consider the use of events based on the storyline, both online and in the physical world.
- CONTINUITY**
 Make sure to have a clear view of each-story fragments, their presentations and consider the continuity of the overall presentation of the storylines as a whole.

TRANSMEDIA STORYLINE



Note: Incorporating too many possible outcome from the scenarios created, can become hard to control. Instead, create predefined scenario's from a set of the character interaction which is best suited.

- Represent the fictional characters in the physical world.
- Consider how to merge the real- and virtual world together.
- Implement elements which have a dramatic effect on the target group, at the events.



Note: Make sure to minimise the complexity of the collected storyline, in order to minimise the level of confusion.

TRANSMEDIA STORYLINE

- **SPREADABILITY**

Determine which story fragments need to be available on the different media and similar platforms.

- **DRILLABILITY**

Determine if certain phases within the story need an extra depth, in order for the user to dig further into the content of the virtual world.

- **IMMERSION**

Map the fictional universe into the real world and utilise physical everyday-life medias to immerse the target group into the virtual world.

- **WORLD-BUILDING**

Consider how the real world is represented within the fictional universe, and how the fictional intersects with the real world.

TRANSMEDIA STORYLINE

Example: Same content spread on three different media platforms.



- Consider creating supplemental back stories.
- Consider creating exclusive content
- Generally consider implementing extra details into the storyline, but make sure it fits the level of engagement from the participants.



Example: Immersion is here created by a fictional character, changing the content of pictures on real websites.

Note: Make sure the same rules, regulations, world-theme and so on is respected similar in both worlds.

TRANSMEDIA STORYLINE

- **SERIALITY**

Consider the possibility to implement stories that are presented within the same fictional universe, but not necessarily in the main storyline.

- **PERFORMANCE**

Consider the level of user participation and engagement within the storyline.

- **MULTIPLICITY**

Consider the possibility to implement alternate interpretations of the storyline.

- **SUBJECTIVITY**

Consider the possibility to explore the transmedia storyline or a phase of the storyline through different objectives or point of views.

TRANSMEDIA STORYLINE

Note: Seriality can be useful for adding drillability and to create back-stories on a fictional character within the universe. By adding seriality, it will be possible for the participant to gain more knowledge of the character.

- Explore the possibility to engage the user into produce content.
- Consider the possibility to incorporate this user-generated content into the storyline.

Note: Adding multiplicity can increase the complexity of the transmedia experience.

- Make use of characters in new situations
- Create new aspects of an existing storyline.



TRANSMEDIA STORYLINE

- **EXTRACTABILITY**

Consider incorporating items within the transmedia experience, which can be extracted from the storyline in the form of merchandise.

General Note: Many of the considerations in the transmedia storyline development are not aspects that must be implemented into a transmedia experience. They should rather be viewed upon as relevant areas for considerations, when creating the content for the storyline. All the aspects are useful in order to benefit from the use of multiple medias, but some may be more useful than others, depending on the given initial product and transmedia storyline.

TRANSMEDIA STORYLINE



GAME DEVELOPMENT

• GAME GENRE(S)

Identify the game genres which suits the aspects of the initial and the transmedia story product.

• GAME PLATFORMS

Identify the platforms which fit the game genres, the aspects of the fictional universe and the transmedia storyline.

• GAME CHARACTERS

Consider which of the fictional characters should be implemented into the game elements of the experience. Consider how they fit the genre and storyline.

• CHALLENGES

Create challenges logically according to the story. Make sure the challenges are interlinked with the story.

GAME DEVELOPMENT



Note: Remember to consider the possibilities and restrictions of the chosen platforms, with focus on utilising the real world as a platform.

- **Functionaltitles:** Consider the functionalities of the fictional characters.
- **Capabllitles:** Consider what the characters are capable of within the game. Remember to compare their capabilities to the rules and regulations within the fictional universe.



GAME DEVELOPMENT

• COLLAB. AND COMPTETITION

Create situations that need a range of participants to collaborate and/or compete.

• GAME MECHANICS

Consider which game mechanics should be implemented in order to manage how certain game elements should be executed.

• GAMIFICATION

Consider how to make use of user progression system, reward implementations, etc.

GAME DEVELOPMENT

COLLABORATION



COMPTETITION



- **Avoid Maximisation:** Consider the level of difficulty and complexity of the game tasks, based on the capabilities of the target group.
- **Matching:** Consider if the game needs to direct the players towards an event or area.
- **Reward Values:** Make sure the value of the rewards, within the games, fit the tasks given.



MOTIVATION DEVELOPMENT

- **MOTIVATING THE PARTICIPANTS**

Consider which type of motivational factors that needs to be implemented to the trans-media experience.

- **INITIATING AN INTEREST**

Define how to get the attention of the participants and how to engage them into the transmedia experience.

- **INVOLVEMENT ADJUSTMENT**

Consider how to adjust the involvement level of the participants, in form of the game elements in the experience.

- **MAINTAIN AN INTEREST**

Make sure the transmedia experience is able to maintain the interest of the target group.

MOTIVATION DEVELOPMENT

Note: Make sure the motivational factors fit the given target group, both intrinsically and extrinsically.

Entry Points Create easy recognisable entries, through mainly intrinsic motivational factors.



- **Multiple Activities:** Make sure the experience enables the possibility of engagement in a level needed.

- **Reward Value:** Make sure the effort and activity of the participants are equally rewarded.

Example: Maintaining the interest from the participants can be achieved through clearly defined live events, reward value adjustment, etc., and generally making sure the experience is attractive for the participants in any given part of the timeline.

INTERACTION DEVELOPMENT

- **SOCIAL MEDIA CONSIDERATION**
Make sure the social media platforms fit the storyline and is logically incorporated in the transmedia experience.

CHOOSING SOCIAL MEDIA

Identify which social media platforms should be used in the given context, and consider how the different platforms should be combined.

EXPERIENCE SHARING

Encourage the participants to share their experiences throughout the transmedia experience.

INTERACTION DEVELOPMENT

Note: Remember to keep the possibilities for the use of other social media platforms open. Help the participants towards the predefined social media platforms, but enable the possibility for the participants to choose themselves.

- **Social Networking Sites (SNS):** Choose the SNS for the central interaction method.
- **Blogs:** Blogs are useful for one-to-many communication. Consider using blogs for information distribution or giving instructions.
- **Content Communities (CC):** Consider the use of CCs in situations where a certain type of content distribution between users is needed.
- **Collaborative Projects:** Store and collect data throughout the experience.



Note: Consider how to incorporate experience sharing to be an element within the storyline of the transmedia experience.

INTERACTION DEVELOPMENT

• SMARTPHONE

Collect user data through the context-aware sensing capabilities and consider user interactions between the users

• DEDICATED APPLICATION

Consider creating a dedicated application, which act as a central interlink between the physical- and virtual worlds.

• DATA COLLECTION

Through the context-aware sensor capabilities it is possible to collect data and track progression of the participants, which can be utilised for character progression, adjusting rewards values and creating virtual achievements and badges.

INTERACTION DEVELOPMENT

- Make sure the smartphone logically fits the story and universe, and is logically incorporated into the transmedia experience.
- Make sure the smartphone has access to the chosen media platforms, and is able to interact with these.

- Consider which data should be saved, tracked and presented.
- Utilise the data with the storyline and the universe.
- Make sure the visual interface of the application reflects the theme and universe.



INTERACTION DEVELOPMENT

- **INTERACTION METHODS**

Identify where interactions are needed, and which.

- **USER INTERACTIONS**

Make sure the user interaction methods are simple and recognisable.

- **CHARACTER INTERACTIONS**

Consider how the fictional characters should interact with the participants.

- **FICTIONAL CHARACTERS**

Consider how the fictional characters are to interact with each other.

INTERACTION DEVELOPMENT

- Identify when participants have to interact with the characters and storyline.
- Identify when the participants need to interact with each other.

Note: It can be favourable to encourage the participants to only use one or a few social networking sites, as it eases the collective interaction overview - both for the participants and the developers.



- **Visual Statements:** Make sure the interactions between the fictional characters are visual, and easily recognisable.
- **In-Character:** Make sure the fictional characters behave verbally and visually as they do within the fictional universe.

PLANNING

- **MANUSCRIPT**

With the 5 previous sections developed, it is necessary to create a detailed manuscript, in order to gain a synchronous overview of the entire transmedia experience.

- **TIME PERIOD**

Make sure to check for special annual events, weather notifications, etc., which has an affect of the transmedia experience or can be utilised within the experience.

- **PLANNING**

Plan when the major events throughout the transmedia experience have to be executed.

- **TIMELINE**

Create a timeline, based on the manuscript and the planning information.

PLANNING

Note: The manuscript does not need to an explicit timed process, between each component, but to focus on how each segment unfolds.

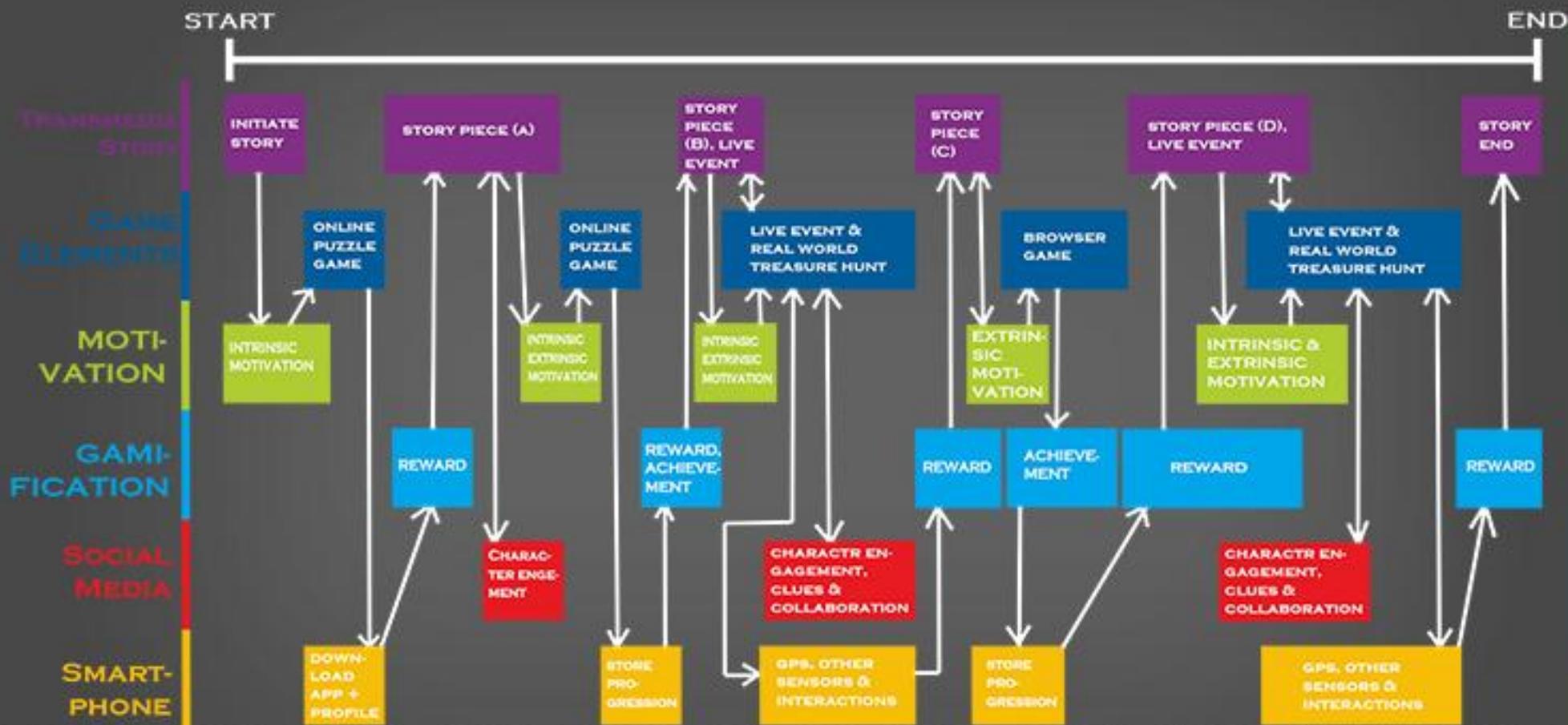


Note: Make sure the major events are logical and regularly allocated throughout the entire experience, and similar events not to close to each other, unless they fit logically.

- **Intersections:** Interlink each activity in order to visually explain the process in within the timeline.
- **Example:** A visual example of a guidemap for a transmedia experience can be seen on next page.

TIMETABLE

EXAMPLE



NOTE: The components used within the timeline, is chosen based on the given use case.

In this example, the transmedia story is initiated, it is the intrinsic motivational factors that create an interest from the participants to engage themselves into the ARG game (online puzzle game in this example). This is shown by an arrow pointing from the initiate story, to intrinsic motivation and then to the online puzzle game. The game then maintains the interest through a reward in the end, which in this example is a new piece of the story. Meanwhile, the fictional characters interact with the participants through social media networks, in order to add more realism to the transmedia experience. The first game makes the participants download the application and create a profile, which will be used for storing and tracking the user progression throughout the transmedia experience.

