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Telling Change: Transmedia Storytelling as A Framework for Civic Imagination and Social Engagement

Shema Bukhari

University College of Bahrain

Abstract

In an age where narratives travel across screens and platforms, transmedia storytelling has emerged as a dynamic mode of civic communication. This paper examines how cross-platform narratives create spaces for collective reflection, empathy, and participation in social issues. By weaving story elements through film, social media, interactive websites, and games, transmedia storytelling extends the reach of traditional narratives and invites audiences to become collaborators in meaning-making. The study adopts a qualitative case study approach to explore selected global campaigns that employ transmedia strategies to foster civic imagination and public engagement. Drawing on Jenkins' framework of participatory culture, Papacharissi's theory of affective publics, and Appadurai's concept of imagination as a social practice, the paper analyzes how narrative coherence, emotional immersion, and audience agency intersect to generate shared social consciousness. Findings suggest that transmedia storytelling functions not only as a cultural production technique but also as a pedagogical framework—one that helps communities envision change, construct empathy, and sustain dialogue across digital and physical contexts. The paper concludes that storytelling, when expanded across media ecosystems, can operate as a civic language for reimagining connection, identity, and transformation.

Keywords: Audience Agency; Civic Imagination; Digital Participation; Emotional Immersion; Participatory Culture; Social Consciousness