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# Transmedia Storytelling Strategies and Their Impact on Film Branding and Audience Retention

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## Abstract

This study investigates the role of transmedia storytelling strategies in enhancing film branding and audience retention within the Thai film industry. With the increasing integration of digital media platforms and interactive content, filmmakers are leveraging transmedia narratives to extend audience engagement beyond traditional theatrical releases. Using a qualitative research approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with Thai film producers and marketers, focus group discussions with audiences, and content analysis of selected transmedia campaigns. Thematic analysis revealed that transmedia strategies—such as social media extensions, web series, interactive campaigns, and cross-media collaborations—significantly contribute to film branding by reinforcing brand recognition, emotional attachment, and cultural relevance. Additionally, these strategies enhance audience retention by encouraging repeat engagement, fostering fan communities, and maintaining long-term loyalty across multiple platforms. The study provides empirical evidence of how transmedia storytelling serves as a strategic tool for the Thai film industry and offers practical recommendations for filmmakers and marketers to optimize audience engagement and brand value.

**Keywords:** Transmedia storytelling, Film branding, Audience retention, Thai film industry, Digital media, Cross-platform engagement

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Principles and Rationale

The advent of digital media and the proliferation of internet-based platforms have transformed the way audiences consume film content worldwide. Traditional linear narratives are increasingly complemented by transmedia storytelling, a strategy in which a story is expanded across multiple media platforms, each contributing uniquely to the overall narrative experience (Jenkins, 2006; Evans, 2011). Transmedia storytelling allows producers to extend audience engagement beyond the primary medium, enhancing both the brand value of the film and long-term viewer loyalty.

Globally, transmedia strategies have been widely adopted in film franchises, television series, and entertainment brands to cultivate fan communities, encourage participatory engagement, and maximize commercial returns (Dena, 2009; Scolari, 2009). Studies show that transmedia storytelling can strengthen audience retention by providing multiple points of entry

into a narrative universe, creating immersive and emotionally resonant experiences that encourage continued consumption across media platforms (Jenkins, 2006).

In Thailand, the adoption of transmedia strategies is emerging, driven by the growth of streaming platforms, social media, and mobile digital technologies. Research indicates that Thai audiences increasingly engage with films across multiple channels, including theatrical releases, online streaming, social media content, and interactive experiences (Klaysung, 2023). Narupon & Rattawadee, 2024). For instance, Thai filmmakers have started to release supplementary web series, behind-the-scenes content, and interactive digital campaigns to enhance narrative engagement and maintain audience interest beyond initial film releases.

Despite the rising significance of transmedia storytelling, research in the Thai context remains limited. Existing studies primarily focus on Western media markets, while Thai studies have emphasized social campaigns or media education rather than commercial film production (Akarajantachot, 2017; Suwannarat, 2024). Moreover, Thai film marketers have begun integrating Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) strategies with transmedia content to strengthen film branding, yet empirical studies evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies on audience retention are scarce (Techapongsathon, 2024; Satunuwat & Chartsrisumpun, 2025).

Given these developments, it is critical to explore how transmedia storytelling strategies are implemented in Thai film production and assess their impact on film branding and audience retention. This background highlights the convergence of digital media, narrative expansion, and marketing strategy as key factors shaping contemporary film consumption in Thailand. Understanding these dynamics will offer insights for filmmakers, marketers, and researchers on optimizing audience engagement and sustaining brand loyalty in the Thai film industry.

## **1.2 Research Objective**

The main objectives of this study are to:

1. To identify the transmedia storytelling strategies used by Thai film producers and marketers.
2. To examine the impact of transmedia storytelling strategies on film branding in Thailand.
3. To evaluate the effect of transmedia storytelling strategies on audience retention.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Transmedia Storytelling**

Transmedia storytelling refers to a narrative strategy where a single story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each platform contributing unique content to the overall narrative experience (Jenkins, 2006). Unlike multi-platform content, transmedia is designed to provide distinct story elements across media, creating multiple entry points for audiences while maintaining narrative cohesion (Scolari, 2009). The strategy engages audiences actively by encouraging participation, interpretation, and emotional investment, which is critical for extending the life cycle of media products (Evans, 2011; Dena, 2009). In Thailand, transmedia

storytelling has been explored in both media education and public communication campaigns. For example, Akarajantachot (2017) studied transmedia storytelling in social advocacy campaigns and found that cross-platform narratives strengthened audience engagement and community participation.

## **2.2 Film Branding**

Film branding is a strategic approach that extends beyond the content of the film itself to encompass audience perceptions, marketing campaigns, merchandise, and associated media experiences (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Effective film branding enhances recognition, builds emotional attachment, and creates long-term value for audiences and producers alike. In global film markets, transmedia storytelling has been successfully integrated into film branding strategies to extend narrative worlds, reinforce brand identity, and maintain audience interest beyond initial releases (Jenkins, 2006; Evans, 2011). Narupon and Rattawadee (2024) found that IMC and transmedia storytelling in Thai films enhanced brand awareness and audience engagement, particularly in the post-COVID-19 era. Similarly, Thanadayamonmueang et al. (2022) showed that transmedia content strengthened film identity and cultural branding.

## **2.3 Audience Retention**

Audience retention refers to the ability of media products to maintain audience interest, encourage repeat engagement, and foster loyalty over time. Studies indicate that multi-platform and transmedia strategies can improve audience retention by offering continuous engagement opportunities and immersive experiences (Scolari, 2009; Dena, 2009). By providing multiple touchpoints across media platforms, audiences remain connected to the narrative universe, which enhances emotional attachment and loyalty (Evans, 2011). Thai studies indicate that audience retention depends on cultural alignment and cross-platform accessibility, with transmedia strategies extending engagement beyond theatrical release and strengthening audience-brand relationships (Satunuwat & Chartsrisumpun, 2025).

## **2.4 Transmedia Storytelling and Film Branding in Thailand**

Combining the insights above, transmedia storytelling serves as a bridge between narrative expansion and strategic film branding. In Thailand, producers and marketers who integrate transmedia strategies can enhance brand identity, foster emotional attachment, and maintain audience engagement over multiple platforms (Narupon & Rattawadee, 2024; Thanadayamonmueang et al., 2022). By connecting narrative content to culturally relevant media touchpoints, films can achieve both commercial success and audience loyalty.

## **2.5 Research Gap**

While global studies have extensively explored the effects of transmedia storytelling on brand engagement and audience retention, there remains limited empirical research on how these strategies are implemented and experienced in the Thai film industry. Most existing studies focus on Western audiences or public communication campaigns in Thailand (Akarajantachot, 2017; Suwannarat, 2024). Therefore, investigating the impact of transmedia

storytelling on film branding and audience retention in Thailand provides an important contribution to both academic research and industry practice.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore how transmedia storytelling strategies are used in the Thai film industry and how they influence film branding and audience retention. A qualitative design is appropriate because it allows for an in-depth understanding of complex phenomena, such as creative production processes, marketing strategies, and audience engagement behaviors, within their real-world context (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

#### **3.1 Population and Sample**

The study population comprises Thai film producers and marketers involved in transmedia storytelling initiatives, as well as audience members who have engaged with Thai films across multiple platforms, including cinemas, streaming services, and social media. Purposive sampling will be used to recruit 15–20 industry professionals and 30–40 audience participants with direct experience in transmedia film campaigns and multi-platform consumption.

#### **3.2 Data Collection Methods**

Data will be collected through multiple qualitative methods to ensure triangulation and analytical rigor. Semi-structured interviews with film producers, marketers, and audience members will be conducted to capture in-depth perspectives on transmedia strategies, branding practices, and audience engagement. Focus group discussions with audiences will further explore perceptions of transmedia storytelling and its influence on engagement and retention. In addition, content analysis will be applied to Thai film transmedia campaigns, including social media content, web series, interactive digital materials, and marketing communications.

#### **3.3 Data Analysis**

Data will be analyzed using thematic analysis to systematically identify, interpret, and synthesize patterns within the qualitative data. The analysis begins with data familiarization through repeated review of interview transcripts, focus group discussions, and documentary materials. Relevant data segments are then coded into meaningful categories related to transmedia storytelling strategies, film branding, and audience retention. These codes are subsequently refined into higher-order themes that explain the relationships between transmedia practices and their impacts. Finally, findings are triangulated across interviews, focus groups, and content analyses to enhance analytical validity and credibility.

### **4. Results**

The analysis of data collected from semi-structured interviews with film producers and marketers, focus group discussions with audiences, and content analysis of transmedia campaigns revealed several key findings regarding the use of transmedia storytelling in Thailand and its impact on film branding and audience retention.

#### 4.1 Transmedia Storytelling Strategies in Thai Films

The study found that Thai filmmakers and marketers commonly employ the following transmedia strategies:

*Social Media Extensions:* Films are supported by official pages, behind-the-scenes videos, interactive quizzes, and character social media accounts, which extend engagement beyond the theater.

*Web Series and Short-form Content:* Supplemental web series or short videos are produced to provide deeper character development and plot elaboration, offering fans additional points of entry into the narrative.

*Interactive Digital Campaigns:* Online games, polls, or story-driven challenges allow audiences to participate actively in the story world, increasing emotional attachment and investment.

*Cross-Media Collaboration:* Some films leverage collaborations with music, fashion, and literature to create transmedia experiences that enhance cultural resonance and brand depth.

These strategies demonstrate that Thai producers are increasingly adopting multi-platform storytelling techniques to reach audiences across different digital and traditional media channels.

#### 4.2 Impact on Film Branding

Analysis revealed that transmedia storytelling contributes significantly to film branding in several ways:

*Brand Recognition:* Transmedia content across multiple platforms reinforces the film's identity and increases public awareness. Participants reported that campaigns featuring consistent visual and narrative elements strengthened brand recall.

*Emotional Attachment:* Audiences expressed that interactive and supplementary content increased their emotional investment in the film's characters and narrative world, which in turn enhanced the perceived value of the film brand.

*Cultural Relevance:* Films that integrated culturally familiar elements in transmedia extensions, such as local social media trends or folklore-inspired narratives, were better received by audiences and contributed positively to brand perception.

#### 4.3 Impact on Audience Retention

Findings also indicate that transmedia storytelling plays a key role in maintaining audience engagement and retention:

*Repeat Engagement:* Supplementary content on social media and web platforms encouraged audiences to revisit the narrative universe multiple times, extending the film's lifecycle beyond the theatrical release.

*Community Formation:* Online discussion forums, fan pages, and participatory campaigns facilitated social interactions among viewers, creating communities that support long-term audience loyalty.

*Platform Flexibility:* Audiences reported that the ability to access film-related content across mobile devices, streaming platforms, and social media increased convenience and sustained interest.

#### **4.4 Key Themes Identified**

Through thematic analysis, three key themes emerged:

*Integration of Narrative and Marketing:* Effective transmedia campaigns integrate storytelling and marketing seamlessly, reinforcing both narrative engagement and brand awareness.

*Audience Participation:* Active audience involvement through interactive platforms strengthens emotional connections and loyalty.

*Cultural and Contextual Alignment:* Transmedia content tailored to Thai cultural norms, values, and media consumption habits maximizes engagement and retention.

Overall, the results suggest that transmedia storytelling is a strategic tool for enhancing both the branding of Thai films and sustaining audience retention across multiple media platforms. These findings align with global studies on transmedia practices, while providing context-specific insights for the Thai film industry.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study examined the implementation of transmedia storytelling strategies in the Thai film industry and their influence on film branding and audience retention. The findings indicate that Thai filmmakers and marketers increasingly adopt multi-platform narrative strategies, including social media extensions, web series, interactive digital campaigns, and cross-media collaborations, to engage audiences beyond traditional film screenings.

The results show that transmedia storytelling enhances film branding by strengthening brand recognition, building emotional attachment, and increasing cultural relevance. Films that integrate supplementary content across digital platforms create cohesive narrative experiences that reinforce brand identity and improve audience perception. Additionally, audience retention is positively influenced by transmedia strategies. Audiences are more likely to repeatedly engage with the narrative, participate in fan communities, and maintain loyalty when supplementary content is available on multiple accessible platforms. Interactive campaigns, culturally aligned content, and opportunities for participation contribute significantly to sustaining long-term viewer interest.

Overall, transmedia storytelling serves as a strategic tool for enhancing both the commercial and cultural value of Thai films. By bridging narrative expansion and marketing communication, filmmakers can optimize audience engagement and retention while reinforcing the film's brand identity. The study's findings align with global literature on transmedia storytelling. Jenkins (2006) emphasizes that transmedia narratives create multiple points of engagement, increasing audience investment and brand loyalty. Similarly, Evans (2011) highlights the importance of cross-platform experiences in maintaining ongoing audience engagement. These principles are mirrored in the Thai film industry, where producers are adapting transmedia strategies to local contexts and cultural preferences.

The findings offer several practical implications for Thai filmmakers and marketers. First, effective transmedia strategies require the close integration of narrative development and marketing objectives to deliver cohesive experiences that consistently reinforce film brand identity. Second, fostering audience participation through interactive mechanisms such as social media engagement, polls, and story-based activities can enhance emotional attachment and strengthen long-term loyalty. Third, optimizing content for the specific characteristics of each media platform is essential to maximize audience engagement and accessibility. In addition, future research may extend this study by employing quantitative approaches to examine audience behavior, exploring demographic differences in multi-platform media consumption, or conducting comparative analyses of transmedia strategies across regional film industries.

## **Acknowledgment**

The author would like to formally express appreciations to Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University for financial support and the Faculty of Management Sciences for providing full assistance until this research was successfully completed. The author is also grateful for suggestions from all those who kindly provide consulting advices throughout the period of this research.

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