Transmedia storytelling: expanding formatted contents in global

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Currently, many entertainment contents around the world are going through transmedia. In particular, video contents that cross media have various changes and acceptance patterns. In addition to being converted into new texts in new media to reflect the differentiation of media, global contents are also reproduced as local contents in new regions. This appears in different ways depending on the genre, such as movies and series. In the case of TV shows, the original works are formatted and these formats are traded with overseas production companies to reproduce and broadcast new contents with modified formats in each region. In this trend, the following characteristics of transmedia storytelling were derived by analyzing cases of formatted contents that are popular worldwide. ① Reconstructing native language to help each country and ethnicity understand, ② Modifying the structure of texts to reflect local cultural backgrounds, ③ Reconstructing characters to reflect local trends, ④ Reflecting micro contents of local culture, ⑤ Reconstructing music, art, and various multimedia, ⑥ Developing communication platforms with viewers. Most format contents are reproduced as new contents through these processes. Currently, in the global entertainment market, all contents must devise strategies for developing global formats. The industry will be able to plan content more effectively and efficiently through the storytelling issues of formatted contents presented above. This article is designed as a narrative review focusing on storytelling and cultural contents in entertainment formats. By synthesizing academic perspectives and industry cases, it contributes to a deeper understanding of storytelling as a strategic framework in cultural content studies.

KEYWORDS

transmedia, storytelling, formatted contents, format business, IP ecosystem

1 Formatted contents trade as transmedia

A format is a type of text that generates distinctive narratives and can be transformed and reproduced for peripheral audiences, thus enabling licensing as a business model. Within broadcast programming, formats are divided into scripted contents and unscripted contents. Scripted formats, which are filmed directly from written scripts, are used in dramas, films, and sitcoms, whereas unscripted formats are applied to entertainment shows or documentaries.

The earliest instance of format trade began with radio, but it has since become most actively pursued in the television industry. The origin of the format business lies in the production of local programs reflecting the tastes of target audiences. One early example is *Amateur Hour*, a talent show broadcast in New York in the 1920s, which was later aired by the BBC and Australian radio channels, and subsequently in Canada and other U. S. states. Another case is the New York radio program *It Pays to Be Ignorant,* which was reformatted by CBS and broadcast on the BBC as *Ignorance is Bliss*, and eventually sold across multiple European countries. At that time, most format business was centered in the United States, but Europe later came to occupy a large portion of the format licensing industry (Chalaby, 2012).

In the 1980s, the United States legally restricted format trade to the game show genre, temporarily contracting the business. However, by the 2000s, both the volume and scope of format trade had expanded explosively. Once limited to game shows, formats diversified into reality shows and factual entertainment. The trade, previously centered on Anglo-American countries, expanded into Asia and the Global South.

South Korea, Turkey, Israel, and Japan emerged as format suppliers. For example, Japan developed the entertainment format *Shark Tank*, which was purchased by the United Kingdom and produced under the title *Dragon's Den*. Korea exported the format of the variety show *Grandpas Over Flowers* to the United Kingdom, where it was broadcast as *Better Late Than NeverGrandpas Over Flowers* to the United Kingdom, where it was broadcast as *Better Late Than Never*. Likewise, *Hidden SingerDragon's DenShark Tank*, which was purchased by the United Kingdom and produced under the title *Dragon's Den*. Korea exported the format of the variety show *Grandpas Over Flowers* to the United Kingdom, where it was broadcast as *Better Late Than Never*. Likewise, *Hidden Singer* was sold to China, Italy, Thailand, the United States, and Vietnam, and continues to air across seasons.

According to the Eurodata TV Worldwide Report, an analysis of 48 countries showed that about half of the 9,000 programs broadcast in 2017 originated from foreign formats (Digital TV Europe, 2018). Similarly, Glance's, 2020 Entertainment TV Report, which surveyed 91 channels in 11 countries, revealed that format contents accounted for an average of four out of ten prime-time programs and increased audience ratings by two-thirds. (Glance, 2020) Originating in television, formatted contents have now expanded to OTT platforms, driving even greater demand.

Broadcasters today require content that can sustain audiences over the long term. They continuously monitor global content markets. While television audiences are declining in many parts of the world due to the rise of diverse media, Central Asia continues to show increasing viewership. Central Asian audiences are displaying greater interest in East Asian formats, while Latin America is paying attention to reality shows from the Middle East and Eastern Europe (Chalaby and Esser, 2017). They are seeking new content, turning to neighboring countries and cultural spheres.

Examples of partnerships and co-productions already exist. Longstanding collaborations between Fremantle and Fuji TV resulted in the joint production of Total and *Little Presenter*, which were sold to multiple regions. Similarly, Hunan TV partnered with Endemol Shine, while Red Arrow and Nippon TV collaborated to produce the studio-based game show *Beat the Rooms*. Another example includes the partnership between the U.K.'s Zig Zag and China's 3C Media on *Ancient Games*. In 2019, A + E Networks signed a representation and co-production agreement with Korea's JTBC, under which A + E Networks obtained exclusive rights to represent JTBC's major programs and forthcoming titles (Fry, 2020).

The television industry is now at a critical juncture with the emergence of new media and platforms (Son and Kim, 2021). In an environment of intensified competition where commercial success is not guaranteed, investing heavily in program production remains a high risk (Yoon, 2021). Broadcasters have thus turned to formatting as a strategy to fill program schedules: producing original programs to earn royalties, or exporting popular discontinued programs as formats (Esser, 2013). For importers, the advantage lies in reducing risk by acquiring formats with pre-established recognition and popularity.

This recent broadcasting trend can be regarded as a dimension of transmedia. Texts now encounter new media in diverse ways. In this process, a text leaves its country of origin and is reborn as a new text for new audiences in a new locale. These newly reborn texts create localized transmedia storyworlds that invite viewers. Audiences experience, participate in, and contribute to the building and transformation of these storyworlds.

Ryan (2020) considers narrative as the expansion of the interaction between multilayered texts and the audience, akin to an extension of virtual reality experience. This aligns with the analytical framework of this study, in which transmedia storytelling expands across various platforms and media, generating multiple reception experiences beyond a single narrative within socio-cultural contexts.

Furthermore, Herman (2021) analyzes in detail the mechanism whereby narrative functions as a core cognitive tool organizing human memory, cognition, and emotional responses, emphasizing the interaction between narrative structures and the recipient's cognitive processes. His cognitive-scientific approach provides a useful theoretical framework for interpreting the complex narrative experiences and audience participation phenomena observed in the analysis of formatted content in this research.

This study aims to examine formatted contents as a form of transmedia storytelling by identifying essential elements in the localization process, analyzing specific cases, and proposing strategies for constructing localized transmedia storyworlds.

2 Storytelling strategy for formatted contents production in local

Simply purchasing and broadcasting foreign format content corresponds to the import and export of content. To produce content aimed at local audiences, a process of interpretation, deconstruction, and reconstruction of the existing format content is required. This is especially true for unscripted formatted contents. Compared to movies or dramas, show entertainment genres particularly undergo this process and are reborn as new content. Here, the concept of transmedia storytelling comes into play.

Transmedia storytelling expands the narrative across various platforms and formats, creates immersive worlds, and encourages viewer participation through diverse media such as social media, video games, and fan-made content, thereby enhancing the overall story experience. During the process of maintaining or reworking the format of the original content, the existing narrative is expanded and a new worldview is realized. Moreover, this expands into new countries through their most accessible social media platforms in their native languages, and user-generated content is created, leading to a new phase where fans interact with each other.

In this storytelling process, six essential elements will be explained. However, to understand the significant modes of change in content, the focus is limited to unscripted contents. Scripted content has limitations in format changes, whereas unscripted content has been found to transform into a much wider range of forms and directions.

This article is designed as a narrative review focusing on storytelling and cultural contents in entertainment formats. The sources were identified through searches in Google Scholar and

industry reports such as Eurodata TV and Glance reports. The review covered materials published between 2010 and 2025, with a focus on genres such as OTT platforms and television formats. In total, approximately 30 scholarly articles and 7 industry reports were consulted, from which 14 representative cases were selected for closer analysis. The formatting and diffusion patterns of 14 original contents from four European countries, seven East Asian countries, and three North American countries were examined (see Table 1).

The selection of cases was conducted through a manual procedure that prioritized formats widely recognized in both academia and industry for their storytelling significance. The main criteria included (1) the degree to which a format demonstrates narrative strategies, (2) its transnational adaptation and cultural transferability, and (3) its relevance to the discussion of cultural contents as global entertainment. The review focused on cases produced and circulated between 2010 and 2025, a period that highlights recent developments in digital platforms and transnational storytelling strategies. Cases such as *Master Chef*, *The Masked Singer*, *Dragon's Den, Master Chef*, *The Masked Singer, Dragon's Den*, and *Big Brother* were chosen because they represent paradigmatic examples that illustrate how storytelling operates as both a cultural practice and a business strategy in the entertainment industry. Storytelling functions as a core analytical framework in cultural content studies.

2.1 Reconstructing in the native language

The basic approach is to express language in the native tongue, and to adapt non-verbal expressions by reflecting the cultural background of the respective country. For example, in India, programs are produced not only in Hindi but also in various regional languages like Tamil and Telugu, increasing understanding and affinity among local viewers.

Not only the program content but also the title is translated into each country's local language, serving as a point where differentiated strategies across countries can be identified. It is important to reflect

cultural backgrounds and current trends and even transform taboo linguistic expressions into positive ones.

The BBC's The Great British Bake Off aired in the UK was broadcast in the US under the altered title *The Great British Baking ShowThe Great British Bake Off* aired in the UK was broadcast in the US under the altered title *The Great British Baking Show*. This change was to avoid legal issues because "Bake Off" is a trademarked term in the US (Bose, 2020). Furthermore, it is inferred that in the US content market, which prefers more direct expressions, the term "Show," which simply reflects the genre and function of the content, was more appropriate than "Off," a quaint British expression filled with old-fashioned humor and nuance.

In the case of *Tigers of Money*, the animal featured in the title changed according to each country, resulting in notably different titles. The tiger used in the original work transformed into lions, dragons, and sharks depending on the country. Belgium and Denmark renamed it *Lion's Den*, the UK and Greece *Dragon's DenLion's Den*, the UK and Greece *Dragon's Den*, and the US and Brazil *Shark Tank*. This reflects the meanings and emotions associated with these animals in each culture.

The original Japanese version incorporated the powerful and familiar image of the tiger as a character. European countries, however, adopted the lion, an animal often symbolizing authority, dignity, and strength in Norse mythology and other northern European traditions. The UK version aired as *Dragon's Den* and achieved great popularity; subsequently, countries culturally influenced by the UK, such as Australia and New Zealand, retained the "Dragon" in the title. This mythical and fantastical image of the dragon emphasized the monumental and mythic presence of entrepreneurs as judges. The US chose the shark, an animal commonly perceived as a villain attacking humans, especially symbolizing sharp teeth and aggression. The shark directly represents the cold and aggressive investors expected in American society. Brazil, Mexico, and other Latin American countries adopted the American title without changes.

This format connects the animal in the title to the roles played within the content—it refers to the judges deciding on investments

TABLE 1 Formatted contents cases analyzed in this review.

Continent	Original Country	Title	Genre	Year (Origin)
Europe	UK	MasterChef	Cooking Competition	1990
	UK	The Great British Bake Off / The Great British Baking Show	Cooking Competition	2010
	UK (Zig Zag) + China (3C Media)	Ancient Games	Entertainment Co-production	2019
	Netherlands	Big Brother	Reality / Survival Show	1999
Asia	Japan	Tigers of Money	Business Pitch Reality Show	2001
	Japan (Fuji TV) + Fremantle	Total Blackout/Little Presenter	Game Show (Co-production)	2010s
	Japan (Nippon TV) + Red Arrow	Beat the Rooms	Studio-based Game Show	2010s
	South Korea	Grandpas Over Flowers	Variety / Travel Reality	2013
	South Korea	Hidden Singer	Music Entertainment	2012
	South Korea	I Can See Your Voice	Music Entertainment	2015
	South Korea	Startup Project—I Am a Businessman	Business Pitch Reality	2016
North America	USA	Shark Tank	Business Pitch Reality Show	2009
	USA	Better Late Than Never	Travel Reality	2016
	USA	Impractical Jokers	Reality/Hidden Camera Comedy	2011

(United Nations Sustainable Development, 2024). These judges are called dragons, lions, etc., and express different personalities. Fans and the content itself sometimes describe each judge as a 'Strong Dragon' or 'Warm Shark.'

Reconstructing not only the title but also important images symbolizing the participants in the format into the native language is crucial in format adaptation. Rather than simply directly translating the original title, it must be culturally reconstructed in a way that suits the cultural sensibility, symbolic system, and audience perception of the respective culture. Because the title itself becomes the brand, it is also important to adapt it into an intuitive and attractive title. Title reconstruction can be regarded as the first step in branding. Finally, through the rhythm, humor, and directness of language, the title must become familiar enough for consumers to continuously share and mention it, which can also be effective for viral marketing.

2.2 Transformation of format structure

When exporting a format, changes to the narrative structure go beyond simple formal adoption; they demonstrate how the core identity of the content is re-narrativized to align with the culture, values, and emotional frameworks of the local country. This change is especially pronounced in unscripted formats, where intertextuality generated during this transformation and acceptance process offers new experiences to global audiences who enjoy diverse content.

The British original format *Master Chef* was exported worldwide and aired in Korea under the title *Master Chef* Korea. While the original version maximized tension centered on cooking skills and contestants surviving or being eliminated, the Korean version emphasizes the participants' background stories, including their family circumstances, the meaning of their challenges, and individuality. In the original, cooking signifies technical and professional expertise, but in the Korean transformed narrative, cooking symbolizes survival and hope and functions as a medium for participants' family, past memories, and emotions. The British original focuses the camera on cooking expertise, technique, and the quality of the final dish, whereas the Korean version focuses more on the emotional narrative, such as the tears or joy of the eliminated contestants.

Especially in episodes where teams compete, the original's narrative resolves conflicts and leadership issues between individuals, while the Korean version strengthens individual sacrifice and affection for team harmony. This reflects cultural tendencies valuing communal cohesion. In summary, the original builds a competitive narrative, whereas the Korean version constructs a narrative of growth and emotion. The original emphasizes the crisis, tension, and catharsis generated by the survival genre structure, while Korea emphasizes empathy and emotional impact typical of drama genres.

During the export and production of the Korean music entertainment format *I Can See Your Voice* in the US, its format underwent changes. The first change was in the scale and awarding method of the prize. The Korean version awards digital singles to skilled participants and monetary prizes to tone-deaf ones, whereas the US version increased appeal and expectations by awarding a large prize of $100,000 to a participant (CJ ENM, 2025). Second, the original centers on the elimination narrative distinguishing tone-deaf from skilled singers. However, reflecting the US TV environment,

where the program must fit around six commercial breaks, the structure was altered. The elimination process was organized into five thematic rounds—visual, lip-sync, evidence presentation, rehearsal, and interview—each with unique methods. Lastly, while in the original the decision on elimination is made by celebrity guests, the US version added ordinary participants to this role, increasing viewer enjoyment and allowing them to identify with these non-celebrity participants, imagining themselves participating in the show.

This transformation in format structure can be seen as borrowing elements from the game show genre in music entertainment. The process of passing through different rounds with distinct characteristics aiming for a grand prize and the structure where ordinary people directly eliminate contestants and eventually win the prize involves complex and multifaceted devices rather than a single genre narrative. Thus, the original music enjoyment genre transformed into a survival genre, adopting game show elements to create a new format. Furthermore, such living content adapts by changing traits according to the local media ecosystem, and the narrative structure varies according to the preferences and degree of involvement of the audience.

2.3 Reconstruction of characters

It is a natural outcome that characters change as the narrative structure is transformed. To enable local viewers to easily empathize and become immersed, adjusting character settings such as personality, background, speech style, and names to fit the local culture and sentiment is a necessary step. Furthermore, character traits need to be strategically designed. However, the Korean version of *Dragon's Den*, titled *Startup Project—I Am a BusinessmanDragon's Den*, titled Startup Project—I Am a Businessman, can be seen as a failure in this regard.

The investors (dragons) on *Dragon's Den* each have distinct personalities, business charisma, and sometimes blunt and sharp speech, leaving a strong impression on viewers. They not only come from diverse business fields but also possess distinctive character traits in terms of personality, speech, and style, which are often exaggerated for the show. In contrast, the investor panel on *Startup Project—I Am a BusinessmanDragon's Den* each have distinct personalities, business charisma, and sometimes blunt and sharp speech, leaving a strong impression on viewers. They not only come from diverse business fields but also possess distinctive character traits in terms of personality, speech, and style, which are often exaggerated for the show. In contrast, the investor panel on *Startup Project—I Am a Businessman* lacked popular recognition and character depth, and the individuality and expertise of each investor were insufficiently highlighted. As a result, viewers found it difficult to remember 'who is who' or 'what personality they have,' hindering immersion.

The failure of empathetic characters is also a contributing factor. Among many global format contents, when survival or competition genres are produced in Korea, judges' characters tend to be transformed into empathetic types. Emotional empathy is an important social virtue in Korean society. Strong and authoritative characters from the original survival or competition genres tend to be softened into empathetic and emotional characters for the Korean version, which influences casting choices.

However, such empathetic Korean characters were not well received in the Korean version of *Dragon's Den*. While the original

investors asked pointed questions and judged coldly based on capital logic, the Korean version reduced this role to that of advisors. They aimed to assess participants' passion, creativity, and potential rather than technical or economic knowledge, and emotionally connected with participants through words of encouragement and tears. This approach was inappropriate for a show format whose logic and rationality are based on deciding whether to invest substantial capital in a large product. Viewers reacted negatively to judges making capital and economic judgments based on emotional criteria, which prevented the generation of tension and conflict crucial for viewer immersion, resulting in failure to engage.

In contrast, *Master Chef*'s US and Australian versions succeeded in character transformation and creating new characters. The cooking competition format *Master Chef*, which originated in the UK, introduced newly created judge characters in each country's version. The British original featured cooking researchers or professional chefs as judges who emphasized business expertise, deep culinary analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.

The US version, however, recruited unique characters such as Gordon Ramsay. His blunt and charismatic persona gained great popularity and attention. Especially in cooking competitions, he created an antagonist who instigated conflict with the main contestants, an unusual "good vs. evil" narrative. This created tension not between contestants but between Ramsay and contestants, and his sometimes harsh and aggressive conduct led viewers to root for and identify with the contestants, deepening their immersion. Yet Ramsay's warm advice following harsh criticism developed him into a multi-dimensional and complex character, contributing to his fandom.

Subsequent versions in various countries have featured star chefs or famous influencers as judges. In Australia, mentor-type judges created a family-like atmosphere and fostered empathy by mentoring contestants, gaining viewers' affection. Moreover, former contestants have appeared as judges, connecting participants, judges, and audiences through shared experiences and amplifying emotional bonds.

In narrative shifts, characters are culturally re-narrativized. These characters are not simply popular trendy figures but symbolic representatives revealing each nation's identity, moral ethics, and collective psychology. As characters provoke conflict and drive the narrative within the show, it is natural and necessary for new characters to appear in formats adapted to new cultural contexts.

2.4 Reflecting local micro-content

Formats are adjusted and adapted to consider the cultural acceptability of new countries, and in this process, local micro-content inevitably gets reflected. Micro-content does not fundamentally change the overall structure but generates new micro-narratives within the interaction with the main narrative structure. This delivers new sensations and emotions to local viewers and reproduces unfamiliar and tangible new experiences to highlight cultural distinctiveness. It is also an important strategy to delicately express local everyday life, emotional codes, and collective identity. It is implemented through detailed scenes, modes of expression, behavior codes, and emotional rhythms that directly appeal to viewers' senses and realities.

In the case of *Master Chef*, as cooking is the subject, new texts are added in displaying local cuisines of each country. In Korea, participants

tend to focus more on stories related to food rather than the cooking itself. For example, unique Korean food cultures such as kimchi, fermented sauces, and ancestral ritual foods are introduced. Participants explain their relationship with particular foods, creating emotional content, such as food that reminds them of their mothers or family tastes, thereby strengthening emotional narratives. The dish Doenjang jjigae (soybean paste stew) is used as a primary motif symbolizing family community, with emphasis placed not on the cooking itself but on participants' emotional reactions during the cooking process.

In India, due to its vast regions and diverse ethnicities, regional micro-contents frequently appear. Regional festivals like Diwali and Pongal are featured, and traditional foods related to these festivals become episode themes, allowing viewers to experience vivid local cultures. Similar to Korea, personal stories involving family memories are shared in relation to cooking, emphasizing emotional expression during cooking and inducing emotional immersion, thus strengthening emotional connections with viewers.

In Vietnam, a fusion of national traditions and modern elements is offered, providing viewers with familiar material. Traditional Vietnamese dishes like Banh Xeo and Pho are reinterpreted in modern styles, and cooking tasks utilize regional specialties to highlight regional diversity. Additionally, cooking projects that contribute to local communities emphasize communal values.

The US version of *I Can See Your Voice* strengthened micro-content related to entertainment and humor compared to the Korean original's strong emphasis on participants' identities. Comedian Ken Jeong's performances, lines, and bodily reactions are representative examples. Additionally, micro-content familiar to the American public is discovered through selections of pop and soul music from American popular culture, the use of slang, jargon, and memes. The show also incorporates sitcom-like elements familiar to American viewers.

While micro-content involving entertainment and humor is also observed in the UK version, it contrasts with the US version by displaying a more cynical style characterized by dark humor and self-mocking parodies. Furthermore, nostalgic selections of Britpop and classic pop from the late '80s to '90s, as well as satirical performances, can be considered distinctive micro-contents.

Thus, micro-content is an indispensable strategy for deeply localizing formats. Variations in scene-level and emotional details reflect the emotional structure and sensory systems of the accepting country and are a key device for securing emotional authenticity in the content. It is no exaggeration to say that the success of global formats depends largely on the ability to coordinate micro-content, making it an important storytelling strategy.

2.5 Reconstruction of multimedia

A single content is composed of a combination of multiple modes. It is mainly crucial how images, videos, art, sounds and music, subtitles, and user interfaces (UIs), based on visual and auditory senses, are recombined. This goes beyond simple language translation and involves comprehensively adapting and applying the content to fit the culture, language, viewing habits, and technological environment of the target market.

The American original *Impractical Jokers* has been localized in various countries including the UK, Italy, and Mexico, providing an active example of multimedia reconstruction. Notably, the filming

locations, backgrounds, props, and costumes were localized. The US version was filmed in public places in cities like New York where passersby appear in the cameras, reflecting a dual atmosphere of openness in public spaces and social cautiousness. The British version extended these visual elements by expanding filming to streets, shops, and parks in London and Essex, a strategy aimed at creating familiar and relatable spaces for viewers. Also, signs and brands in streets and public places were openly shown to emphasize a vivid and familiar image. The lively and humorous music of the American version was replaced by popular local music and local-style sound effects to suit local viewer sentiments. Unlike the fast and bold editing style preferred by American viewers, the British and other versions favored more restrained editing with awkward silences and subtle reactions, reflecting local codes.

Master Chef actively localized visual elements such as studio set design, judges' outfits, and traditional dishes. Subtitles and graphic designs, such as scoreboards, mission instructions, and contestant introductions, were also adapted to match local broadcast trends and viewer preferences. The British original focused the narrative mainly on cooking and emphasized visual effects related to the aesthetics of cooking. In contrast, the American version dramatically edited contestants' emotional expressions with frequent close-ups to heighten tension and favored fast and dramatic music (Esposito, 2018). The Australian version adjusted the pace with slower editing and visuals matched to local cultural tempo, featuring customized background music expressing nuanced emotions like tension, emotion, and growth. A variety of instruments such as piano, strings, and orchestra were utilized to maximize the atmosphere of contestants' stories and scenes.

2.6 Activation of local communication platforms

In transmedia, communication with users goes beyond simple consumption to mean participatory co-creation of the story world. It offers new perspectives on content stories and allows users to experience and evolve stories in their own ways. Through user-generated contents such as comments, shares, voting, and hashtag challenges, users can directly contribute to story development and branding. This ultimately leads to fandom formation, creates real communities, and contributes to building a vast shared story world from personal experiences. Therefore, this is also a key element in the localization strategy of format content.

The reality program *Big Brother*, originating in the Netherlands, has been exported and locally produced in over 50 countries. It frequently involves viewer participation in selecting eliminated contestants. All versions have introduced systems where viewers directly influence the program's outcomes through real-time voting and opinion sharing platforms connected to official websites, dedicated apps, and social media. Interactive communication such as viewer discussion boards and social media hashtag challenges has become central to broadcasting, and platform engagement continues to improve.

In the US, *Big Brother* provides 24-h live house video, highlights, and analysis content, along with official season voting and special mission votes like *America's Favorite HG*. Live feeds subscribers interact in dedicated chat rooms with real-time discussions, voting, and highlight bookmarking. The program also uses a diverse range of

channels including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Reddit (fan discussions/spoilers/predictions), and podcasts (in-depth analysis) (Natanedelsburg, 2013).

## 3 Sustaining IP ecosystems: transmedia lifecycle of formatted contents

Today's media market is rapidly changing due to the growth of OTT platforms and the expansion of global networks. In this trend, formatted contents are entering the international market through various methods such as licensing, remakes, and co-productions. A common characteristic of successful contents is their inclusion of universal values—such as family, community, emotions, and challenges—that resonate globally. These values must be flexibly adapted and applied to local cultures, supported by technology and distribution platforms. In addition, several strategies for the sustainable expansion of formatted content IPs will be discussed.

As examined in the previous chapter, formatted contents are distributed globally based on original narratives planned during initial production but undergo various transformations during localization, including narrative, character settings, and visual codes. These transformations not only reflect the cultural preferences of local audiences but also create new narrative assets that tend to reintegrate back into the original IP. For example, original formats may incorporate unique elements from local versions into global renewal seasons.

As Chalaby (2021) notes, transnational television formats illustrate how global diffusion and local adaptation are embedded in industrial practices, which corresponds to the circulation loop highlighted in this article. This forms a feedback loop of "adaptation → diffusion → return," which gradually expands the IP's worldview. This cyclical structure is the key mechanism that allows formatted content to function not merely as cultural products of a single country but as parts of a multilayered global cultural network.

Figure 1 illustrates the cyclical model of global content IP circulation and localization that underpins the ecosystem of transmedia formatted contents. Beginning with an Original IP, the content undergoes Adaptation in preparation for Globalization, where stories and formats are diffused across diverse international media markets. During this Diffusion stage, the IP is exposed to new audiences and platforms, which necessitates further Localization—transforming narrative structures, character settings, and visual codes to fit the sociocultural and media preferences of local regions. Crucially, the process does not end at localization; instead, locally transformed content and new narrative assets often Return to influence the original IP, leading to renewal and expansion. This creates a continuous feedback loop in which global and local versions interact, adapt, and expand the IP's storyworld across multiple countries and platforms. As represented in the figure, this iterative cycle of adaptation, diffusion, localization, and return is the key mechanism through which transmedia storytelling and sustainable content IP ecosystems are realized in the global entertainment industry.

This calls for the promotion of transmedia storytelling strategies. The storytelling of formatted contents should aim to expand beyond single platforms through multiple media paths. The narrative unfolding on traditional TV and OTT services should design basic

FIGURE 1
Cyclical model of global–local–global circulation of formatted content IPs through adaptation, diffusion, and return.
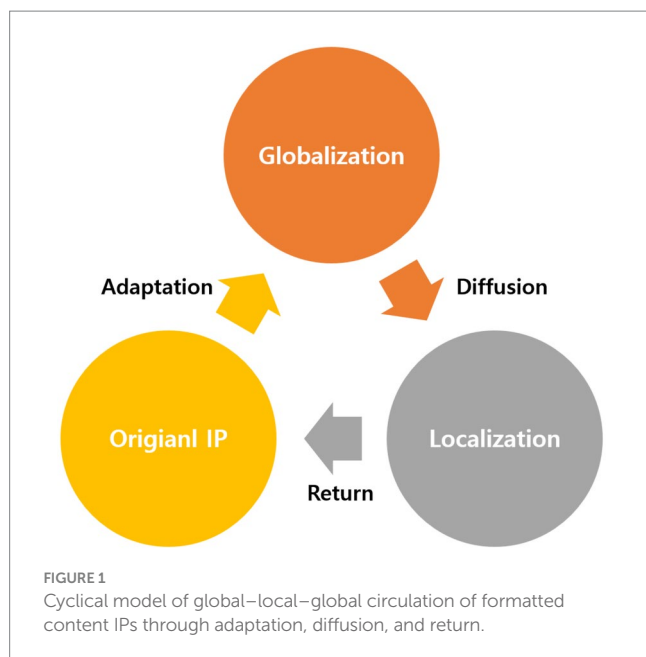
story structures such as conflict and characters, while social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok should create supporting narratives such as characters' daily lives, behind-the-scenes footage, and fan participation events. Furthermore, interactive games or XR experiences can deepen the layers of narrative by providing immersive experiences. Through this platform-specific narrative arrangement, consumers experience the content from various entry points, maximizing IP immersion and dwell time.

Another important axis of transmedia expansion is active audience participation and co-creation (Park, 2021). Fandom communities produce fan fiction, fan art, video remixes, and other derivative works that blur the lines between official IP narratives and unofficial creations. For instance, challenges originating from formatted reality shows have spontaneously proliferated on social media, and original producers have incorporated these back into official channels. In this process, audiences transition from mere consumers to prosumers, and their creative activities become the driving force that amplifies the IP's value. As a result, the story worlds of formatted contents become "open narrative spaces" jointly managed by producers and audiences.

The transmedia expansion of formatted content can generate economic and cultural added value through collaboration with other industries. For example, a popular reality format may partner with a fashion brand to commercialize costumes featured in the program or cooperate with tourism authorities to develop filming locations into themed tourist destinations. Such brand integration transforms IP from mere media texts into symbolic capital and creates cross-industry synergies. However, this process requires balancing commercial objectives with narrative authenticity. Excessive commercialization of the narrative world may weaken audience emotional immersion.

Expanding the transmedia ecosystem involves various challenges such as copyright management, cultural appropriation controversies, and narrative inconsistencies across platforms. Especially during localization of global formats, cultural elements borrowed without context may be criticized as cultural appropriation rather than cultural sharing. Additionally, maintaining narrative freshness and

platform innovation is essential for the long-term IP lifecycle. Simple season repetition or superficial media expansion may accelerate audience attrition, so producers must continuously design new narrative stimuli and experiential approaches.

The transmedia ecosystem of formatted contents makes IP a living cultural organism based on a global–local–global cyclical structure. In this cycle, original and local versions interact and expand the worldview, while multi-platforms and fandom co-creation deepen this worldview multilayeredly. Consequently, formatted contents evolve beyond one-off programs into long-term sustainable cultural assets, which will be a core strategy to secure competitive advantages in the global content industry.

This paper has established that formatted contents form an interactive cyclical structure between the global and local through transmedia expansion, beyond simple program format trade. Based on this analysis, several recommendations are offered for future format content production and distribution. First, localization should be understood not as mere adaptation but as a process of recreating a global storyworld, which producers must strategically design. Second, transmedia expansion should not simply diversify platforms but reorganize narrative layers and audience experiences. Finally, for a sustainable IP ecosystem, copyright management and minimizing cultural appropriation risks are essential, alongside actively embracing new media technologies and narrative forms.

As a result, formatted contents can function in the global media industry beyond short-term profit models as long-term cultural assets and worldview construction fields. This suggests the need to view format business not as mere industrial transactions but as cultural interaction structures in the transmedia era.

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