"Manifestations and roles of transmedia in Japan Society and the construction of its image overseas: *Fictionality* in the Era of convergence"

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1. *Fictionality*, producers and consumers in the paradigm of Convergence

The term 'Culture of Convergence' (Jenkins, 2006) is still one of the most influential characterizations of Cultural Studies and Communication Studies nowadays. As it has been commented through this volume, the concept defines a global phenomenon that includes other technological, sociological and communicative aspects. Among other consequences, Jenkins points to the discursive fragmentation, a global trend towards content-recycling, and the participation of active (digital) audiences (*ibid.*). While certainly implicit, others have preferred to emphasise this sociological aspect of the audiences' empowerment. 'Digital storytelling', for example, would be the product of an audience that not only can but feels the need of telling more through their own stories (Couldry, 2008). These two aspects of transmedia communication, the multiplication of formats and products, and the multiplication of increasingly individual and subjective voices, have aroused interest in the theorizing of the fictional aspects of transmedia. Fictionality can be considered a transmedia feature through the definition of representational shared and persistent values of their concepts (Zipfel, 2014). But, while 'Storytelling' etymologically address to the narrative features of the communication but, as this project is intended to show, Transmedia is not necessarily linked to fictional narrations.

However, the transmedia phenomenon can be studied from narrative theory. In the field of journalism, for example, it is common to find the distinction between cross-media (which many understand as multiplatform adaptation) and transmedia (a scattered narrative) (Veglis, 2012). While it is clear that we do not refer to genres or fictional contexts (journalism at least tries to tell the truth), there should be still room for the introduction of fictional elements. Thus, *Fictionality* can be understood as either a quality or a mode (fictive discourse) to which we have access through cognition. Audiences know that a text or part of a text is not real but this is accepted as a way of establishing an argument or as a pleasure. In this model of rhetorical and cognitive inspiration, *fictionality* has been described as a universal quality, defined as 'intentional use of invented stories and scenarios' (Nielsen et al., 2015). However, if a fictional model serves the purpose of a transmedia narrative, this one needs to be understood through a communication scheme. As has been suggested, *fictionality* "resides in a way of using a language, and its distinctiveness consists in the recognisably distinct rhetorical set invoked by that use" (Walsh, 2007).

Here a reasonable doubt arises because, as any theory of communication explains, there can be a difference between what is intentional and what is finally recognised. There is, therefore, the need to discern whether they are both treated as necessary. Can it be considered fictional those narratives that audiences take by non-fictional? Imagine the extreme case of mock-documentaries. Perhaps, if the definition of 'genre' depends on the dialogue with the audience, a definition of *fictionality* based on the genre can be inclusive, creating products that are both fictional and non-fictional at

the same time. On the other hand, the requirement of intentionality closes the possibility that narrative is an involuntary act, naturally associated with cognition. However, there is evidence that would support this thesis. Finally, there are also certain formal implications associated with text derived from this distinction between the 'sign' and the 'recognisable' that can help revive the issue of the fictional genre. That is, fictional texts should be recognisable by their form and content.

Institutional communication and its dialogue with the media are a good example of how fictionality cant be isolateds from transmedia communication. This hybridization is even more tangible in those contexts where Popular Culture plays a more relevant role. This can be explained in different ways. It is possible that the most active media users are young people and that Popular Culture is a substantial part of their consumption and production. On the other hand, the most consumed and shared transmedia stories in the world belong to fictional narratives, with a high prevalence of fantasy worlds and science fiction. It is the fictional stories that inspire greater participation and contribute to the creation of texts in specialized (fandom) and general communities.

It is my goal in this work to link with narrative theory as the main axis for a communicational and rhetorical study for what I choose Japanese Institutional Communication as a main example. First, I will explore the main Japanese communication agents and the current state of the convergence process, taking into account technological and sociological aspects. Secondly, will summarise from a historical perspective, the main elements of the media industries in relation to the fictionality and their convergence with media ecosystems and institutional communication. Finally, I will examine these issues through a relevant case study: the reformulations of national Branding aligned to the Cool Japan (Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games). While it is more a prior exploration than a refutable research, I will maintain a weak version of my hypothesis: that it is almost impossible to build messages that do not replicate or reference elements from other communication structures including fictional narratives.

2. Japanese Media Ecosystem

Following the global trend, there have been attempts by the Japanese government since the beginning of the century to foster technological convergence and stimulate creative industries. In the case of Japan, the rapid onset of new technologies (particularly the internet and mobile technologies) is the result of an 'interventionist' policy and has been defined in terms of 'integration' and 'digitalization' (Menon, 2006). The term integration refers to how the media can share the same technology infrastructure. For example, mobile, internet and television can now be offered by the same provider through high-speed internet connections. On the other hand, the digitalization is more oriented to the treatment of contents, and its transformation into digital formats. Political and historical factors have contributed to a map of platforms and transmedia agents, although in a different way from other countries with the equal level of development:

Television and Video Streaming

Despite the progress of social media and internet, 51% of Japanese still go to television on a daily basis to get informed, a situation that may change in a very close future (Reuters Institute, 2016b).

In relation to the consumption of entertainment products, the main media are YouTube and Japanese distributor NicoNico Video. Video streaming has been over the years much more popular for both the consumption of news and the consumption of entertainment products. Of great importance are the multi-platform tools of media groups (Newspapers) such as NHK or Tokyo TV. Actually, reports indicate that watching the news on the online site (39%) is more frequent than trough Social Networks (15%) (Reuters Institute, 2016b). In October 2014, the merging of Kadokawa with Dwango, founder of NicoNico, was completed. Everything points to a shift towards the convergence of multimedia platforms, due to the relevance of Kadokawa, largest Publisher in Japan, as a content generator. NicoNico's video interfaces are radically different from other multimedia content providers because they include comments and cross-platforms links (Steinberg, IN PRESS/DRAFT).

Publishers, Newspapers and Content Aggregators

In the Japanese case, the regional press (21%) is used more frequently weekly as a news source, followed by nationals Yomiuri Shimbun (16%), Asashi Shimbun (14%) and lower level Mainichi Shimbun (5%) And Sankei Shimbun (4%) (Reuters Institute, 2016a). The interest in the local press may be linked to the interest of the Japanese in political participation. The population has been re-politicized at the local level in response to the disapproval of national policy, accommodating to institutional decentralisation (Foljanty-Jost and Schmidt, 2006). This citizen participation can find in the social media a form of expression if not completely free at least not directly controlled by the government. In that sense, the freedom of the press in Japan has been questioned, due to the powerful influence of the media conglomerates. An example may be the *kisha clubs* (lit. 'reporters' club), which are associations that have exclusive access in the form of monopoly to numerous institutional sources. This eventually contributes to the homogeneity of news content and its ease of manipulation (Au and Kawai, 2012).

The survival and prevalence of news aggregators like Yahoo News or BuzzFeed Japan are justified by the confidence generated in the quality and ideology of these portals (Reuters Institute, 2016b). This, in the long term, is detrimental to the emergence of a competent digital native press. Compared to other countries, aggregation behaviour is a common and successful practice, similar in its frequency to other countries such as Korea or the Czech Republic. There is a big market in the news and many native digital platforms (along with other social applications like LINE or Mixi) have already take positions.

Interestingly, the Japanese are more interested in "soft" news that in the reports including entertainment and celebrities, lifestyle news, Arts and Culture and sports. Audiences most interested in these topics are mainly women (44%) and sectors between 18 and 24 years old (58%) (Reuters Institute, 2016b). Consistent with other commented data, the news consumer profile is mainly passive: just 40% acknowledge to engage in any form of news participation during the week (Reuters Institute, 2016b).

The government's commitment to technology is especially interested in the democratisation of the Internet environment. For example, in December 2016, The Internal Affairs and Communications Ministry announced the installation of 30,000 Wi-Fi Access Point prior to the Olympic events. This strong investment, which involves doubling the number of free accesses available in 2016 (Kikuchi, 2016), aims to give free and immediate access to the Internet to victims of natural disasters. Although the announcement can be considered a beneficial investment for the tourism industry, the measure is local and it is not clear what the impact in the city of Tokyo could be. Urban population employ individual 3G / 4G access, usually through monthly based contracts with the communications providers.

In recent years, so-called digital media have gradually replaced mass media in many respects (interest, use, scope ... etc.). In Japan, where the population pyramid has been clearly inverted for decades, the bulk of internet users is over 35, the same early adopters of mobile email some years ago (Boase and Kobayashi, 2008). Despite the common image of Japan as a technology heaven and mediatized society, in many respects, the Japanese are less active in Social Networks than their Asian neighbours are. According to data from March 2015, (RVC, 2016) Japan is the fourth country in the Asian zone in terms of National Internet penetration with an index of 86% and the third position (84%) in unique mobile users. However, the Japanese recognise spending less than 20 minutes a day in social media, a very low figure compared to Malaysians, Thais and Indonesian users, for example, who spend about two hours. In terms of Mobile Social Use, Japan stands at 17%, which is below the average (22%) of the continent. The use of the mobile for purchases or m-commerce is low, being inferior to many countries of another continent in a list led by Asian countries like SK, China, HK, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. As a counterpart, it seems that, from 2015, mobile and tablets are increasingly used for the consultation of News (Reuters Institute, 2016b). In relation to social media activities consumption, there are also slight differences with users from other countries. For example, when the most habitual behaviours are usually watch videos, read/like to post and check other's profile, it seems that the actions of the Japanese users tend to be more anonymous, being lower the behaviours such as "like a post" and "Checking profiles". The relatively low index of streaming video consumption through social media can be explained by the already mentioned abundance of alternatives offered by traditional platforms through their official sites.

The literature on Japanese media suggests that in the case of digital media, it is also possible to speak of a certain idiosyncrasy. Thus, the form, function and history of the creation of virtual communities in the Japanese context are different from that of other countries, including Western but also Asian ones. According to data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2015), the most used tools by Japanese consumers are Facebook (35.3%), LINE (32.5%), Twitter (31%), Mixi (16.5%) and Instagram)[1]. However, due to the similarity and consistency among digital platforms and the multiple overlapping in their use, it is necessary to consider the use and the meaning of this consumption above the preference for a particular brand.

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[1] These data of institutional origin may differ from other external sources depending on the criteria followed in the correspondent survey. For example, compared to Reuters Institute (2016) the MIC does not seem to consider YouTube as one of the major social networks.

Supposedly, Mixi (https://mixi.jp/) is a social network more exclusive than Facebook since it is proposed to put in contact only people with similar hobbies and interests. In that sense, it is a platform more oriented to the creation of communities and makes new friends. As it happens on Facebook, there is an implicit connection with other social networks by allowing the search of old schoolmates from High School or college. As the main difference with other social networks, Mixi limits to 1000 the number of contacts, a norm that can only skip celebrities' profiles. Until 2010, the access to the web was possible only by invitation. Subsequently, it became necessary to verify by mobile phone, a mechanism that limits the use of the platform to Japanese users or people already settled down in Japan. In that sense, the average profile of users up to 2015 was 44.6% between 15-24, also inhabitants of the populated Kanto area (Tokyo, Yokohama and surroundings)[2]. Anonymity and concern for privacy are part of the nature of the network since its inception. During the first years, the platform used people and many users adopted false profiles, supplanting celebrities. Fictional characters as *manga* and anime characters, updated their profile, followed by thousands of users. In 2011, Mixi Page was established, a strategy similar to the separation that Facebook makes between personal profiles and professional pages. Also, Mixi was one of the first applications to use the footprint (*ashiato*) which lets you know who has visited your profile, when and how many times. As a virtual community, Mixi incorporates a review function of cultural products such as music CDs or movies, similarly to other databases with social functions such as IMDB (https://www.imdb.com). The web also serves as a showcase for news and trending topics within the community.

Mixi's monopoly, hegemonic until 2008, began to be replaced by other applications such as Twitter, LINE and Facebook. Many consider that the success of Twitter in Japan is due to the coverage offered by their anonymous identity. That would be consistent with the popularity of Mixi and the almost 21% of users adopting anonymous profiles in Facebook (RVC, 2016). Other technical features may also justify their popularity. The incorporation of Internet to the mobile devices was popular in Japan before it was in other countries, as the Japanese version of Twitter was released in 2008. Asian languages like Japanese or Chinese take more advantage of the software's 140-character limitation. In Japanese alphabets (*hiragana* and *katakana*), with a syllabic basis, one character occupies half that of a Western language such as Spanish or English. Even less if ideograms such as those derived from Chinese (*kanji*) are used which can carry complete units of meaning (verbs, objects ...) in each symbol.

Taken as a whole, the increase in the participation of different social networks has grown steadily in recent years. The majority of the investigations indicate as a point of inflexion the Great earthquake of March of 2011 (Ikeda and Richey, 2012), and understand that this may be only the beginning of greater mobilisation and political activism. However, it does not look as the degree and motivations behind participation in social networks offer the necessary conditions for activism yet. Most important virtual forums in Japan, such as Ni-Channeru, are more focused on gathering and creating communities around fictional worlds. This orientation to escapism and *fictionality* could be a characteristic feature of Japanese virtual communities. A comparative study conducted with South Korean audiences (Ishii and Ogasahara,

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[2] There are no more official company announcements since it stopped updating their public statistics since April 2013, http://mixi.co.jp/profile/think/data/.

2007), suggests that in contrast, Japanese virtual communities are not as strongly related to the real group as the Korean ones, ie they are formed primarily in the network. In more recent data (Reuters Institute, 2016b), the percentage of citizens that came to the SN as a primary source of news reached 7%, still considerably low compared to other Western countries but significantly higher than 3% in 2015. The Japanese usually come to YouTube (26%), Facebook (16% %), Twitter (16%) and LINE (13%). Put it in short, it looks that in the convergence area main sources of leisure and fictional products are also the main tools of communications but, why is Japan an illustrative example of this convergence?

3. Japanese Transmedialities

Japanese popular culture can be considered one of the main aportations to the global imagery and through its different visual styles (manga, *kawaii, chibi*..) and narrative tropes has let significant influence in all transnational media industries. The most appropriate model to characterise the Japanese industries goes through the characterization of this phenomenon as a reticular architecture, traditionally centralised around *manga* medium (Hernández-Pérez, 2017). This should emphasise the need to move from seriality - whether of retroactive or proactive origin - to the cross-platform design. Centrality and reference, terminologies derived from cognitive science, are the main forms in which this model of cross-media narrative must be defined (*ibid.*). In these franchises can be identified to text/set of texts to which all other elements refer, that is, that shows to hypo-textuality with respect to the rest of texts (Genette, 1989). This central text or parental is usually the first published *manga*, although there are exceptions originated in video games, light novel or anime. Japan has been the subject of a number of studies about the particularities of its popular industries Transmedia model(s) in which adaptations within *manga*, anime and toys are the basic mechanism of content recycling strategies, also called media-mix.

The term 'media mix' in relation to the Japanese entertainment industry is officially introduced in an interview by Yoshio Irie, editor-in-chief of Nakayoshi magazine (Schodt, 1996). The magazine, published since 1954 by Kodansha, was aimed at a teenage female audience, offering the usual serial stories. It also offered articles and educational illustrations as a complement to these other ludic contents. Shortly after, due to the *manga* boom in Japan, a new market rise supplying the corresponding series *manga* (between 12 and 15), emphasising among its habitual collaborators to Osamu Tezuka (*Princess Knight*, 1958) and Yumiko Ligarashi (*Candy Candy*, 1975-79). In 1990 with the addition of Irie to the head of the publishing house, the magazine adopts as a priority the creation of stories for television scheduled to be released shortly after the corresponding *manga*. The goal, shared by many projects since then was to reach the realisation of the merchandising based on the characters as soon as possible, which would generate real benefits. In fact, this model of industry and its close relationship with the anime begins to implant in the beginnings of the Japanese animation, being *Tetsuwan Atomu* (1963), first anime and also the first character in creating a merchandising industry around him (Steinberg, 2012).

The phenomenon of the characters has moved to institutional communication, causing an oversaturation of characters in institutions, companies, educational programs ... This is also the case of *Yuru Kyara*, PR agents in the form of mascots and *Gotochi Kyara*, Ambassadors of a city or region (Occhi, 2014). The most striking thing about

the Kyara and its industries is that they are characters without history or narrative, at least in the classical sense. All of them, however, possess the potential to engage audiences emotionally and therefore are able to generate an infinity of narratives. See, for example, the twitter account of Kumamon, one of the most celebrated characters, representative of the Kumamoto area. The character reports about his activities as an ambassador almost daily through his personal twitter account (@ 55_kumamon). Through his images and comments reports about his visits to schools, museums and other institutions. Their job is promoting selling, for example, local agricultural commodities (oranges, strawberries). However, Kumamon's work can take him very far. At the end of November 2016, the popular mascot visited the French cities of Paris and Bordeaux. Kumamon also has other friends, other *kyara* that he visits in official acts of their corresponding prefectures and localities. In February 2017, posted a pic with Ganba-kun and Ranba-chan, in Nagasaki, in December of the previous year he had visited Musubimaru, the mascot of the Miyagi Government Office. Kumamon's tweets are similar to those of a celebrity. Also on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/kumamonofficial) and Instagram (kumako_kumamon), where he welcomes every new week ("I'll work very hard this week") or wish a good evening to their Followers ("Good night (Oyakuma) ☆"). Through Kyara, Japanese institutional communication demonstrates how fictional and narrative are intermingled in genres and communication frames that were not expected to be fictional, but in which seems to be totally addressed to entertainment now.

Following the model of other media-mix industries, LINE business is sustained in the creation of characters with potential for transmedia expansion. LINE is an instant messaging / chat tool similar to WhatsApp more used in Western countries. It is quite popular in the youth sector for its strong visual identity, reinforced through their different functionalities. These function as sophisticated emoticons and occasionally use characters from anime franchises and other Western cartoons. Paid games are also quite popular. These are usually arcade or casual mini-games and can be played individually or competitively. Advertising is a great source of income, due to the penetration of the tool in the area. Finally, and as an innovative feature in this sector, LINE brands its own merchandise which generates also income in products such as t-shirts, toys, etc.

As part of its narrative expansion, LINE includes a whole family of characters: Brown, the bear is the main protagonist of the narrative along with Cony, a white rabbit. The pair is used symbolically in the emoticons to represent the relationships of the couple, sometimes, in an exclusively romantic way, since Brown is male and Cony female. Sally, it is an inexpressive (also silent) naïf design of a yellow chick, although it really looks like a duck. The character of James is especially comical. It works like a simplified version of a *bishōnen* design. A popular figure among *manga* and Japanese anime, *bishōnen* refers to a young boy with female-like physical features. Depending on the *manga* genre and the kind of story, these boys can be also depicted as skilled athletes or warriors which have been considered as a challenge to effeminate characters from other traditions in popular culture. Most of the emoticons featuring James replicate elements of this subgenre *manga* visual style in which he appears as a character presumed and extroverted, very emotionally expressive (in that sense very similar to Cony). Moon is the symbolic representation of a 'salaryman' (*Sararyman*), an archetype deeply rooted in Japanese popular culture from the pre-crisis Japanese economic bubble. To serve this purpose as an archetype, Moon has an iconic, hairless, round and white face. His supervisor ('Boss') is his partner in some emoticons

(stickers) that synthesise scenes of this narrative. Jessica is Cony's best friend and shows a great inclination for domestic work. The narratives of other characters are less developed in the application and include Edward (Caterpillar), Leonard (frog), Choco (Brown's little sister), and Pangyo (a panda bear, presumably her boyfriend who very significantly has a Korean name). In April 2013, Tokyo TV channel 5 released an animated series called 'Line Town'. The series was previously tested as a pilot in the episode emitted by Tokyo TV "Line Offline: Salaryman" of only 5 minutes of duration. Finally, there is an official shop called 'Line Friends' that can be found in the Harajuko town (Tokyo prefecture) with branches in other countries like Korea and Taiwan.

A distinctive graphic design is one of the pillars in the tradition of *Kyara* business such as Sanrio's Hello Kitty. This can be understood as the other great cultural contribution of this business model. The term *kawaii* ('cute') refers to one of the main features of Japanese popular design. However, despite the relevance of *kawaii* style in the history of the Japanese visual arts, it is an accepted fact that 'cute' designs are not exclusive to Japanese industries. Other Asian countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, China... are major consumers of *kawaii* culture and with the time, they have made their own adaptations. Global aspirations of this trend explain LINE's success in the SE Asian area. *Kawaii* consumers of LINE may feel identified with the transnational *manga* and anime audiences, naturally aligned in the demographic market of the app, both through age and location. In addition, it is evident that there is an emotional component that underlies the sophisticated design of the LINE sticker in comparison with traditional emoticons. The stickers, considerably larger in size, express a greater range and detail in the emotions. On the other hand, the design of the scenes could follow a narrative logic in different ways. For example, they could be an adaptation to panel format of a narrative created in other media forms such as the anime. One could even speak of a reticular narrative in which the episodes or events are disordered (ie Connie and Brown marry, the couple starts living together ...). It is difficult to verify either of the two hypotheses, even more, when the catalogue of stickers is different according to the national market. Many of these, simple adaptations to gestures and expressions typical of the country (ie, Moon hand gestures in the Italian LINE app).

What is clear through the cases of LINE, Mixi and other social networks in Japan is that interpersonal communication may present significant differences among international audiences. In the case of Japan, escapism through consume of fictional products and anonymity may be more than a common trend.

4. Case Study: Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games

The overwhelming presence of Japanese content, especially in the field of animation and video games, to some extent redefines the image of the Japanese culture from the West. In the case of the West, this perception is differentiated at the generational level. Twenty years ago, Japan was seen as a threatening power whose main weapon, being a country without natural resources, was its relentless methodology (*kaizen*). As we know, the subsequent explosion of the Japanese economic bubble dragged the country into a long recession of which it has not yet recovered. But in the midst of that economic "nightmare" - or rather, "awakening" from a dream - Japan seems to have found comfort in projecting an image of cultural hegemony with which he can come back to his old aspirations of leading Asia. Iwabuchi (2010) calls this strategy 'Brand Nationalism', rescuing in a certain way the imperialist past of Japan. It has also been

employed frequently the concept of "soft power", which addresses John Nye's work, an American thinker who analysed power relations, after the fall of Berlin's wall. In those moments of special uncertainty, the United States had to find a new way of achieving its interests without resorting to coercion. As an alternative to military power, this "soft power" proposes awakening in others the desire to be imitated (Nye, 1990). Therefore, popular culture from Hollywood's cinema to McDonalds's gastronomic empire was supposed to play an important role, not so much because of its real influence but because of its scope, and because, at first sight, its "soft" features would allow greater permeability. First used in 2002 in relation to Japanese culture, the term 'Gross National Cool' indicates the intentional nature of this projection that is based on the main resource that is left to the Japanese economy and is none other than "its enormous Cultural capital " (McGray, 2002).

Regardless of the labels chosen, it is certain that Japan is aware of the projected image overseas through its omnipresent Popular Culture. On September 7, 2013, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) awarded the 2020 Games to Tokyo. The implications of this historic opportunity are of great importance to all economic sectors in Japan. It is also for its international image, damaged by the other great event of the decade, the unfortunate incident caused by the Great Earthquake and the security breach in Fukushima.

Prime Minister Shinzō Abe had to answer questions about safety in his pitch for the concession of the games, promising security as the main objective. Years later and with the closeness of the event, the international press sees the event with scepticism. Junichiro Koizumi former prime minister accuses Abe of lying to the government's ability to maintain adequate levels of nuclear security (Shino and Reuters, 2016). Scandals follow in relation to various aspects of the games organization: Investigations for bribery in the concession of the games (Gibson, 2016), doubts of security against cyberattacks (McCurry, 2016), The resignation of the governor of Tokyo due to expenses of the public treasury (Yoshida, 2016) And even change in the Tokyo 2020 logo due to accusations of plagiarism (Addley, 2016).

But Social Media, in its anarchy, lies far from agenda and journalism themes. Audiences around the world, particularly the Japanese, focus their attention to the closing ceremony of Rio 2016. During the show, Shinzō Abe prime minister made appearance in a failed cosplay of Super Mario. His performance linked with the projection of a video that included the expected inspirational images of Olympic athletes accompanied by some of the main contributions of Japan to the collective imagination: Pac-Man, Hello Kitty, Doraemon and Captain Tsubasa. Facing the impossibility of arriving in time, Abe, one more of the protagonists of this fiction, is transformed into the well-known video game character. Helped by Doraemon, he finds one of the iconic transdimensional pipelines that will make it possible for him to reach Tokyo from his awaited appointment in Rio on time.

Abe's cosplay can only mean a new turn to soft power which connects with other actions from the past which linked to political influence through the appeal of Japanese creative industries (Pellitteri, (IN PRESS)). Actually, the promotion of Japan through a content industries macro-strategy has some history in the Japanese political agenda. The Japanese government has for years promulgated policies that would improve the sale of its products and develop the "Japan" brand strategy, a direction it has taken since 1986 when Prime Minister Nakasone promoted the

"internationalisation" (*kokusaika*) of the country (Daliot-Bul, 2009). Interest in promoting the media arts coincides with a delicate moment in Japan's economic history that has stalled in a recession since the early 1990s. With the arrival of former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in 2001, started to be clear that the country should "coordinate the appropriate measures for the production, viewing and other aspects of these arts". From that moment, Media Arts, including *manga* and videogames animation among other artistic disciplines starts to be officially promoted, good way to "attract the international attention, what repercusses in greater interest and understanding by Japan". But above all, it is considered the "role that popular culture can play in the promotion of industry and tourism, as well as cultural exchange" (Agency for Cultural Affairs, 2003). In 2004, the first Strategic Intellectual Property Program (IPSP) was created, with the purpose of "making Japan a world leader in content"(IPSP, 2006). Following this trend, the Commissioner for Cultural Affairs, Seiichi Kōndo has repeatedly referred to the concept of Cool Japan and the role that culture must play in international politics. However, for Kōndo, entertainment-oriented policy projects an incomplete picture, and while recognising its utility in attracting international attention, it prefers to focus on a more traditional and holistic view of Japanese culture, relative to that of other countries Of the Asian sphere (Kōndo, 2011).

The Japanese Council of Cultural Affairs then took very noticeable decisions at international level, which included the appointment of various characters such as Astroboy, Doraemon and Hello Kitty as "Ambassadors", symbolising, thus, the valuation of such relevant cultural products. The main promoter of these events was Foreign Minister Taro Aso, who for the first time used the term "power" to refer to the popularity of Japanese characters in Asian markets (Aso, 2006). The figure of Taro Aso is in certain aspects controversial and symbolises the controversial reactions that awaken Popular Culture industries in its country of origin. Taro Aso has been named Prime Minister after the resignation of Yasuo Fukuda in September 2007. The politician was then known as a confessed "otaku" Which aroused some controversy in his appointment. Being a manga fan and having contributed to its diffusion in the Council of Cultural Affairs, the appointment of Aso drew the attention of the industry to the possible measures with which from the power would promote the media arts. During 2009, Aso continued with its plan to promote this sector, promising that the media industry would give 4 million jobs by 2020 and increase national capital by 1.2 trillion yen. That same year embarked on a project that would be strongly criticised by the opposition: the construction of a gigantic *manga* museum in the Tokyo district of Akibahara. Projects and promises that he could not carry out, however, as his government would abruptly end his resignation a few months later, motivated by opposition pressure from the difficult economic situation.

In 2010, METI established the Cool Japan Office and in January 2012 is published the Cool Japan Strategy. The plan is mainly oriented to the promotion of cultural industries and recognizes the importance of Asian, European and mainly North American markets (METI Ministry of Economy Trade and Industry, 2012). Although the potential of the Creative Industries, Fashion, Commodities and Food Culture is underlined, it is surprising that other less valuable export sectors such as Express delivery services, Japanese-Styles Inn, Traditional Arts and Crafts are also included. Perhaps, 'Cool Japan' does not mean the same for international audiences as for those responsible for Japan's National Branding. The report is complemented by a number of case studies in which potential international industries and benefits for tourism play

both an important role. During the following years, very little has been said again from the Japanese government about Cool Japan. It seems that Cool Japan is a narrative slowly diluted in the press (The Japan Times still includes a section dedicated to Cool Japan) and a topic of interest for academics in the social area. However, Japan's identity crisis after the great East Japan earthquake may have fuelled interest in this question. Japan is now at a crossroads in its international agenda, its national re-branding and its economic goals (Mandujano, 2013) which strongly links the tragedy of the earthquake with the need for a resurgence of Cool Japan.

The Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games look a logical way to boost and support these strategies, but also an interesting example of competing narratives across media. The discourses on multiculturalism and the diversity of Japan may be one of the most important. As has been seen, the Japanese identity and, even more, its international image is often considered in constant dilemma around its openness and diversity. Like all national images, it serves a purpose and therefore the role of national agents in the creation and maintenance of these stereotypes cannot be ruled out. Traditionally regarded as a closed country and even hostile to foreign influences, Japan has benefited from this image to build a halo of exoticism and uniqueness that in some way links with the academic discourses of the *Nihonjinron* (lit. Japanese Uniqueness).

The biggest fortress in Tokyo in front of Madrid and Istanbul, other finalists, was security (Jiji, 2013) however, it is the message of openness and diversity the most prevalente one through the Tokyo 2020 transmedia campaign. Mami Sato, Japanese Paralympian athlete finishes his intervention in the Tokyo 2020 with ensuring that "Excelence, Friendship and Respect can be more than words" (Olympic Channel, 2013). Little more explicit mention was made of multiculturalism during the pitch, but it does not seem necessary. To take a step forward as a candidate for Olympism, is, in itself, a commitment to diversity. The values of the modern Olympism are based on the healthy sport competition between countries and the search for the improvement. The Olympic Games have traditionally been a 'force for change' in society for their ideal of tolerance of diversity and the international community acts with criticism to watch over these values (Robson, 2016). In the case of Tokyo 2020, "Unity in Diversity" is one of three core concepts (together with "Achieving Personal Best" and "Connecting to Tomorrow") summarized in the vision of the games:

> "Accepting and respecting differences in race, colour, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, level of ability or other status allows peace to be maintained and society to continue to develop and flourish" (Internation Olympic Committee ICO, 2013).

The official logo for the Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee adapts this message to a graphic format, more fortunate than in its first version. With the motto "Unity in diversity", it is inspired by Japanese traditional patterns and colors (indigo blue) and it is "Composed of three varieties of rectangular shapes, the design represents different countries, cultures and ways of thinking" (Internation Olympic Committee ICO, 2016).

We will have to wait for the next few years, to find out know in what ways Japan takes advantage of the multiculturalism discourses to build a national image of a culturally diverse and open country. On the other hand, one of the most outstanding aspects of

transmedia production in relation to Tokyo 2020 is related to the use of fictional figures. Already in the pitch speech, the industries of Japanese anime are used as one of the main means of promotion for the proposal. Once again, the charisma of Captain Tsubasa, a personage of a popular manga about the world of soccer is used, while explaining how he had inspired other world-class players like Messi, Kaka or Uchimura (Olympic Channel, 2013). The media's own expansion of cultural industries has already influenced the promotion of the event. Instead of the adaptation of other discourses or the creation of a corporate image, the multiplicity of merchandising in the form of commodities seems to obey more to the maximizing of benefits of industries based on IPSP management. Under the usual label 'ambassadors', so used in the speeches of Cool Japan, a select number of characters has been part of the official Tokyo2020 merchandising since February 2017. These seem to have been selected especially for their international popularity including Atom (*Astro Boy*), Bunny (*Sailor Moon*), Luffy (*One Piece*), Naruto, Goku (*Dragon Ball Z*), Shin-chan, and Jibanyan (*Yokai Watch*). This combined with other characters appeleaing to Asian markets such as the magical girls from *Pretty Cure*.

Fans also contribute to these crossover among Japanese fiction stars. The short film "Doraemon at the 2020 Neo-Tokyo Olympic Games" animated by Aleix Pitarch is a fan fiction in the form of mash-up. Released shortly after the Olympic nomination is known, it rescues the apocalyptic scenario of the film of Otomo Akira (1988), using the same shots from its theatrical version trailer including its OST. It features, as protagonists, Doreamon's characters created by Fujiko F. Fujio in the late 60's. The show is one of the longest in the history of the Japanese media-mix having been recycled in numerous shows, animes and other products. Stories presents Nobita and his gang of friends of the school whose life changes radically with the visit of Doraemon, an extraterrestrial coming from the future. In each autoconlusive episode, Doraemon introduces a new invention with always magical characteristics in order to help make the daily problems of Nobita more bearable. In contrast, the Otomo film is part of the collective imagination by the force of its transgressive and counter-cultural image. It is a postmodern, visceral and sometimes horrific portrait of a young biker gang in a future megacity (Neo-Tokyo). One of its members, a troubled and mistreated Tetsuo, begins to manifest supernatural abilities that gradually transforms it into a physical and moral sense. In the scene that the video parodies, his best friend, Kaneda, tries to stop him while he looks helplessly at his transformation into a huge, monstrous monster. Here, the subversive pleasure so characteristic of fandom derives from the intertextual use of the characters of Fujio, who are usually considered as paradigm of Japanese traditional values and family in a transgressive context still easily recognizable by fan audiences.

This example illustrates the contradiction inherent in Cool Japan strategies. On the one hand, national branding uses popular narratives in the domestic and international spheres. In the Olympic context, the characters derived from *shōnen*. This seems a logical choice because it is at the same time the most popular genre and contains some themes (martial arts, sports, adventures …) that can be related semantically and emotionally with the Olympic competition. However, local and international audiences include a more participatory sector that, while a consumer of mainstream products, also chooses and develops its own stories. Perhaps that is why Ian Coundry referred to the movement as 'Geek Japan' (Condry, 2013), even though the strategy of Cool Japan aims at the most global and unspecific market.

But, whatever the messages and narratives involved in Tokyo 2020, it seems clear that the way in which they will be enjoyed will be very different from previous Olympic events. The main reason lies behind the technological and social changes promoted by the media convergence. Due to the large part of the millennial audience (30%), a large participation is expected through social media and mobile app (Bunch, 2016). Everything indicates that Japan will also make a great effort to be at the forefront of new technologies and show their technological rank. The maturity of AR / VR media and the increased quality of video and 360 video capture technology will allow the multiplication of different experiences available to audiences around the world. It is a matter of time that the maturity of these media allow not only the proliferation of canonical cultural products but also fandoms contestations. In that sense, it seems logical to expect that *fictionality* will cross new media frontiers with the arrival of 2020 to Tokyo.

5. Conclusions

As a conclusion, it is difficult to discard fictional production when we talk about transmedia phenomena in Japanese audiences or in the production about the national branding of Japan. But some forms of *fictionality* also has space in these speeches. Japan takes advantage of the emotional value and the natural attraction of the characters of its media industries for the promotion of the event and the country itself. On the other hand, it is to be hoped that in the face of the multiplication of channels across platforms and the saturation of messages that will arrive in the next years on Tokyo 2020, the global audiences will produce a greater number of transmedia products, either between the general audiences or within the sector of a more engaged fan audience. The Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, involves the adaptation of a set of political narratives to journalistic media discourses and institutional communication. The current Japanese National Branding is determined by the tragic events of the 2011 earthquake and a decade of unstable strategies based on the soft power of their media industries. Tokyo 2020 connects both images of Japan, rescuing positive values such as tolerance for diversity, respect for traditions and technological innovation.

Through the study of Japanese media and its global cultural exportations, I strengthened the idea that transmedia is inherently narrative and that in narrative constructions fictionality will be the common rule. In some cases, the use of the fictional does not imply a change in the purpose of the communication (i.e. Shizo Abe's cosplay as Super Mario is still a public act) so, we cannot talk about fictional genres. Is it, therefore, a fiction? A non-fiction? Or even a 'transfiction' insofar as it combines nested fictions into non-fictional transmedia structures? It is a fact that Japan is a country with enormous potential for story creation through its cultural production but, more surprisingly, through commentary and intertextuality of its cultural products in global audiences.

Figure 1. Tokyo 2020 Olympic Logos

Figure 2. Screenshots of the fan video "Doraemon at the 2020 Neo-Tokyo Olympic Games"

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