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TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING PRACTICES OF MALAYSIAN FILM PRODUCERS

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Abstrak

Kajian ini meneliti amalan penceritaan transmedia oleh penerbit filem Malaysia dan menangani pemahaman yang terhad tentang bagaimana strategi transmedia ditafsirkan, dilaksanakan, dan diadaptasi dalam landskap sinematik tempatan. Menggunakan reka bentuk kajian kes kualitatif, penerokaan, penyelidikan ini melibatkan temu bual separa berstruktur dengan enam penerbit filem Malaysia bersama dengan analisis artifak terpilih, termasuk filem, bahan promosi, dan sambungan media sosial. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik, dipandu oleh model 3Cs, yang merangkumi watak, kemudahan, dan komuniti, sambil menggabungkan lapisan kontekstual Malaysia (M) untuk mencerminkan keadaan budaya, industri, dan kawal selia. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa, walaupun penerbit menyedari potensi penceritaan transmedia, aplikasinya kekal berpecah-pecah. Produksi berasaskan animasi menunjukkan amalan pembinaan dunia yang lebih kukuh berbanding sinema aksi langsung. Cabaran utama termasuk kekangan kewangan, perancangan yang tidak mencukupi untuk pengembangan merentas platform, dan strategi penglibatan khalayak yang tidak berkesan. Kajian ini mencadangkan Rangka Kerja Penceritaan Transmedia 3C+M Malaysia untuk membimbing pembangunan strategi naratif, platform, dan komuniti pada masa hadapan di Malaysia. Penemuan ini menyumbang pandangan baharu kepada sarjana transmedia dalam industri filem yang sedang berkembang dan menawarkan implikasi praktikal untuk penerbit, pembuat dasar, dan institusi kreatif yang bertujuan untuk mengukuhkan ekosistem penceritaan Malaysia.

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Kata kunci: Penceritaan transmedia, Penerbit Filem Malaysia, Model 3C+M, Kajian kes kualitatif, Analisis tematik.

Abstract

This study investigates the transmedia storytelling practices of Malaysian film producers and addresses the limited comprehension of how transmedia strategies are interpreted, executed, and adapted within the local cinematic landscape. Employing a qualitative, exploratory case study design, the research involved semi-structured interviews with six Malaysian film producers along with an analysis of selected artefacts, including films, promotional materials, and social media extensions. Data were analysed using thematic analysis, guided by the 3Cs model, which encompasses character, convenience, and community, while incorporating a Malaysian contextual layer (M) to reflect cultural, industrial, and regulatory conditions. The findings indicate that, although producers recognise the potential of transmedia storytelling, its application remains fragmented; animation-based productions demonstrate more robust world building practices than live-action cinema. Key challenges include financial constraints, insufficient planning for cross-platform expansion, and ineffective audience engagement strategies. This study proposes the 3C+M Malaysian Transmedia Storytelling Framework to guide the future development of narrative, platform, and community strategies in Malaysia. The findings contribute new insights to transmedia scholarship in emerging film industries and offer practical implications for producers, policymakers, and creative institutions aiming to strengthen Malaysia's storytelling ecosystem.

Keywords: Transmedia storytelling, Malaysian Film Producers, 3C+M Framework, Qualitative case study, Thematic analysis.

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This work is dedicated to all who strive to strengthen Malaysia's creative and cinematic storytelling for future generations.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Transmedia storytelling has become a key tactic for developing franchises, growing intellectual property (IP), and sustaining audience interest over time in markets like Hollywood. This strategy allows producers to provide immersive and participatory experiences by fusing creativity with commercial potential (Jenkins, 2006). However, transmedia storytelling is still only occasionally used in Malaysia (Jamaluddin, Mustaffa, & Hamzah, 2021).

The Malaysian creative industry is demonstrating significant growth and making substantial contributions to the country's economic development. According to data released by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), the cultural and creative sectors accounted for 6.8% of Malaysia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2024, reflecting a growth rate of 7.1% compared to the previous year. The value added was RM130.7 billion, and the sector supported approximately 760,000 jobs nationwide (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2024). These statistics, subsequently reported by the New Straits Times, provide empirical evidence that the Malaysian creative industry has become a vital component of the national economy rather than merely a peripheral cultural activity (Radhi, 2025). This growth trajectory aligns with global observations from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which highlights the increasing importance of the creative industry within the digital economy, driven by the production of intellectual property, platform consolidation, and innovation-led value creation (UNCTAD, 2025).

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However, there is a structural gap between national digital policy aspirations and actual industry practices that highlights a critical disconnect within the Malaysian film ecosystem. While policy frameworks such as Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint (MyDIGITAL) emphasise digital integration, platform convergence, and value creation across ecosystems, film production practices in Malaysia remain largely confined to single-platform, project-based models that prioritise short-term returns. In this context, the absence of strategic approaches such as transmedia storytelling limits the industry's ability to extend intellectual property value, build sustained audience engagement, and leverage digital platforms effectively.

From the researcher's professional perspective as an active film producer and screenwriter, this structural gap is evident not only at the policy or institutional level but also in the daily decision-making processes of production. It is noteworthy that transmedia storytelling is often viewed as aspirational or externally driven, rather than being seen as a locally grounded production approach. The researcher's ongoing participation in content development, production planning, and professional collaborations with Malaysian film producers has underscored a persistent disparity between theoretical comprehension and practical application. This is especially clear in areas like planning for intellectual property, keeping an audience, and integrating platforms.

This chapter introduces the context and rationale of the study by situating transmedia storytelling within the Malaysian film industry. It outlines the study's background and emphasises the researcher's motivation to explore the evolving film ecosystem,

particularly the industry's long-standing dependence on conventional, single-platform film production practices. It outlines the background of the study, identifies the research problem arising from the gap between policy aspirations and industry practices, and presents the research questions and objectives guiding the investigation. The chapter further defines the scope and significance of the study, particularly in relation to Malaysian film producers' production experiences. Finally, it provides an overview of the thesis structure to guide the reader through the subsequent chapters.

1.2 Conceptual Flow of Transmedia Storytelling and Research Direction



Figure 1.1. The three Cs of transmedia storytelling

Source: Adapted from Pratten (2015, p. 12)

Figure 1.1 illustrates the Three Cs (3Cs) model of transmedia storytelling as proposed by Pratten (2015). This model conceptualises transmedia storytelling through the interrelated components of Character, Convenience, and Community, Transmedia storytelling is frequently regarded as a strategic method for expanding narratives across various media platforms. A foundational conceptualisation of this approach is

presented by Pratten (2015) through the Three Cs (3Cs) model, which comprises Character, Convenience, and Community. This model elucidates the functioning of transmedia storytelling by anchoring narratives in compelling characters, ensuring that content is delivered via accessible and suitable platforms, and fostering participatory communities that maintain engagement across diverse media ecosystems.

In Pratten's conceptualisation, Character serves as the narrative core, motivating audiences to engage with storyworlds across various platforms. Convenience pertains to the strategic distribution of content, ensuring it is delivered at the appropriate time and through suitable channels. Meanwhile, Community emphasises the significance of social interaction, participation, and shared experiences that surround the narrative. The 3Cs model offers a clear conceptual framework for understanding the elements that underpin effective transmedia storytelling practices, especially within mature media industries where transmedia strategies are systematically devised and executed. While the 3Cs model seen as a valuable conceptual reference, it is primarily rooted in transmedia practices that have emerged within Western and technologically advanced media contexts. Its relevance to the Malaysian film industry, especially in the realm of live-action cinema, is notably limited and insufficiently documented. Current local practices are predominantly characterised by single-platform, film-centric production models, where transmedia elements are frequently implemented in an ad-hoc or incidental manner, rather than being integrated as a cohesive production strategy.

To guide the present study, Pratten's 3Cs model is introduced as a conceptual foundation rather than a definitive analytical framework. Building upon this conceptual understanding, a research flowchart is employed to illustrate how global

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transmedia practices are contextualised within the Malaysian cinematic landscape. This approach facilitates the identification of specific research gaps concerning producers' production experiences and decision-making processes. The conceptual flow elucidates the transition from established transmedia concepts to the study's focus on how Malaysian film producers comprehend, interpret, and implement transmedia storytelling within their production practices.

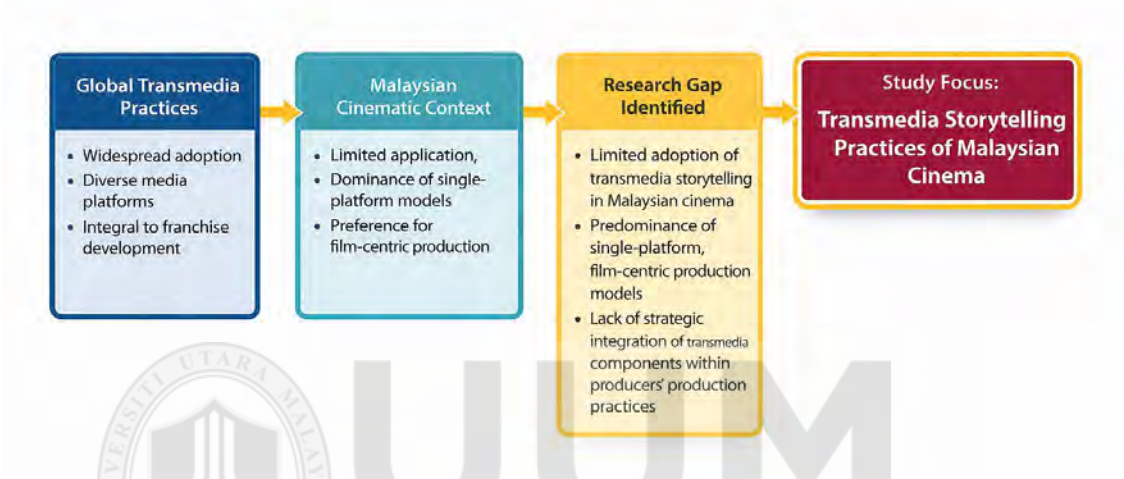

Figure 1.2. Conceptual flow of transmedia storytelling in Malaysia cinema

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Figure 1.2 illustrates the conceptual flow of transmedia storytelling contextualised within the Malaysian cinema landscape. The flowchart begins by situating transmedia storytelling within established global practices, where it has been widely adopted as a strategic approach for narrative expansion across multiple media platforms.

The second stage highlights the Malaysian cinematic context, characterised by a limited application of transmedia storytelling and a continued reliance on single-platform, film-centric production models. This context reflects various structural, industrial, and production-level constraints that influence how transmedia practices are understood and implemented within the local film industry.

Based on this comparison, the flowchart identifies a clear research gap: the limited strategic integration of transmedia storytelling within Malaysian cinema and among producers' production practices. While discussions surrounding transmedia concepts are increasingly prevalent at the policy and conceptual levels, their systematic adoption in cinematic production remains underdeveloped.

Consequently, the final stage of the flowchart outlines the focus of this study, which aims to examine transmedia storytelling practices within Malaysian cinema from the perspective of film producers. This conceptual flow provides a structured overview of how global transmedia concepts are translated into a locally grounded research direction, informing the research questions, objectives, and methodological design of the study.

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1.3 Background of Study

The rapid development of digital platforms has transformed contemporary storytelling practices across the global screen industries. Transmedia storytelling, which expands a narrative world across multiple media platforms while maintaining coherence and audience engagement, has emerged as a strategic approach for producers aiming to strengthen intellectual property, diversify revenue, and cultivate long-term audience while major international markets have widely adopted this approach, its application within Malaysia's film industry remains limited and uneven.

In the local context, transmedia initiatives are more prominently observed in animated properties, which tend to benefit from stronger character branding and merchandise-

driven ecosystems. In contrast, live-action cinema continues to rely heavily on traditional film-centric production and promotional models, with little cross-platform planning or narrative extension. This disparity indicates a lack of systematic understanding regarding how local producers interpret, implement, and negotiate the principles of transmedia storytelling within their production environments.

As a practitioner-researcher with professional experience in film development and production, the researcher has noted that although the potential of transmedia storytelling is often recognised, it is seldom operationalised in a structured manner. Challenges such as limited resources, fragmented planning, unclear conceptual frameworks, and weak audience engagement strategies hinder efforts to expand story worlds beyond the cinematic text. These observations underscore the necessity to examine producers' real-world practices, constraints, and decision-making processes to comprehend the reasons behind the inconsistent adoption of transmedia.

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Consequently, this study investigates the transmedia storytelling practices of Malaysian film producers, concentrating on how they conceptualise story worlds, utilise available platforms, and engage audiences across various media. By analysing these practices through the 3C model - Character, Convenience, and Community and incorporating a contextual layer that reflects local cultural and industrial realities, this research aims to provide a more grounded understanding of transmedia implementation in Malaysia. This background lays the groundwork for identifying the gaps, needs, and opportunities that inform the research problem and guide the development of a locally relevant analytical framework.

Transmedia storytelling has emerged as a significant narrative approach in the contemporary digital media ecosystem, increasingly shaping global entertainment practices. Coined by Jenkins (2006), transmedia storytelling refers to the strategic dissemination of narrative elements across multiple media platforms, such as films, television, video games, social media, comics, and mobile applications. Each platform contributes uniquely to the overall narrative experience, allowing for a richer and more immersive engagement. Rather than repeating the same story across platforms, transmedia ensures that each medium adds a distinctive dimension to the overarching narrative universe (Scolari, 2009; Dena, 2009).

This model has been effectively deployed by global entertainment franchises such as Star Wars, the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), and Harry Potter, which extend their narratives through films, series, games, and interactive digital platforms. These properties cultivate dedicated fan communities through multi-platform content delivery and participatory engagement (Kim & Hong, 2013; Kwon & Byun, 2016).

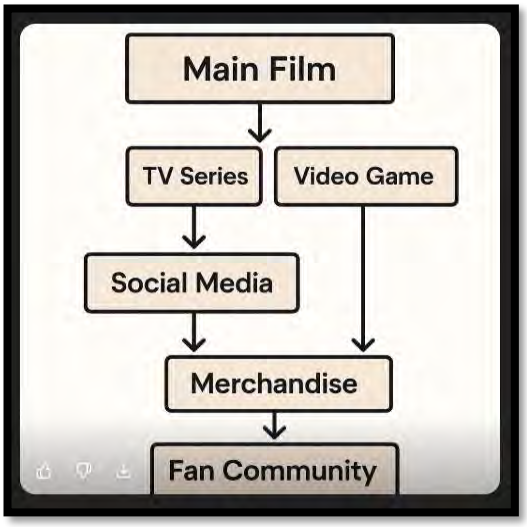

Figure 1.3. Transmedia storytelling in global franchises

Source: https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/31149

As illustrated in Figure 1.3, such franchises seamlessly expand character arcs and storylines across television, games, and digital interactions, forming a cohesive transmedia ecosystem.



Figure 1.4. Usage gap of transmedia storytelling between global franchises and Malaysian cinema.
Source: https://www.sukafilem.net/2017/11/ini-senarai-cinematic-universe-yang.html.

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To illustrate this contrast between global and local adoption of transmedia storytelling, Figure 1.4 compares the implementation gap. It illustrates the variation in the utilization of transmedia narrative in global and Malaysian cinema. Global franchises like the ‘Marvel Cinematic Universe’ (MCU), ‘Star Wars’, and ‘Harry Potter’ exhibit significant transmedia integration across various platforms, including television, gaming, retail, and interactive digital media.

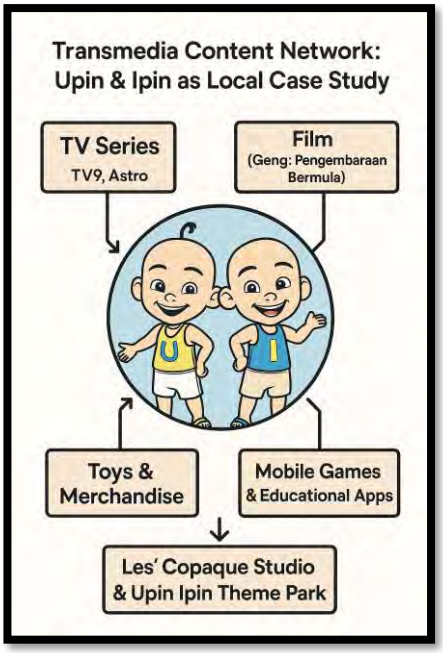

Figure 1.5. Example of a local Transmedia Model - Upin & Ipin (Transmedia Content Network: Upin & Ipin as a local case study).

However, transmedia storytelling is still in the early stages of development in Malaysia. Figure 1.5 illustrates how local animated series implement the franchise model. A select few animated products, such as Upin & Ipin and BoBoiBoy, have successfully achieved continuity across various platforms, including television series, films, comics, mobile applications, and theme parks (Umar et al., 2020). However, their application in live-action cinema remains limited. Many producers continue to adhere to a linear narrative style that culminates in a single medium, typically a theatrical release or a streaming platform (Aziz et al., 2014; Rosnan et al., 2010).

A significant problem is the lack of understanding and skill among local film producers concerning transmedia approaches. Many remain unaware of how to develop

narratives that may succeed across several platforms, or how to build fan networks as enduring assets (Perumal & Woods, 2007; Sarji, 2006).

To address this challenge, this study aims to analyze the comprehension and application of transmedia storytelling tactics by Malaysian film producers, emphasizing their production experiences. This strategy is crucial for enhancing the local film industry's ability to produce competitive content on both regional and global scales.

1.4 Motivation of Study

This study is motivated by the increasing gap between the global adoption of transmedia storytelling and its limited application within the Malaysian cinema industry. Transmedia storytelling has emerged as a fundamental strategy for prominent global franchises like Marvel, Star Wars, and Harry Potter, which extend narratives across films, television, games, and digital content (Jenkins, 2006; Scolari, 2009; Kim & Hong, 2013). In contrast, the Malaysian cinema landscape continues to be largely linear, especially in live-action productions.

Although Malaysian filmmakers have achieved success with animated transmedia properties such as Upin & Ipin and BoBoiBoy (Umar et al., 2020), they have not yet fully capitalized on the narrative and commercial opportunities presented by multi-platform storytelling in live-action formats (Jamaluddin et al., 2021; Aziz et al., 2014). The limited adoption can be attributed to various factors, such as a lack of understanding of transmedia principles, fragmented media ecosystems, and financial constraints that hinder innovation (Rosnan et al., 2010).

The researcher, as a film practitioner and academic observer, has noted the missed opportunity for Malaysian cinema to develop into a globally competitive storytelling ecosystem. This study aims to empower Malaysian producers by providing contextual knowledge, case-based insights, and a conceptual framework for the strategic implementation of transmedia storytelling. By documenting the production experiences of Malaysian producers, this research addresses the knowledge gap, fosters media innovation, and assists the local industry in adapting to global storytelling trends.

The primary aim of this research is to initiate a paradigm shift in Malaysian cinematic narratives, enabling them to extend beyond single-medium delivery. This approach seeks to foster interconnected platforms that cultivate loyal communities and generate diverse revenue streams in both local and international market.

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1.5 Problem Statements

In the world of entertainment, transmedia storytelling has become a major narrative and business tactic, especially in the Western film industries. To maintain long-term audience engagement and increase brand and intellectual property value, major franchises like Marvel, Star Wars, and Harry Potter show how narrative worlds can be strategically expanded across movies, TV shows, video games, and digital platforms (Jenkins, 2006; Scolari, 2009; Kim & Hong, 2013; Kwon & Byun, 2016). These examples demonstrate how transmedia storytelling combines storytelling, audience participation, and platform convergence to serve as both a creative approach and an organised production and business practice.

In contrast, the adoption of transmedia storytelling within the Malaysian film industry, particularly in the live-action cinema sector, remains both limited and fragmented. Existing studies indicate that while animation studios such as Les' Copaque (known for Upin & Ipin) and Animonsta (creator of BoBoiBoy) have successfully utilised multi-platform storytelling, such practices are exceptions rather than the norm (Umar, Md Azalanshah, & Runnel, 2020).

The live-action film sector continues to rely predominantly on single-medium distribution models, such as theatrical releases or streaming platforms, with minimal strategic integration across various media platforms (Aziz, Hashim, & Ibrahim, 2014). Prior research attributes this limited adoption to several structural and strategic constraints, including a lack of industry awareness and expertise in transmedia approaches (Jamaluddin, Mustaffa, & Hamzah, 2021), a fragmented media infrastructure that impedes cross-sector collaboration (Rosnan, Ismail & Daud, 2010), financial limitations that hinder long-term investment and experimentation (Aziz et al., 2014), and inconsistent knowledge management practices that obstruct the transfer of creative innovation across projects (Perumal & Woods, 2007). Additionally, scholars have highlighted broader cultural and institutional challenges, such as ongoing debates regarding national cinema identity and the pressures of globalisation, which further constrain the development of innovative and sustainable storytelling models within Malaysian cinema (Sarji, 2006; Wong, Pillai, & Ong, 2018). Beyond these structural challenges, a critical distinction between global and Malaysian film industries lies in their industrial scale and market capacity. Major studios such as Disney operate within high-capacity ecosystems supported by extensive exhibition infrastructure and diversified revenue streams, generating approximately USD 4.9 billion in global box-

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office revenue in 2022 and reporting total annual corporate revenue of USD 89.2 billion, thereby enabling sustained franchise development and multi-platform intellectual property expansion (Li, 2024).

In contrast, the Malaysian film industry operates within a significantly smaller industrial context. According to data from the National Film Development Corporation Malaysia, only 61 local feature films were released in 2024, generating RM165.04 million in gross box-office revenue with approximately 7.08 million cinema admissions (FINAS, 2025). This disparity in industrial scale directly shapes the feasibility of transmedia storytelling within Malaysia, influencing producers' capacity for long-term investment, platform integration, and sustained audience development. The conditions outlined above highlight a considerable gap in both academic research and industry practice. While international scholarship has established robust theoretical foundations for transmedia storytelling (Jenkins, 2006; Scolari, 2009; Dena, 2009; Pratten, 2011), research within Malaysia has predominantly focused on animation, conceptual discussions, or broader industry challenges. This has resulted in a lack of empirical insights into how live-action film producers in Malaysia perceive, adopt, and implement transmedia strategies within their production practices (Umar et al., 2020; Jamaluddin et al., 2021). As a consequence, there is a notable absence of contextually grounded understanding of transmedia storytelling as a production practice in the Malaysian live-action cinema sector. To address this gap, there is a need for an empirical examination of Malaysian film producers' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in engaging with transmedia storytelling, with the objective of developing a framework that aligns with the structural realities and constraints of the local film industry.

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1.5.1 Gap in Previous Studies

Table 1.1

Synthesis of Previous Studies on Transmedia Storytelling

Author(s)	Context	Contribution	Limitation / Gap
Jenkins (2006); Scolari (2009)	Global (Hollywood/Western)	Foundational theories of transmedia (convergence culture, branding, semiotics)	No Malaysian or Southeast Asian context
Kim & Hong (2013); Kwon & Byun (2016, 2018)	Korea & US	Strategies of transmedia storytelling; cross-national comparisons	Focus on Western and Korean cases; Malaysia not included
Dena (2009); Pratten (2011)	Theoretical frameworks	Concepts of transmedia practice and the 3Cs model	Not empirically tested in Malaysian cinema
Umar et al. (2020); Jamaluddin et al. (2021)	Malaysia (animation and conceptual studies)	Animation success stories (*Upin & Ipin*, *BoBoiBoy*); thematic proposals for cinema	Concentrated on animation and conceptual themes; limited focus on live-action cinema
Aziz et al. (2014); Rosnan et al. (2010)	Malaysia (film industry studies)	Identified industry challenges, transformation, and globalization impacts	Did not address transmedia storytelling directly
Sarji (2006); Wong et al. (2018)	Malaysia (identity and history)	Explored national cinema identity and cross-cultural narratives	No discussion of transmedia storytelling

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Perumal & Woods (2007)	Malaysia (knowledge management)	Case study on tacit knowledge in indie production (*Chemman Chaalai*)	Did not connect knowledge management with transmedia practices

The synthesis presented in Table 1.1 demonstrates that existing transmedia storytelling studies can be broadly categorised into three strands: foundational theoretical frameworks developed largely within Western contexts (Jenkins, 2006; Scolari, 2009; Dena, 2009; Pratten, 2011), empirical and strategic studies focused on established markets such as the United States and South Korea (Kim & Hong, 2013; Kwon & Byun, 2016, 2018), and Malaysian studies that primarily examine animation successes, industry challenges, or national cinema identity (Umar et al., 2020; Jamaluddin et al., 2021; Aziz et al., 2014; Sarji, 2006). While these studies contribute valuable theoretical and contextual insights, they do not empirically examine how Malaysian live-action film producers conceptualise and apply transmedia storytelling within their production practices. Consequently, prior research provides limited understanding of transmedia storytelling as an operational production strategy in the Malaysian live-action cinema context.

1.6 Theoretical Orientation of the Study

This study is grounded in key theories of transmedia storytelling as developed by leading scholars in the field. Henry Jenkins (2006) introduced the concept of convergence culture, highlighting how media convergence, participatory audiences, and collective intelligence shape a new storytelling environment. His work provides a foundation for understanding how narratives move fluidly across multiple platforms while engaging audiences in active participation. Carlos A. Scolari (2009) expanded

this discussion by analysing transmedia storytelling through a semiotic and branding lens. He highlighted how narrative worlds are constructed across different media and how audiences are positioned as implicit consumers, ranging from casual participants to dedicated fans who engage with multiple layers of the storyworld. This perspective is crucial for recognising the role of branding and consumer engagement in sustaining transmedia ecosystems. Christy Dena (2009) contributed to the theoretical landscape by theorising transmedia practice, shifting the focus from mere definition to implementation. She examined how creators design and manage transmedia projects, distinguishing them from simple cross-media adaptations. Her framework underscores the methodological and practical considerations necessary for effective transmedia storytelling.

Building on these foundations, Robert Pratten (2011) introduced a practical, producer-orientated framework, most notably the 3Cs Model (Character, Convenience, and Community). This model highlights the centrality of strong characters in driving narratives across platforms, the importance of convenient access for audiences, and the value of fostering communities around storyworlds. Pratten's framework serves as the guiding conceptual anchor for this research. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive foundation for this study. Jenkins (2006) establishes the cultural and participatory basis of transmedia storytelling, Scolari (2009) integrates the semiotic and branding dimensions, Dena (2009) explains the creative and methodological practices, and Pratten (2011) offers a practical model suitable for exploring producers' experiences. Collectively, these theoretical perspectives inform the study's analysis of how Malaysian cinema producers understand and apply transmedia storytelling strategies.

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1.7 Research Questions

In this study, the research questions are:

(i) How do Malaysian cinema producers conceptualize and apply transmedia storytelling strategies in their production practices?

(ii) What key elements are essential for developing a transmedia storytelling framework for Malaysian cinema producers?

1.8 Research Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

(i) To evaluate Malaysian cinema producers' experience with transmedia storytelling components within the 3C analytical framework.

(ii) To propose a transmedia storytelling framework for Malaysian cinema producers.

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1.9 Scope of Study

This research is specifically designed to analyse Malaysian cinema producers who possess experience in feature film production and have contributed significantly to the development of Malaysia’s film industry. The study focuses on contemporary Malaysian cinema within the digital era, where transmedia storytelling practices have increasingly emerged alongside platform convergence and audience engagement strategies. The key aspects of the study’s scope include:

(i) Focus on Malaysian Cinema Producers

(a) The study centres on producers who have been actively involved in the Malaysian film industry, particularly those producing commercially released feature films for theatrical exhibition.

(b) Malaysian cinema has undergone significant evolution since the post-2000 period, and the role of producers in shaping narratives, securing funding, and overseeing production positions them as critical stakeholders in determining the feasibility and success of transmedia storytelling strategies.

(ii) Emphasis on Box Office Performance

(a) To ensure industrial relevance, the study specifically includes producers with a demonstrated track record of box-office performance, reflecting films that have achieved measurable audience reach within the Malaysian theatrical market.

(b) Box-office performance is treated as an indicator of audience engagement and market penetration, both of which are essential considerations in the development of transmedia storytelling.

(c) Focusing on commercially successful productions allows the study to examine how storytelling and production strategies that resonate with audiences may inform transmedia expansion across platforms.

(iii) Producers with Multi-Platform Production Experience

(a) The study prioritises producers who have engaged with multi-platform production practices that extend beyond conventional filmmaking.

(b) This includes producers who have expanded their intellectual properties through merchandising, digital content, animation spin-offs, interactive media, or gaming adaptations.

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(c) As transmedia storytelling necessitates narratives to expand coherently across platforms, the study examines producers who have experimented with such multi-platform models within the contemporary context of the Malaysian film industry.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

This study does not include producers from television networks or drama series whose works are primarily designed for broadcast television. The decision to exclude television producers is based on key differences between cinematic storytelling and television production, particularly in:

(i) Financing Models: Television producers often work under pre-arranged funding structures with broadcasting networks, whereas film producers rely on box office sales, sponsorships, and distribution deals.

(ii) Audience Engagement Models: Television series are designed for episodic storytelling and sustained viewership, while films are typically produced as standalone narratives or franchise-based projects.

(iii) Intellectual Property Ownership: Most television content in Malaysia is owned by broadcasters, which limits the producers' ability to expand the story independently across multiple platforms.

However, an exception is made for Malaysian television producers who have successfully expanded their narratives across multiple platforms, incorporating transmedia storytelling elements into their work. This includes:

(i) Producers who have adapted TV series into films (e.g., drama series extended into cinema releases).

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(ii) Producers who have leveraged digital platforms, gaming, or print media to their television narratives beyond a single medium.

(iii) Producers who have retained intellectual property rights and actively developed transmedia extensions of their TV projects.

An example of such an exception is 'Skop Productions', which has successfully transitioned its popular television drama series (*Gerak Khas*) into films, demonstrating an understanding of multi-platform storytelling. Another example is 'Les' Copaque Productions', which initially produced 'Upin & Ipin' as a television series before expanding it into films, merchandise, theme parks, and digital content.

While these cases demonstrate successful multi-platform storytelling strategies, most of the Malaysian television content remains confined to single-platform broadcasting models. Thus, only TV producers with proven transmedia expansions are considered in this study, while those strictly producing television content under conventional models remain outside the research scope.

(i) Exclusion of Social Media Content Creators.

(a) The study does not analyse independent social media content creators, YouTubers, or digital influencers who produce content solely for online platforms.

(b) While social media plays an important role in transmedia storytelling, the focus of this study is on traditional cinema producers who aim to expand their stories beyond a single film rather than creators who primarily engage in short-form, viral, or influencer-driven content.

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(c) The decision to exclude social media creators is also based on the difference in content creation objectives cinema producers are focused on long-form narratives and structured storytelling, whereas social media creators often prioritize engagement-driven, short-form content.

(ii) Limitations in Sample Size.

(a) Given that transmedia storytelling is still relatively new in Malaysian cinema, only a small number of producers currently explore multi-platform storytelling strategies.

(b) The study focuses on a select group of high-profile producers with experience in box office film production, which may limit the generalizability of the findings.

However, this targeted approach ensures that only producers with significant industry experience and storytelling influence are included in the analysis.

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(iii) Challenges in Data Collection.

(a) Since transmedia storytelling is not yet widely adopted in Malaysia's film industry, gathering comprehensive case studies and real-world applications is challenging.

(b) Many producers may not fully document their transmedia strategies, and industry reports on transmedia success stories in Malaysia are limited.

The study relies primarily on qualitative interviews with producers, which may present subjective perspectives rather than quantitative data on audience engagement or revenue impact.

1.11 Justification for Scope and Limitations

The scope and limitations of this study have been carefully structured to ensure that the research remains focused, relevant, and practical:

(i) By focusing exclusively on Malaysian cinema producers, the study provides insights into the specific challenges and opportunities within Malaysia's film industry rather than blending findings from television or social media production.

(ii) The decision to prioritize box office producers with multi-platform experience ensures that findings reflect real-world industry practices rather than hypothetical discussions.

(iii) While excluding television and social media creators may limit the generalizability of the findings, it ensures that the study remains aligned with the objectives of exploring film producers' transmedia experiences

(iv) Recognizing the limitations in sample size and data collection, the study adopts a qualitative approach, leveraging interviews and industry insights to provide a comprehensive understanding of the transmedia landscape in Malaysian cinema.

This study focuses on exploring the experiences of Malaysian cinema producers with transmedia storytelling, particularly those who have achieved box office success and are involved in multi-platform production. By excluding television producers and social media content creators, the study ensures that findings are directly relevant to the challenges and opportunities within Malaysia's film industry. Despite limitations in sample size and data availability, this research aims to provide practical insights and

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recommendations that can contribute to the development of a structured transmedia storytelling framework for Malaysian cinema.

1.12 Significance of Study

In light of the structural gap between global transmedia developments and the limited strategic integration within Malaysian live-action cinema, this study adopts an empirical, producer-centred approach to examine transmedia storytelling as a production practice rather than merely a theoretical construct. By focusing on the lived experiences, decision-making processes, and industry negotiations of Malaysian film producers, the research seeks to generate contextually grounded insights that reflect the realities of the local film ecosystem. To achieve this, the study employs a qualitative design centred on in-depth semi-structured interviews with selected producers, guided by the 3C framework and attentive to Malaysian contextual conditions. The following chapter reviews the theoretical and industrial foundations of transmedia storytelling, establishing the conceptual basis that informs the study's analytical framework and subsequent methodological design.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores significant scholarly works on transmedia storytelling and situates these discussions within the context of Malaysian film. It has two primary objectives. First, to examine the fundamental concepts, theories, and practices of transmedia storytelling that have emerged from the global screen industries and second, to investigate how these concepts have been addressed, modified, or overlooked within the Malaysian film industry, particularly in relation to live-action films.

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The chapter outlines the theoretical and conceptual framework for the present study by integrating prior research on transmedia narratives, audience interaction, world-building, and multi-platform production processes. This research emphasises producer-centric perspectives on transmedia storytelling, which guide the selection of analytical frameworks utilised in the study. Specifically, this chapter addresses the research issues central to the study. The literature analysis establishes the theoretical framework for exploring how Malaysian filmmakers conceptualise and implement transmedia storytelling methods in their production processes (Research Question 1). Furthermore, recognising the discrepancies between global transmedia frameworks and the realities of the Malaysian sector contributes to the development of a contextualised analytical model, thereby leading to the proposed 3C+M Malaysian Transmedia Storytelling Framework (Research Question 2).

The chapter concludes by presenting the conceptual framework that underpins the study's methodological design and analysis, thereby linking the literature review to the subsequent research methods and findings.

2.2 Transmedia Storytelling: Concepts and Definitions

Henry Jenkins (2006) defines Transmedia storytelling as a process where "each medium does what it does best," allowing a film to introduce a core storyline, while television, comics, games, and online media extend the universe with additional arcs and perspectives. This additive expansion offers audiences multiple points of entry into the narrative, encouraging participation without requiring sequential consumption. For example, The Matrix franchise dispersed its story world across films, animated shorts, video games, and comics, such that no single medium alone provided the complete narrative (Jenkins, 2007).

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Carlos Scolari (2009) enriches this definition through a semiotic and narratological approach, arguing that Transmedia storytelling is not merely intermedia adaptation but a multimodal discourse that constructs different implicit consumers. Each text anticipates an ideal reader or viewer such as children, adults, fans, or casual audiences who interpret the narrative at varying levels. This view highlights how transmedia not only disperses stories but also positions and segments its audiences.

2.2.1 From Convergence Culture to Transmedia Storytelling

Driven by continuous technological, economic, and cultural changes, convergence culture denotes a substantial shift in the relationships between media industries, media texts, and audiences. Convergence, as defined by Henry Jenkins (2006), is more than

just a technological process, it is a cultural change in which media content moves across platforms, media industries use channel-specific synergistic tactics, and audiences participate more in the dissemination and analysis of media texts. Because production and consumption processes are becoming more interconnected and mutually influential, it is becoming harder to distinguish between media industries and audiences in this convergent media landscape. While audiences actively navigate, share, and reinterpret media content within networked social contexts, media organisations seek to expand their intellectual property and foster audience loyalty across various platforms. In the end, this dynamic interaction changes the way that modern media ecosystems construct meaning, value, and engagement (Jenkins & amp; Deuze, 2008).

Convergence culture's impact on both industry and culture creates an ideal environment for the evolution of transmedia storytelling. Storytelling is no longer confined to a single medium, as media content disperses across an ever-increasing array of platforms, allowing audiences to switch between different media types with ease. Convergence promotes narrative forms that are dispersed, interconnected, and designed to offer multiple entry points. Therefore, while convergence culture does not directly embody transmedia storytelling, it establishes the cultural and structural framework that enables transmedia storytelling to emerge as a viable and strategic narrative technique. The convergence of audience behaviours, media platforms, and industry practices provides the essential foundation for stories to traverse multiple media while maintaining coherence within a singular storyworld (Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins & amp; Deuze, 2008).

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The lines separating media industries, media texts, and audiences are becoming more and more flimsy in a convergence culture. Within the media ecosystem, this change results in a reconfiguration of power, control, and meaning-making. Media industries no longer have complete control over how stories are disseminated. Audiences actively interact with, analyse, and re-distribute media content across multiple platforms Henry Jenkins (2006). Media texts now serve as interrelated parts of larger narrative and commercial systems rather than being restricted to a single medium or self-contained narrative form. Through this change, audiences become active participants rather than passive consumers, and their actions have a big impact on how stories are continued, shared, and expanded. As a result, storytelling techniques change to adapt to fragmented but linked media experiences, resulting in situations where stories are not tied to a single cinematic text but rather are intended to unfold across various platforms (Jenkins & amp; Deuze, 2008).

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Transmedia storytelling emerges as a distinctive narrative approach within contemporary media production, capitalising on the conditions established by convergence culture. Henry Jenkins (2006, 2007) defines transmedia storytelling as a strategy in which narrative components are systematically distributed across various media platforms, with each medium offering a unique and meaningful enhancement to the overall narrative experience. Rather than merely repeating or altering the same content across different platforms, this approach aims to enrich the story within a shared storyworld. Christy Dena (2009) and Carlos Scolari (2009, 2014) further contribute to this concept. Dena perceives transmedia as a structured narrative system designed to guide audiences across multiple platforms, while Scolari views transmedia storytelling as a semiotic and textual ecosystem where meaning is derived from the

connections between diverse media texts. Collectively, these perspectives regard transmedia storytelling as a deliberate method of narrative construction that transcends mere advertising, necessitating careful planning concerning the storyworld, character development, and the management of intellectual property.

The definition of transmedia storytelling is especially important in the context of this study because it moves the emphasis from textual results to production-oriented decision-making. Transmedia storytelling is framed as a strategic production practice rather than just a narrative concept by highlighting platform-specific contributions, intentional narrative design, and coordinated storyworld development. This viewpoint is in line with the study's emphasis on Malaysian filmmakers, whose jobs necessitate striking a balance between artistic vision, practical production limitations, and business realities. Instead of evaluating transmedia only based on finished texts or audience reactions, this definitional lens allows the study to examine how producers conceptualise, interpret, and apply transmedia principles within their production processes. As a result, this definition offers a vital starting point for examining the experiences of producers and creating a contextualised framework that appropriately captures the real-world circumstances of Malaysian cinema.

2.2.2 Distinguishing between Multimedia, Cross-Media, and Transmedia

Although they refer to conceptually different methods of creating and disseminating content, the terms transmedia storytelling, cross-media, and multimedia are commonly used interchangeably in academic and professional discourse. Since the existence of content across multiple platforms does not always equate to transmedia storytelling, it is imperative that these distinctions be made clear for the purposes of this study.

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A narrative technique known as transmedia storytelling involves distributing story elements across several media platforms, each of which adds fresh and complementary narrative content to the overall storyworld. Transmedia storytelling, as defined by Henry Jenkins (2006, 2007), places more emphasis on narrative expansion than repetition and necessitates that viewers interact with various platforms in order to experience various aspects of a common narrative universe. Transmedia is positioned as a coordinated storytelling and production strategy rather than a post-production or marketing activity because meaning is created cumulatively through the relationships between narrative extensions.

On the other hand, cross-media practices mostly entail distributing or modifying the same content on several platforms. Cross-media tactics don't usually add new narrative content or broaden the storyworld, even though they might increase visibility, reach, and promotional efficacy. According to scholars, cross-media approaches primarily serve as a distribution or marketing logic rather than a storytelling framework, prioritising content circulation and market penetration over narrative complexity (Ibrus & Scolari, 2013; Hutter, 2012). Therefore, platform presence rather than additive narrative design is the focus of cross-media promotion.

On the other hand, multimedia describes how various media types, including text, audio, video, and graphics, are combined into a single platform or product. Rather than distributing narrative content across platforms, multimedia projects concentrate on improving presentation and comprehension through the combination of media elements. Given that its main focus is on content integration rather than narrative

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expansion, multimedia does not necessitate audience movement between various media environments or imply narrative continuity across distinct texts (Mayer, 2009). From a film production standpoint, being present on multiple platforms by itself does not address the strategic challenges associated with long-term intellectual property development and sustained audience engagement, which is why this study focuses specifically on transmedia storytelling. While transmedia storytelling emphasises deliberate narrative design, coordinated storyworld development, and platform-specific contributions, cross-media promotion and multimedia practices are frequently motivated by short-term visibility and presentation goals. By focusing on transmedia storytelling, this study can better analyse production decision-making in the Malaysian film industry by looking at how filmmakers develop and apply narrative strategies that go beyond surface-level multi-platform presence.

2.2.3 Transmedia as a Narrative and Semiotic System

Transmedia storytelling can be thought of as an integrated narrative and semiotic system where meaning is created through the interactions between texts, media, platforms, and users within a common storyworld, rather than just as the dissemination of content across various platforms. Carlos A. Scolari (2009) makes the semio-narratological claim that transmedia storytelling functions as an ecosystem of signification, with various media texts serving unique yet complementary narrative purposes. In this system, meaning is created through the coordinated interaction of various media expressions that together create a cohesive narrative world; no single text is adequate to convey the full narrative experience.

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Expanding on this ecosystem perspective, transmedia storytelling can also be viewed as a purposefully planned narrative technique as opposed to an unintentional or natural growth of content. According to Christy Dena (2009), transmedia projects are influenced by deliberate design choices, in which authors first imagine a fictional world and then decide how to represent it in various media and settings. This design-oriented viewpoint supports the notion that transmedia coherence is accomplished by carefully allocating narrative functions to particular platforms rather than by repeating content. This enables audiences to traverse the storyworld through a variety of entry points while preserving narrative coherence.

The idea of transmedial worlds, which was first proposed by Susana Tosca and Lisbeth Klastrup (2004), further explains the importance of the storyworld. According to their theory, transmedial worlds serve as abstract content systems from which various narratives, personas, and experiences can be extracted from various media formats. As narratives are expanded or adapted across platforms, the storyworld, which is characterised by its mythos, topos, and ethos, acts as the main semiotic anchor that ensures coherence and recognisability. Scolari's claim that transmedia meaning is maintained at the global level as opposed to at the level of individual texts is supported by this.

These theoretical stances are operationalised from a production standpoint by means of useful frameworks that direct strategic and creative decision-making. Robert Pratten (2011; 2015) emphasises the significance of consistent worldbuilding, character continuity, and platform-specific design in order to translate transmedia theory into a producer-oriented approach. In order to make sure that every media component

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enhances rather than detracts from the overall narrative system, producers must actively manage the relationships between story elements, platforms, and audience pathways, as demonstrated by Pratten's work.

2.3 Audiences, Participation and Worldbuilding

In transmedia storytelling, audience participation and meaning-making within a dynamic storyworld go beyond simple consumption. Transmedia functions as a narrative and semiotic system where viewers engage with characters, texts, and platforms through a variety of entry points, as was explained in the sections before this one. With an emphasis on participatory culture, community involvement, and the function of worldbuilding in maintaining long-term narrative coherence, this section explores how audiences operate as active participants within transmedia ecosystems. This discussion is in line with the Community dimension of the 3C framework, which views audience participation as a strategically planned result influenced by producer choices rather than accidental audience behaviour. This is achieved by placing audience participation within the larger framework of transmedia storytelling.

When combined, these viewpoints present transmedia storytelling as a structured narrative and semiotic system that is influenced by intentional production techniques, well-thought-out worldbuilding, and carefully thought-out audience navigation. This system-based perspective offers a theoretical framework for investigating how viewers interact with, take part in, and comprehend transmedia storyworlds a topic that is discussed in the section that follows.

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2.3.1 Participatory Culture and Spreadable Media

Traditional consumption models, which portray audiences as passive recipients of media content, are insufficient to comprehend audience engagement in transmedia storytelling. Rather, transmedia functions within a participatory culture, as defined by Henry Jenkins (2006), which is typified by low barriers to artistic expression, robust encouragement for content creation and sharing, and unofficial mentoring among participants. By sharing, analysing, and extending narrative components across platforms, viewers actively participate in storyworlds in these settings and become essential parts of the transmedia ecosystem.

Jenkins, Ford, and Green (2013) broaden this viewpoint by introducing the idea of spreadable media, which describes how content moves across networks via audience agency as opposed to top-down distribution. According to this perspective, media texts are valuable not only because they are seen but also because they can be shared, remixed, and recontextualised within communities. Spreadability in transmedia storytelling makes it possible for story elements to travel beyond their original platforms, giving audiences a variety of ways to enter the storyworld and promoting group meaning-making.

Fan activities, sometimes referred to as fan labour, are crucial to the continuation and expansion of transmedia narratives in participatory cultures. Fan fiction, fan art, and online discussion are examples of such labour, but their importance comes more from their role in community building and narrative continuity than from their unpaid creation. According to Jenkins (2006), participatory audiences actively negotiate and reinterpret narrative meanings within shared cultural spaces rather than passively

consuming stories. This is consistent with Carlos A. Scolari's (2009) theory that audiences are "implicit users" whose interpretive behaviours are planned and regulated by transmedia system design.

From a producer-centred standpoint, spreadable media and participatory culture are strategic considerations in transmedia storytelling rather than accidental results. Deliberate production choices regarding character design, narrative transparency, and platform affordances are necessary to facilitate, direct, and maintain audience participation. Successful transmedia projects acknowledge community engagement as a fundamental structural element rather than a promotional afterthought, according to Robert Pratten (2011; 2015). This viewpoint is in line with the 3C framework's Community dimension, where audience participation serves as a means of fostering sustained storyworlds relevance, narrative loyalty, and long-term engagement. Therefore, audiences are repositioned as co-participants in transmedia storyworlds, whose collective practices add to both narrative meaning and cultural value, thanks to participatory culture and spreadable media. This knowledge serves as a crucial starting point for investigating the relationship between audience participation and worldbuilding procedures, a topic that is covered in more detail in the subsection that follows.

2.3.2 Transmedial Worlds, Franchises and Characters

The ability of a storyworld and its characters to exist outside of a single text or platform is crucial to the sustainability of transmedia storytelling. Franchise potential arises when a storyworld has enough depth, coherence, and openness to accommodate several narrative extensions; not all narratives are naturally suited for transmedia

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expansion. Lisbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca (2004) make the case that a transmedia world functions as an abstract content system from which a variety of narratives, characters, and experiences can be extracted across media formats. In this way, franchisability stems from the recognisable and consistent world's underlying mythos, topos, and ethos rather than from the repetition of a single plot.

Characters are essential to maintaining audience engagement across platforms in these kinds of worlds. Through the use of semiotic connectors, characters allow viewers to move between various media texts while still feeling as though the story is continuing. As Matt Hills (2012) points out, continuing character relationships, rather than just plot, are frequently what maintain long-term audience attachment in franchised media. Characters are essential resources in transmedia ecosystems because they enable viewers to identify and emotionally invest in a storyworld even as narratives grow, change, or move platforms.

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Strategic character and intellectual property management is another aspect of franchise development from an industry and production standpoint. Derek Johnson (2013) emphasises that franchising is an industrial process that is influenced by choices about character consistency, brand identity, and cross-platform coordination rather than just being a narrative one. To avoid storyworld fragmentation, producers of transmedia storytelling must strike a balance between maintaining canonical coherence and allowing for creative expansion. When extending across media, characters with unclear motivations, identities, or narrative depth are less likely to maintain meaningful engagement.

Character continuity and depth are especially crucial in transmedia settings, where viewers interact with characters in a variety of formats that each provide a different perspective on the storyworld. Audiences can incorporate these scattered narrative tidbits into a cohesive comprehension of the fictional world through consistent characterisation. On the other hand, inconsistent character portrayals run the risk of eroding audience trust and the world's credibility. As a result, character design stops being a secondary narrative concern and instead becomes a fundamental part of transmedia worldbuilding.

This discussion lays the foundation for the 3C framework's Character dimension by positioning characters as strategic anchors for transmedia engagement rather than just narrative agents. Characters serve as connective structures that maintain viewer engagement, facilitate franchise continuity, and facilitate long-term storyworld expansion across platforms, according to a producer-centred viewpoint.

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2.3.3 Platforms, Convenience and User Journeys

The way audiences' access and navigate story elements across multiple platforms has an impact on audience engagement in transmedia storytelling, in addition to the narrative content itself. Therefore, whether transmedia systems are viewed as cohesive and accessible or as disjointed and inconvenient depends greatly on the choice and layout of these platforms. From a practice-oriented standpoint, the success of transmedia depends on how well producers match their narrative goals with each platform's affordances, user behaviour, and logistical limitations.

According to transmedia practitioners, platforms influence how stories are viewed and comprehended rather than being merely neutral repositories of content. Christy Dena (2009) argues that transmedia systems ought to be designed with user journeys in mind, ensuring that each platform offers a unique yet complementary contribution to the overall narrative experience. Rather than requiring audiences to engage with all media components, effective transmedia design creates multiple entry points, enabling users to participate at varying levels according to their interests, available time, and access. This approach establishes convenience as a fundamental design principle instead of a mere by-product of distribution.

Likewise, Robert Pratten (2011; 2015) emphasises how crucial accessibility and usability are in transmedia systems. Pratten emphasises that viewers should never have to "work too hard" to follow a story because doing so can discourage participation and reduce interest. As a result, platform strategy needs to take into account elements like content availability, cost barriers, device compatibility, and scheduling. When transmedia components are challenging to access, poorly timed, or dispersed across incompatible platforms, there is a risk that audience engagement may become exclusionary rather than expansive.

From a producer-centred perspective, considerations regarding platforms and convenience are significantly influenced by practical and resource constraints. Factors such as budget limitations, production capacity, and partnerships with various platforms dictate which media can be realistically employed in a transmedia project. Independent or smaller producers, particularly those operating outside of Hollywood, often find themselves without the resources necessary to maintain extensive multi-

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platform ecosystems. Consequently, decisions regarding platforms frequently entail strategic trade-offs between narrative ambition and operational feasibility. Dena (2009) observes that successful transmedia projects often arise not from attempts at maximal expansion, but from thoughtfully curated platform selections that align with the available resources and the habits of the audience.

Convenience becomes crucial in maintaining long-term engagement in this situation. Clear, accessible, and adaptable user journeys enable audiences to engage without feeling overloaded with information or logistics. This is in line with the 3C framework's Convenience dimension, where producer decisions influence strategic design considerations like navigability and ease of access. To guarantee that narrative systems continue to be inclusive, sustainable, and captivating across a range of audience contexts, transmedia storytelling demands that convenience be integrated into platform strategy rather than being treated as a secondary consideration.

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2.4 Industry and Practice Perspectives on Transmedia

While earlier sections have examined transmedia storytelling from narrative, audience, and worldbuilding perspectives, this section shifts the focus to industry and practice-based viewpoints. In particular, it reviews how transmedia storytelling is understood and implemented by producers within real production environments, where creative ambitions are negotiated alongside financial, organisational, and market constraints.

From an industry perspective, transmedia storytelling is not merely a storytelling technique but a strategic production practice that requires coordination across platforms, teams, and timelines. As such, the producer plays a central role in determining whether and how transmedia strategies are adopted, adapted, or avoided.

This section reviews global practices, sector-specific patterns, and documented barriers in order to contextualise producer decision-making and to prepare the analytical ground for the methodological approach adopted in this study.

2.4.1 International Transmedia Techniques in Television and Film

In reputable international film industries, transmedia storytelling has become an essential strategy for franchise growth and the sustainability of intellectual property (IP). Transmedia storytelling is widely used by major film and television franchises in Hollywood and international streaming markets to extend narrative worlds beyond a single medium and allow stories to unfold across films, television shows, digital platforms, games, and live experiences (Jenkins, 2006; Evans, 2011).

The integration of transmedia storytelling into long-term production planning is exemplified by television franchises like Star Wars, the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), and Harry Potter. While ancillary extensions offer more story content rather than just repetition, feature films usually serve as the main narrative anchors. Games, webisodes, comics and novels, television or streaming spin-offs, and digital-first content are examples of these extensions. Each of these adds unique narrative viewpoints that enhance the overall storyworld (Dena, 2009; Scolari, 2013).

A number of transmedia extension types are particularly common from the perspective of industry practice. Webisodes and short-form digital content, which offer comparatively inexpensive extensions with high engagement potential, are widely used to explore supporting characters or narrative voids between major releases. In addition to being used for marketing, social media platforms serve as narrative spaces

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where characters and storyworlds are continuously present. While live events and immersive installations strengthen fan participation and brand loyalty through physical engagement, console-based and mobile games offer experiential depth by enabling audiences to interact directly with story environments (Evans, 2011; Freeman, 2016). Importantly, early-stage integration and centralised control are characteristics of global transmedia practices. Producers frequently plan transmedia strategies during the development stage, coordinating audience pathways, platform roles, and narrative continuity within a single franchise roadmap (Pratten, 2011). Strong intellectual property ownership, significant financial resources, and established industrial infrastructures all support this degree of coordination. Global transmedia practices are therefore a highly systematised model that is difficult for smaller or up-and-coming film industries to imitate.

2.4.2 Transmedia Practices in Animation and Children's Content

Across both global and regional contexts, animation and children's content are widely recognised as sectors where transmedia storytelling is most effectively implemented. Scholars note that animated properties are particularly well suited to transmedia expansion due to their strong emphasis on character branding, visual consistency, and modular narrative design (Scolari, 2009; Umar et al., 2020).

In global markets, children's and family-oriented franchises frequently extend their narratives across television series, feature films, books, games, mobile applications, merchandise, and themed attractions. Characters function as stable narrative anchors that can be recontextualised across platforms without disrupting continuity, making them ideal for long-term transmedia ecosystems. From an industry perspective,

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animation also benefits from flexible production pipelines, where assets such as character designs and environments can be repurposed across media with greater efficiency compared to live-action productions.

In Southeast Asia, including Malaysia, similar patterns can be observed. Successful animated intellectual properties have demonstrated the viability of transmedia storytelling through the integration of television content, cinema releases, digital platforms, merchandising, and experiential branding. These cases illustrate how transmedia storytelling can function as a sustainable business model when supported by coherent character design, audience familiarity, and long-term production planning (Umar et al., 2020).

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However, scholars also note a clear disparity between animation and live-action cinema in terms of transmedia adoption. While animated properties often evolve into multi-platform franchises, live-action films particularly those operating within smaller domestic markets tend to remain confined to single-platform distribution models (Aziz et al., 2014; Jamaluddin et al., 2021). This contrast highlights how genre, production scale, and target audience shape the feasibility of transmedia storytelling and reinforces the need to examine producer practices within specific industrial contexts.

2.4.3 Challenges and Barriers in Adopting Transmedia Strategies

Transmedia storytelling is still not widely used in the film industry, despite its proven success in international franchises and animated content. The literature currently in publication identifies a number of persistent obstacles that limit producers' readiness and capacity to employ transmedia tactics.

Financial risk is a significant obstacle. Investment across several platforms is necessary for transmedia storytelling, and the returns are frequently uncertain. When box office performance is still the main metric of success, the costs of creating and maintaining transmedia extensions may be greater than the perceived benefits for producers working in smaller markets (Bolin, 2010; Freeman, 2016). Transmedia projects are therefore usually seen as high-risk endeavours rather than essential production techniques.

Organisational and structural fragmentation present another difficulty. Coordination is challenging because film production, television, digital media, and marketing frequently operate as distinct silos. Cross-departmental cooperation and long-term planning are necessary for effective transmedia storytelling, but these requirements are not always met by current institutional frameworks or production cultures (Jenkins, 2006; Evans, 2011). Adoption is made more difficult by gaps in knowledge and abilities. A tendency to associate transmedia with promotional activity rather than narrative expansion arises from the fact that many producers lack formal training or hands-on experience with transmedia design. When there is a multi-platform presence without a coherent storyworld development, this conceptual ambiguity results in fragmented implementation (Dena, 2009).

And last, there is a serious worry about audience ambiguity. Producers may be uncertain if audiences will interact with cross-platform narrative extensions in markets with low levels of transmedia literacy. Because of this uncertainty, producers frequently make conservative decisions and favour tried-and-true single-platform models over cutting-edge transmedia strategies (Freeman, 2016). When taken as a

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whole, these obstacles highlight the significance of considering transmedia storytelling as a situated production practice that is influenced by producer experience, cultural context, and industrial scale rather than general theoretical frameworks.

This section's review of the literature shows how producer decision-making, industrial capacity, and contextual constraints all have a significant impact on transmedia storytelling practices. Although animated properties and international franchises show the promise of integrated transmedia strategies, their production environments are very different from those of producers working in smaller national film industries.

These observations draw attention to a significant research gap: there aren't many empirical studies that look at how movie producers themselves comprehend, deal with, and use transmedia storytelling in their production settings. A research strategy that prioritises producer viewpoints, experiences, and decision-making procedures is necessary to close this gap.

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In order to translate the industry-oriented concerns mentioned in this section into an empirical research design, the following chapter describes the qualitative methodological framework used in this study to examine Malaysian film producers' involvement with transmedia storytelling practices.

2.5 Malaysian Screen Industries and Transmedia Potential

This section situates transmedia storytelling within the specific structural, cultural, and industrial context of the Malaysian screen industry, following an examination of global transmedia practices and industry perspectives. While global models illustrate the

strategic value of multi-platform storytelling, their relevance to Malaysia must be considered in light of local market scale, regulatory frameworks, cultural sensibilities, and production realities.

The section encompasses (1) an overview of the Malaysian film and media landscape, (2) a comparison between animation and live-action practices, and (3) a discussion of cultural, religious, and industrial factors that influence transmedia potential. Together, these discussions lay the groundwork for understanding the Malaysian dimension ("M") within the proposed 3C+M framework.

2.5.1 Overview of the Malaysian Film and Media Landscape

The Malaysian film industry operates within a relatively small and fragmented domestic market. Jamaluddin Aziz, Hashim, and Ibrahim (2014) emphasise that Malaysia's limited population base and audience segmentation pose structural challenges for sustaining local film production. The dominance of foreign imports particularly Hollywood films, further intensifies competition, making it difficult for Malaysian productions to secure consistent box office performance.

Globalisation has significantly reshaped the industrial environment. Rosnan, Ismail, and Daud (2010) argue that the globalization of film business presents both opportunities and threats to developing film industries. While global integration offers potential for market expansion, it also exposes local producers to heightened competition, technological demands, and capital constraints. Malaysian film production remains heavily influenced by these external market pressures.

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Institutionally, the National Film Development Corporation Malaysia (FINAS), established in 1981, plays a central regulatory and developmental role (Rosnan et al., 2010). Government initiatives aim to elevate Malaysian cinema to international standards. However, financing structures remain predominantly project-based and short-term in orientation. Revenue models are still largely dependent on theatrical performance, which discourages long-term intellectual property (IP) planning and systematic transmedia development.

Debates surrounding national identity further complicate the Malaysian media landscape. Asiah Sarji (2000) highlights longstanding tensions concerning what constitutes a "Malaysian film," particularly in relation to language, ethnicity, and the National Cultural Policy. Historically, Malay-language films have been institutionally privileged as representative of national cinema. This ideological positioning influences narrative construction, regulatory decisions, and audience expectations.

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Although streaming platforms and digital distribution have expanded alternative exhibition pathways, systematic transmedia integration remains limited. Jamaluddin Aziz, Mustaffa, and Hamzah (2021) argue that while media convergence has created new storytelling possibilities, the Malaysian film industry has yet to fully operationalise transmedia strategies within mainstream production practice.

2.5.2 Malaysian Case Studies: Animation vs. Live-Action

The animation and live-action film industries in Malaysia are very different from one another. The use of transmedia storytelling techniques is more prevalent in Malaysia's animation industry. According to Umar Hakim Mohd Hasri, Md Syed, and Runnel

(2020), franchises like Upin dan Ipin, BoBoiBoy, and Ajen Ali strategically span a variety of platforms, including television shows, movie releases, merchandise, digital platforms, and video games. These franchises integrate Malaysian cultural values into commercially produced goods in addition to using transmedia storytelling formats. The authors contend that a hybrid ecosystem for Malaysian animation has been cultivated through cooperation between private producers and government policy incentives. Strong character branding, asset reusability, and a family-friendly viewership enhance animation production, allowing for long-term franchise development and cross-platform consistency.

Malaysian live-action films, on the other hand, continue to be primarily centred around a single platform. Additive narrative extensions across platforms are uncommon, despite the fact that promotional campaigns may use digital marketing strategies and interact with social media. The majority of live-action films are written as stand-alone works of cinema and don't have the vast storyworld ecosystems found in popular franchises.

Transmedia storytelling has a great deal of promise to revitalise the Malaysian film industry, claim Jamaluddin Aziz et al. (2021). Its usefulness in live-action production is still restricted, though. A crucial research gap is highlighted by the sharp contrast between the structured adoption of transmedia in animation and the conservative production model of live-action movies.

While the animation industry has demonstrated that transmedia integration is feasible in the Malaysian context, live-action producers seem to be more cautious and risk-

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averse when it comes to implementing multi-platform storytelling strategies. By investigating how Malaysian live-action film producers understand and apply transmedia storytelling in their production processes, this thesis aims to directly address this gap.

2.5.3 Cultural, Religious and Industrial Considerations

Malaysia's transmedia potential must be understood within its socioreligious and cultural context. The concepts of Malay identity and the National Cultural Policy have been intrinsically linked to the notion of Malaysian national cinema (Asiah Sarji, 2000). Regulatory frameworks and audience expectations continue to be influenced by the prioritisation of the Malay language and indigenous cultural values. In crafting stories and characters, producers must navigate censorship regulations, moral principles, and cultural sensitivities.

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Identity negotiation has historically been a significant aspect of national film narratives, as evidenced by analyses of the Golden Era of Malaysian cinema. Early films facilitated inter-ethnic negotiation and cross-cultural dialogue within Malaysia's multicultural society, as highlighted by Wong, Pillai, and Ong (2018). However, contemporary regulatory and ideological structures impose more clearly defined narrative boundaries.

Beyond regulatory frameworks and identity negotiations, Malaysian screen production must also be understood through the lens of production culture and institutional mediation. Karelawati (2015) demonstrates that media production environments operate within what she describes as a "culture of caution," where institutional

ideologies, hierarchical structures, and regulatory sensitivities shape editorial boundaries and creative autonomy. Her analysis reveals that creative labor is negotiated within organizational expectations and risk-avoidance practices rather than exercised in conditions of unrestricted freedom.

Although her study focuses on religious broadcasting, the implications extend to the broader Malaysian screen industry, where producers similarly navigate funding dependencies, censorship parameters, cultural sensitivities, and commissioning structures. In such contexts, creative decisions including narrative expansion, cross-platform development, and audience engagement strategies are structurally mediated. Transmedia potential, therefore, is not determined solely by narrative ambition or technological capability, but by the ecology of institutional conditions that shape production practice.

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This production culture perspective reinforces the need to conceptualize a contextual dimension within the proposed 3C+M framework, where "M" represents the structural and institutional forces that mediate the feasibility, scale, and sustainability of transmedia storytelling in Malaysia.

Moreover, audience fragmentation remains a critical consideration. According to Jamaluddin Aziz et al. (2014), there are notable ethnic, class, and cultural divides among Malaysian moviegoers. This fragmentation complicates strategic planning for transmedia expansion, particularly for producers uncertain about the levels of cross-platform engagement.

Industrial scale also influences feasibility. The industry's reliance on government assistance, limited production budgets, and a dearth of specialised transmedia knowledge restrict its capacity to attract long-term franchise investment. Consequently, producers must find a balance between economic risk, legal compliance, and creative ambition.

In the proposed 3C+M framework, these structural, cultural, and industrial factors converge to form the Malaysian dimension ("M"). While global models emphasise the strategic pillars of character, convenience, and community, Malaysian producers must also contend with market fragmentation, cultural coherence, and regulatory alignment. Thus, Malaysian transmedia storytelling needs to adapt to local industrial realities rather than merely replicating international franchise models.

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2.6 Theoretical and Practical Models for This Study

The preceding sections have examined transmedia storytelling from multiple perspectives: foundational theory, audience participation, industrial practice, and the Malaysian screen context. While these discussions provide a broad conceptual and contextual understanding, this study requires a structured analytical model capable of bridging theory and empirical investigation. Accordingly, this section introduces the theoretical and practical models that guide the present research.

Transmedia storytelling scholarship is rich and multidimensional, encompassing narrative theory, media convergence, participatory culture, worldbuilding, and production strategy. However, the diversity of perspectives also presents an analytical challenge. Without a coherent framework, empirical research risks becoming

descriptively fragmented or overly dependent on isolated theoretical strands. Therefore, this study adopts a focused analytical lens that synthesises key insights from foundational transmedia scholars while remaining sensitive to industrial realities.

Specifically, the study employs the 3Cs model - Character, Convenience, and Community as its primary analytical structure. The 3Cs serve as organising categories for examining how Malaysian live-action film producers conceptualise narrative expansion, platform strategy, and audience engagement. At the same time, the study recognises that transmedia practices do not operate in theoretical abstraction but are shaped by contextual forces. Consequently, this section also outlines the positioning of the study within broader transmedia scholarship and introduces the groundwork for an additional contextual dimension to be developed inductively from the findings.

The following subsections therefore (1) define and justify the 3Cs model as the core analytical lens, (2) situate the study within established transmedia scholarship, and (3) outline the development of a context-sensitive 3C+M framework tailored to the Malaysian screen industry.

2.6.1 The 3Cs Model: Character, Convenience and Community

Pratten's (2011) 3Cs model Character, Convenience, and Community is used in this study as the primary analytical framework for analysing transmedia storytelling techniques. Transmedia storytelling is conceptualised by the 3Cs model, which was previously shown in Figure 1.2, as an integrated planning strategy where audience engagement, platform delivery, and narrative design all work in tandem. Pratten views transmedia as a coordinated production framework that necessitates intentional

strategic alignment across story, media platforms, and audience communities rather than just as a textual phenomenon.

The 3Cs are operationalised as structured analytical categories in this study to examine the viewpoints and decision-making procedures of Malaysian live-action film producers. Narrative depth, continuity, recognisability, and the possibility of growth beyond a single cinematic text are all considered aspects of character. Character serves as the main narrative anchor that maintains engagement across platforms in transmedia planning (Pratten, 2011). This dimension looks at how producers think about the potential for intellectual property in live-action stories, the coherence of storyworld rules, and the expandability of story assets.

The strategic distribution of relevant content via easily accessible platforms at the right times is referred to as convenience. Transmedia extensions must be feasible within production constraints and in line with audience habits, according to Pratten (2011). Convenience in this study includes budgetary considerations, workflow coordination, format suitability, platform selection, and release sequencing. It is a reflection of the business realities that influence how producers assess storytelling across multiple platforms.

The relational and participatory aspect of transmedia storytelling is encapsulated by community. Pratten links community to co-creation, discussion forums, user-generated content, and ongoing audience engagement (Pratten, 2011). The producers' approaches to audience participation, social media engagement, fan cultivation, and

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long-term relational sustainability beyond the initial film release are examined in this study in order to analyse community.

Despite having its roots in Pratten's (2011) transmedia planning framework, the 3Cs model's conceptual reasoning is consistent with more general transmedia scholarship. The theoretical foundation for community engagement is provided by Jenkins' (2006, 2009) work on convergence culture and participatory audiences; attention to coherence and expansion is supported by Scolari's (2009, 2013) conceptualisation of transmedia as a structured narrative system; Dena (2009) emphasises the significance of intentional design; and Klastrup and Tosca (2004) draw attention to the importance of world continuity across platforms. Together, these viewpoints reinforce the 3Cs' theoretical underpinnings while maintaining Pratten's model as the main operational framework for the research.

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As a result, the 3Cs serve as the foundational conceptual framework that directs the gathering of data and thematic analysis. The next section lays the foundation for expanding the framework in the Malaysian context and places this study more clearly within the field of transmedia storytelling scholarship.

2.6.2 Positioning the Study within Transmedia Storytelling Scholarship

Jenkins and Scolari's work serve as a fundamental foundation for transmedia storytelling scholarship. Jenkins (2006, 2009) places transmedia storytelling in the context of convergence culture, highlighting the methodical distribution of narrative components across platforms and the active involvement of viewers in the process of creating meaning. His explanation of participatory culture emphasises the relationship

between audiences and producers in multi-platform settings. In support of this viewpoint, Scolari (2009, 2013) defines transmedia storytelling as an organised narrative system that is distinguished by expansion, coherence, and intertextual connectivity across media platforms. By presenting transmedia storytelling as a cultural and narrative phenomenon, Jenkins and Scolari together offer the theoretical framework for transmedia storytelling scholarship.

Subsequent researchers have extended transmedia inquiry into fields such as world construction, planning, and design, building on these foundations. Dena (2009) highlights the significance of deliberate structural planning by distinguishing between designed transmedia and basic cross-media distribution. Transmedia is reframed as a development and production strategy by Pratten (2011, 2015), who emphasises its useful application in media workflows. The idea of transmedial worlds is introduced by Klastrup and Tosca (2004), who highlight internal consistency and world coherence across platforms. By investigating audience engagement strategies, user-generated content, and community building within transmedia ecosystems, participation and fandom scholars expand on Jenkins' participatory framework. Together, these viewpoints move transmedia scholarship away from textual expansion and toward relational sustainability, production strategy, and narrative continuity.

Much of this research, however, comes from high-capacity international franchise industries that are predicated on established fan cultures, significant investment, and intellectual property control. Such structural conditions are not universally applicable, according to regional scholarship. Market fragmentation, regulatory frameworks, and industrial scale constraints are highlighted in studies of the Malaysian screen industry

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(Jamaluddin Aziz et al., 2014; Rosnan et al., 2010). While live-action film is still relatively conservative in its use of multi-platform storytelling techniques (Jamaluddin Aziz et al., 2021), research on Malaysian animation shows selective transmedia integration under particular institutional and commercial conditions (Umar Hakim Mohd Hasri et al., 2020). These regional insights suggest that contextual forces mediate the implementation of transmedia. The current study situates itself at the nexus of foundational theory and Malaysian industrial realities, which serves as the foundation for creating a Malaysian contextual dimension within the analytical framework.

2.6.3 Towards the 3C+M Malaysian Transmedia Storytelling Framework

While the 3Cs model provides a structured analytical foundation for examining transmedia storytelling, the review of Malaysian screen industry literature in Section 2.5 indicates that transmedia implementation is mediated by contextual forces specific to the Malaysian production environment. Industrial scale constraints, regulatory frameworks, funding mechanisms, and market dynamics shape how producers evaluate risk, expansion, and sustainability (Jamaluddin Aziz et al., 2014; Rosnan et al., 2010). In addition, socio-cultural and religious sensibilities influence narrative construction, character representation, and thematic boundaries within Malaysian cinema (Asiah Sarji, 2000; Jamaluddin Aziz et al., 2021).

These contextual conditions suggest that the principles of character, convenience, and community cannot operate in abstraction from local production realities. Instead, Malaysian context mediates how each of the three constructs is interpreted and operationalised. Narrative expandability (Character) is shaped by censorship

boundaries and cultural expectations; platform feasibility (Convenience) is constrained by industrial scale and financial capacity; and audience engagement strategies (Community) are influenced by local media consumption patterns and digital participation cultures.

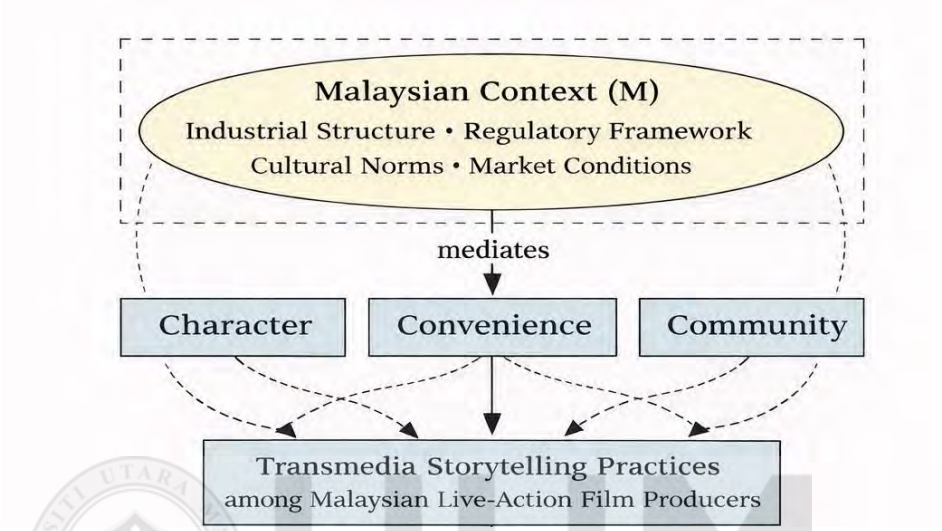

Figure 2.1. The proposed 3C+M Malaysian Transmedia Storytelling framework

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Figure 2.1 illustrates this conceptual relationship. The Malaysian contextual dimension ("M") is positioned as a mediating layer that encompasses industrial structure, regulatory frameworks, cultural norms, and market conditions. This contextual layer influences the interplay of character, convenience, and community within the Malaysian live-action film ecosystem. Consequently, the interaction of these constructs shapes the practices of transmedia storytelling among Malaysian live-action film producers.

Importantly, while the necessity of contextual mediation is supported by the literature reviewed in Section 2.5, the specific configuration of the Malaysian contextual dimension is not predetermined. Instead, the elements that comprise "M" will be

refined inductively through qualitative analysis of producer interviews. This approach enables the framework to remain both theoretically informed and empirically grounded.

The integration of character, convenience, community, and the Malaysian contextual dimension will culminate in the formal articulation of the 3C+M Malaysian transmedia storytelling framework in Chapter 5. This chapter will synthesise theoretical principles with empirical findings to illustrate how global transmedia storytelling concepts are negotiated, adapted, and strategically positioned within Malaysia's live-action production landscape.

2.7 The Conceptual Framework of the Study

This section synthesizes the theoretical and analytical discussions from Chapter 2 into a formal conceptual framework that informs the study's empirical approach. Building on prior sections that established the relevance of transmedia storytelling scholarship and identified the 3Cs model as the core analytical lens, this section articulates the operational role of these constructs in the research design.

The conceptual framework fulfils three main objectives. First, it delineates the analytical structure for investigating transmedia storytelling practices among Malaysian live-action film producers. Second, it defines the relationships between the independent analytical constructs and the central phenomenon under study. Third, it demonstrates the alignment of research questions with the framework, ensuring conceptual consistency between theoretical foundations and methodological execution.

Anchored in the 3Cs model - Character, Convenience, and Community - the initial framework designates these dimensions as principal explanatory factors shaping transmedia storytelling practices. At this stage, the framework maintains a focus on the 3Cs, establishing a systematic basis for qualitative data collection and thematic analysis. The Malaysian contextual dimension ("M"), as discussed in Section 2.6.3, will be incorporated inductively based on empirical findings and further elaborated in Chapter 5.

2.7.1 The Initial Conceptual Framework (3Cs Focus)

The initial conceptual framework of this study is grounded in the 3Cs model - Character, Convenience, and Community as introduced in Section 2.6.1. The 3Cs model was originally conceptualised by Pratten (2011) as a strategic framework for transmedia planning. While developed for industry application, the model is operationalised in this research as independent analytical constructs for examining transmedia storytelling practices among Malaysian live-action film producers. Its adoption is further supported by foundational transmedia scholarship that emphasises narrative expandability, cross-platform coordination, and participatory engagement (Jenkins, 2006, 2009; Scolari, 2009, 2013; Dena, 2009).

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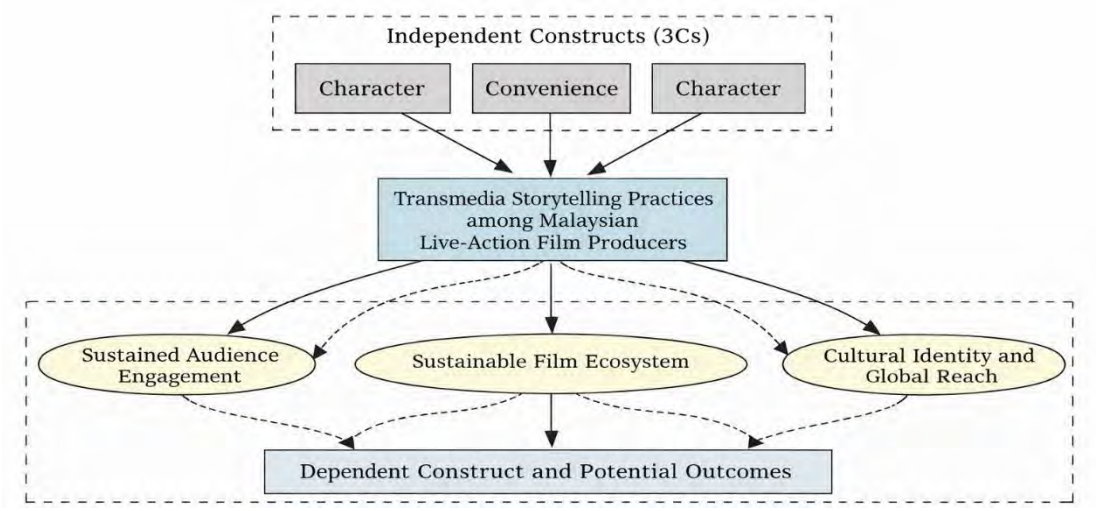

Figure 2.2. Initial conceptual framework of the study (3Cs Focus)

Within this framework, Character, Convenience, and Community function as independent constructs guiding qualitative inquiry. Character refers to the narrative dimension of transmedia storytelling, encompassing storyworld coherence, character depth, recognisability, and potential for narrative expansion across platforms (Pratten, 2011; Scolari, 2013). Convenience captures the strategic and industrial dimension, including platform selection, release timing, format suitability, and feasibility within budgetary and production constraints (Dena, 2009; Pratten, 2011). Community represents the relational dimension, focusing on audience participation, engagement strategies, and long-term interaction between producers and audiences (Jenkins, 2006, 2009).

These constructs collectively influence the dependent construct, defined as transmedia storytelling practices among Malaysian live-action film producers. The dependent construct refers to how producers conceptualise, adopt, adapt, or limit transmedia strategies within their production environments. In qualitative research, conceptual frameworks serve as analytical scaffolds that guide interpretation rather than test

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statistical causality (Maxwell, 2013), and the present framework operates in this capacity.

The framework further acknowledges potential outcome implications associated with effective transmedia integration. These include sustained audience engagement, the development of a sustainable film ecosystem, and strengthened cultural identity with broader regional or global reach. Such outcomes align with broader discussions on creative industry sustainability and cultural positioning in transmedia contexts (Jenkins, 2006; Scolari, 2013).

2.7.2 Linking the Conceptual Framework to the Research Questions

The framework aligns directly with the research questions guiding this study. Research Question 1 (RQ1) examines how Malaysian live-action film producers conceptualise transmedia storytelling practices, mapping primarily onto the independent constructs of Character, Convenience, and Community. Research Question 2 (RQ2) explores how industrial, cultural, and regulatory conditions shape transmedia implementation, laying the groundwork for the emergence of the Malaysian contextual dimension ("M") that will be elaborated in Chapter 5.

Accordingly, the initial conceptual framework provides the analytical structure guiding the qualitative methodology outlined in Chapter 3. It establishes the 3Cs as the foundational lens of analysis while allowing space for contextual refinement through empirical findings.

The conceptual framework presented in Section 2.7.1 provides a structured analytical lens through which the research questions are addressed. By positioning Character, Convenience, and Community as core constructs derived from transmedia scholarship (Jenkins, 2006, 2009; Scolari, 2013; Pratten, 2011), the framework ensures theoretical continuity between established transmedia principles and the empirical focus of this study.

Research Question 1 (RQ1) examines how current transmedia storytelling practices among Malaysian live-action film producers relate to the three core constructs. Specifically, RQ1 explores how producers conceptualise narrative expandability and character depth (Character), assess platform feasibility and production logistics (Convenience), and engage audiences through participatory or relational strategies (Community). In this sense, RQ1 operationalises the 3Cs as analytical categories for examining existing industry practices.

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Research Question 2 (RQ2) extends the inquiry by identifying the contextual conditions and structural elements that shape or constrain transmedia implementation. While initially examined through the 3Cs lens, RQ2 recognises that transmedia storytelling is embedded within specific industrial and cultural environments (Jenkins, 2006; Scolari, 2013). In the Malaysian context, these conditions include regulatory frameworks, production scale, market limitations, and socio-cultural considerations discussed in Section 2.5. The insights generated through RQ2 will inform the refinement of the Malaysian contextual dimension ("M") within the proposed 3C+M framework.

Together, RQ1 and RQ2 function sequentially within the conceptual framework. RQ1 evaluates current practices through established transmedia constructs, while RQ2 identifies contextual mediating factors necessary for adapting transmedia principles to Malaysian production realities. Consistent with qualitative research design, the framework guides interpretation rather than testing statistical causality (Maxwell, 2013), ensuring conceptual coherence between Chapters 2, 3, and 5.

2.8 Summary

This chapter has examined the theoretical and industrial foundations underpinning transmedia storytelling and its relevance to Malaysian live-action cinema. It began by situating transmedia storytelling within the broader framework of convergence culture, where technological integration, industrial coordination, and participatory audience behaviour reshape contemporary media ecosystems (Jenkins, 2006, 2009). Within this context, transmedia storytelling emerges not merely as multi-platform distribution, but as a strategic and additive narrative model in which story elements are expanded coherently across media platforms (Scolari, 2009, 2013; Dena, 2009).

The chapter further highlighted the significance of participation, worldbuilding, and character continuity in sustaining audience engagement. Transmedia storytelling relies on coherent storyworld construction, recognisable characters, and opportunities for relational interaction between producers and audiences. These dimensions collectively reinforce the importance of narrative expandability, platform strategy, and community formation within contemporary media practice.

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In examining the Malaysian screen industry, however, the literature reveals a structural and strategic gap. While animation sectors demonstrate relatively stronger integration of intellectual property expansion and cross-platform strategies, Malaysian live-action cinema remains predominantly single-platform and project-based. Industrial constraints, regulatory frameworks, cultural norms, and market limitations shape production decision-making and moderate the extent of transmedia adoption. This gap between global transmedia theory and local live-action practice underscores the need for a contextualised analytical approach.

To address this gap, the chapter introduced the 3Cs model - Character, Convenience, and Community - as the core analytical lens for the study. The Initial Conceptual Framework positions these constructs as independent analytical dimensions influencing transmedia storytelling practices among Malaysian live-action film producers. Recognising the mediating influence of local industrial and cultural conditions, the framework further proposes the inclusion of a Malaysian contextual dimension ("M"), forming the basis of the emerging 3C+M Malaysian Transmedia Storytelling Framework.

Together, these theoretical discussions and contextual analyses establish the conceptual foundation for the empirical investigation. The following chapter outlines the qualitative methodology adopted to operationalise the 3Cs framework and to inductively refine the Malaysian contextual dimension through in-depth analysis of producer experiences.

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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach adopted to investigate how Malaysian cinema producers conceptualise and apply transmedia storytelling strategies within their production practices (RQ1) and to identify the key elements required to develop a contextualised 3C+M Malaysian Transmedia Storytelling Framework (RQ2). In order to address these research questions, the study adopts a qualitative exploratory case study design involving six Malaysian cinema producers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and supported by artefact and document analysis. The data were analysed using thematic analysis, guided by the 3C+M conceptual framework. This chapter explains the research design, research framework, sampling strategy, data collection procedures, data analysis process, criteria for trustworthiness, and ethical considerations underpinning the study.

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This study is grounded in an interpretivist research paradigm. Ontologically, the research assumes that realities surrounding transmedia storytelling practices are socially constructed through industry experiences, professional interactions, and contextual constraints within the Malaysian film ecosystem. Epistemologically, knowledge is generated through participants' interpretations, reflections, and meanings rather than through objective measurement or statistical generalisation. As the study seeks to explore producers lived production experiences, decision-making processes, and strategic considerations in relation to transmedia storytelling, an interpretivist approach is appropriate in enabling in-depth understanding of how

transmedia practices are perceived, negotiated, and operationalised within specific industrial and cultural contexts.

3.2 Research Design

Guided by an interpretivist paradigm, this study adopts a qualitative exploratory case study design to examine transmedia storytelling practices among Malaysian cinema producers in the digital era. Within this paradigm, reality is understood as socially constructed through professional experiences, industry interactions, and contextual constraints. As the study seeks to explore how producers interpret and negotiate transmedia storytelling within their production environments, a qualitative approach is appropriate for capturing subjective meanings and contextualised decision-making processes (Creswell, 2018).

The overarching case of this study is the practice and interpretation of transmedia storytelling within contemporary Malaysian cinema production. The study is bounded geographically to Malaysia and temporally to the digital era, defined as the period in which digital production workflows, social media engagement, and streaming platforms have become integral to the Malaysian film ecosystem. The unit of analysis consists of individual Malaysian cinema producers who have been actively involved in theatrical feature film production within this context.

An exploratory case study design is appropriate given the limited empirical research focusing on live-action Malaysian cinema producers' engagement with transmedia storytelling. Case study methodology enables the investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life setting, particularly when contextual conditions are

inseparable from the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2018). In the Malaysian context, transmedia practices are shaped by intersecting industrial, cultural, financial, and regulatory factors; therefore, a case-based approach allows for in-depth contextual analysis rather than statistical generalisation.

Structurally, the research is designed as a single-case study with multiple embedded units (Yin, 2018). The overarching case is Malaysian cinema production in the digital era, while the embedded units consist of six cinema producers selected based on defined sampling criteria. This structure allows for cross-case comparison within a shared industrial context while maintaining conceptual coherence.

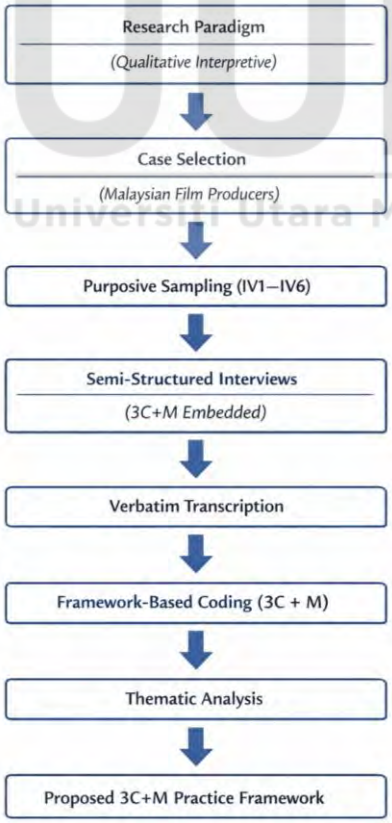

Figure 3.1. Structured research process aligns with 3C + M framework

As illustrated in Figure 3.1, the study is structured within a qualitative interpretive paradigm, focusing on Malaysian film producers as the central unit of inquiry. The research questions (RQ1 and RQ2) guide the analytical direction of the study and are operationalised through the 3C+M framework derived from the literature review. This framework informs the development of the semi-structured interview protocol, ensuring that questions are conceptually anchored to Character, Convenience, Community, and Malaysian contextual conditions (M). Data collected from six purposively selected Malaysian cinema producers (IV1–IV6) are transcribed verbatim and subjected to framework-based coding prior to thematic analysis. The analysis combines deductive categorisation based on the 3Cs with inductive refinement to capture context-specific industry realities. The resulting themes constitute the empirical findings presented in Chapter Four and subsequently inform the proposed 3C+M practice framework.

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3.3 Research Framework

This study is guided by the 3C+M research framework, comprising Character, Convenience, Community, and the Malaysian contextual dimension (M). Derived from the theoretical foundations discussed in Chapter Two, the framework functions as the primary analytical structure for examining transmedia storytelling practices among Malaysian cinema producers.

The three core components Character, Convenience, and Community form the initial analytical dimensions of the study. Operationally, Character refers to how producers conceptualise narrative worlds, character continuity, and potential cross-platform expansion. Convenience concerns strategic decisions related to platform selection,

accessibility, timing, format adaptation, and feasibility within production constraints. Community refers to audience engagement strategies, including participatory practices, fan interaction, and long-term relationship building.

Distinct from the three core components, the Malaysian contextual dimension (M) functions as a mediating layer rather than a separate analytical category. As established in Section 2.6.3, "M" represents the industrial, cultural, regulatory, and financial conditions shaping how the 3Cs operate within the Malaysian film ecosystem. These include market scale, funding structures, censorship guidelines, religious and societal norms, intellectual property considerations, and digital infrastructure readiness. Rather than being imposed deductively, the specific configuration of "M" is refined inductively through empirical findings.

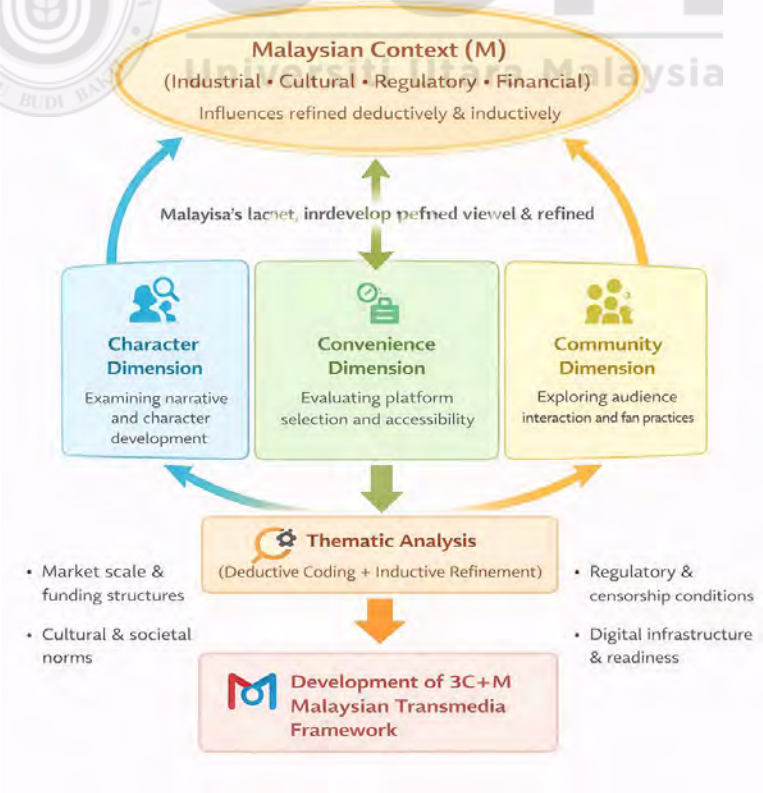

Figure 3.2. Research framework guiding data analysis

Figure 3.2 illustrates the research framework guiding data analysis. The Malaysian contextual dimension surrounds and influences the three core components, indicating that Character, Convenience, and Community do not operate in isolation but are shaped by local industrial realities. During thematic analysis, the 3Cs served as initial deductive coding dimensions. However, contextual factors emerging from the data such as awareness and implementation gaps, business and marketing considerations, and production experience constraints, clarified how the Malaysian context mediates the application of transmedia strategies.

Thus, the framework operates through a hybrid analytical logic. Deductively, the 3Cs provide structured thematic entry points grounded in transmedia scholarship. Inductively, the Malaysian contextual dimension refines and reshapes these components based on empirical insights from producers lived experiences. This process leads to the development of the contextualised 3C+M Malaysian Transmedia Storytelling Framework presented in Chapter Five.

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3.4 Sampling Strategy

The target population comprised Malaysian film producers and screen industry practitioners involved in theatrical feature film production and related screen media activities after the year 2000, corresponding to the digital-era boundary established in Chapter 1. The post-2000 period reflects the transformation of Malaysian cinema through digital production workflows, online marketing practices, streaming platforms, and cross-platform audience engagement structures.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to recruit information-rich participants capable of addressing the research questions. Purposive sampling is appropriate when the objective is to select cases that can illuminate the central phenomenon under study rather than achieve statistical representativeness (Patton, 2015).

In addition, elements of maximum variation sampling were incorporated to ensure diversity across:

(i) Generational experience (legacy producers and mid-career practitioners),

(ii) Production orientation (live-action and animation),

(iii) Genre specialisation,

(iv) Industry positioning (established studios, independent production entities, and academic–industry practitioners).

One participant is positioned as an industry practitioner with academic affiliation, whose professional experience in screen production, including award-recognized short film and television production, is complemented by scholarly engagement in media and transmedia discourse. This positioning strengthened the study by combining practice-based insight with conceptual awareness relevant to the research focus. This combination ensured both strategic authority and analytical diversity within a bounded qualitative case study design.

3.4.1 Justification of Sample Size (n = 6)

The study involved six participants (IV1–IV6). In qualitative case study research, adequacy of sample size is determined by analytical depth and thematic saturation rather than statistical generalisation.

The selected participants function as elite informants, occupying strategic roles within Malaysian film production and screen media practice. Each interview lasted approximately 60–90 minutes and generated substantial narrative data concerning character development logic, platform feasibility, audience engagement strategies, and Malaysian industrial constraints.

Thematic saturation was observed when subsequent interviews no longer produced fundamentally new codes related to the core analytical dimensions (Character, Convenience, and Community) or significantly altered patterns associated with the Malaysian contextual mediation layer (M). By the fifth and sixth interviews, themes stabilised and reinforced the emerging analytical structure.

Given the bounded nature of the case and the depth of engagement with experienced industry figures, six participants were considered methodologically sufficient.

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3.4.2 Participant Recruitment Process

Participant identification followed a structured two-stage strategy.

(i) Stage 1: Industry Record Identification

- Ten producers and screen practitioners meeting the inclusion criteria were initially shortlisted through:
- Publicly available industry records,
- FINAS-linked box office and theatrical release references,
- Documented post-2000 production activity within the Malaysian screen sector.

(ii) Stage 2: Network-Facilitated Access

Following shortlisting, professional industry networks were utilised to establish contact. As an active practitioner within the Malaysian film industry, the researcher leveraged professional relationships and engaged relevant associations, including FDAM (Persatuan Pengarah Filem Malaysia), to facilitate communication and access. Potential participants were contacted through professional communication channels including email, phone calls, and WhatsApp messaging. Of the ten shortlisted individuals, six agreed to participate in the study. Four did not participate, primarily due to scheduling constraints and ongoing production commitments. This recruitment process ensured transparency, consistency with inclusion criteria, and access to elite informants directly relevant to the research questions.

3.4.3 Participant Profile

Table 3.1

Profile of Interview Participants (IV1-IV6).

Pseudonym	Professional Position	Years Active	Primary Production Focus	Relevant Post-2000 Engagement
IV1	Studio-based Film Producer	40+ years	Commercial Action Cinema	Franchise continuity, serialised film development, adaptation to digital-era marketing and distribution
IV2	Industry Practitioner with Academic Affiliation	20+ years	Short Film & Television Production	Award-recognised short film production, television programme production, conceptual engagement with transmedia discourse
IV3	Senior Studio Producer	50+ years	Action / Drama	Long-running IP ecosystem, film-to-TV expansion, digital distribution transition

IV4	Animation Producer / Studio Head	15+ years	Children's Animation IP	Series-to-feature film adaptation, spin-off development, streaming platform release, YouTube-based audience ecosystem
IV5	Producer–Director	30+ years	Comedy / Drama	Film sequels, brand extensions, digital promotional integration
IV6	Producer–Director	35+ years	Drama / Commercial Film	Contemporary film releases within streaming-era ecosystem, cross-platform promotional practices

Table 3.1 demonstrates that the sample comprises strategically positioned industry actors whose professional trajectories span legacy studio production, contemporary independent filmmaking, animation-based intellectual property development, and television and short-form production. This variation is analytically significant for addressing the research questions, as it enables comparison of how Character construction, platform feasibility (Convenience), and audience engagement (Community) are interpreted across different production environments.

To ensure alignment with the study's inclusion criteria, publicly available industry records such as filmographies, award listings, box office reports, and professional profiles were reviewed during the participant identification stage. These materials were used solely to verify eligibility and establish industry relevance prior to recruitment. They were not treated as empirical data for analysis, as the study relies exclusively on semi-structured interview narratives for its findings.

The majority of participants possess extensive experience in theatrical feature film production, including franchise continuity and long-running IP ecosystems. The

inclusion of an animation-focused producer allows examination of transmedia logic within IP-driven content structures, while the presence of an industry practitioner with academic affiliation contributes practice-grounded insight enriched by conceptual awareness of transmedia discourse.

Although several participants began their careers prior to 2000, all remain active within the post-2000 digital-era ecosystem characterised by streaming platforms, online promotion, and cross-platform audience interaction. The inclusion of legacy producers operating within digital-era transition conditions, alongside mid-career practitioners, enables generational comparison and strengthens the refinement of the Malaysian contextual mediation layer (M). Collectively, the sample provides sufficient diversity and depth to examine how transmedia storytelling components are operationalised within Malaysia's evolving cinema landscape.

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3.5 Data Collection Methods

This study employed semi-structured interviews as the sole primary data collection method. The decision to rely exclusively on interviews was grounded in the interpretive nature of the research, which seeks to understand how Malaysian film producers conceptualise and implement transmedia storytelling within their professional practice. As the focus of the inquiry concerns decision-making processes, strategic thinking, and experiential knowledge situated within a contemporary industry context, interviews were deemed the most appropriate method for eliciting in-depth, practice-based insights. Consistent with Yin's (2018) case study principles, the study examines a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life setting, where the

boundaries between transmedia practice and industry conditions are not clearly evident and require contextual exploration.

Six Malaysian cinema producers (IV1-IV6) were selected through purposive sampling as outlined in Section 3.4. All participants possess feature film production experience and have demonstrated industry relevance within the Malaysian film ecosystem. Their professional positions place them in strategic roles where transmedia-related decisions whether conceptual, operational, or constrained by context are made, thereby positioning them as critical informants capable of providing rich explanatory insight (Yin, 2018).

3.5.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data source because they allow elite informants to explain professional experience, decision-making, and constraints in depth, while still ensuring coverage of the study's key constructs and research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.5.1.1 Interview design and alignment with 3C+M

The interview guide was developed using the 3Cs as core sections - Character (storyworld/character design and extendability), Convenience (platform choices, access, timing, and feasibility), and Community (audience engagement, participation, fandom/community touchpoints). In addition, three practice-facing areas were included to reflect production realities: Awareness & Implementation, Business & Marketing, and Production Experience.

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These domains were also used to prompt the M layer (e.g., FINAS ecosystem, censorship norms, market size, financing structure, streaming-era conditions), ensuring Malaysian conditions were not treated as "background" but as active explanatory factors.

3.5.1.2 Protocol details

Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or online, depending on participant availability and preference. Each interview lasted approximately 45-90 minutes, and informed consent was obtained before audio recording.

Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Malaysia, English, or mixed code-switching, reflecting natural industry communication. Where code-switching occurred, the transcript preserved the original language; where translation into English was required for reporting, translation was conducted during write-up with careful attention to meaning equivalence (particularly for idioms and industry terms).

3.5.1.3 Pilot and refinement

Prior to full data collection, the interview guide was piloted informally to check clarity, flow, and timing. Minor revisions were made to (i) reduce repetitive wording across sections, (ii) strengthen probes that distinguish "transmedia as marketing" versus "transmedia as narrative expansion," and (iii) ensure each 3C domain could elicit both practice examples and constraints (M).

(i) Sample question clusters (illustrative). *(not the full guide)*

- Character (C1): How do you design characters/storyworlds that can continue beyond one film? What makes an IP "extendable" in your experience? What breaks continuity when expanding across formats?
- Convenience (C2): Which platforms are realistic for your projects (cinema, streaming, TV, YouTube, socials, games, merch)? What determines timing, access, and audience entry points? What resource constraints shape platform choices?
- Community (C3): How do you build and sustain audience engagement beyond release? What role do fandom/community interactions play? What engagement activities have you tried (online/offline/events)?
- Malaysia Context (M) *(probes across sections)*: How do local regulations, cultural expectations, funding structures, market size, and platform partnerships affect your ability to plan transmedia?

(ii) Recording, transcription, and verification.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Where appropriate, participants were offered the opportunity to verify key

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excerpts (member checking) to reduce misinterpretation and improve credibility.

3.5.2 Data Collection Framework

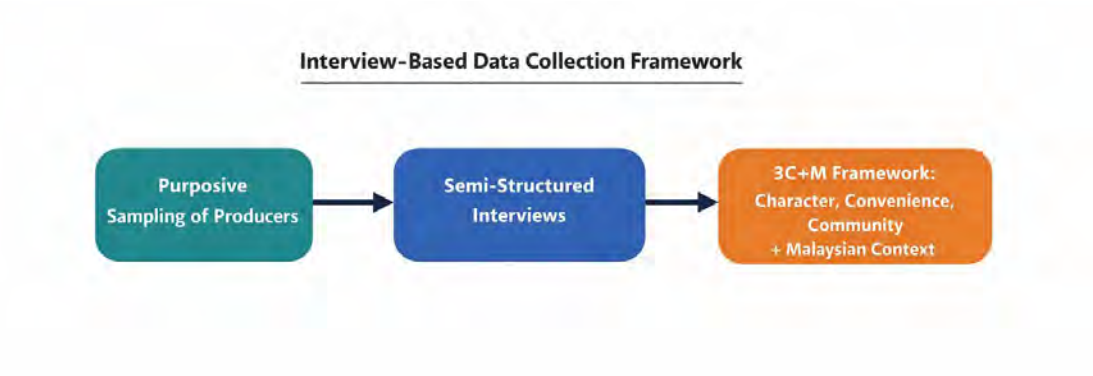

Figure 3.3. Data collection framework

As illustrated in Figure 3.3, the data collection process was structured around a qualitative, interview-based design aligned with the 3C+M framework. Following purposive sampling of six Malaysian cinema producers (IV1-IV6), data were collected exclusively through semi-structured interviews. The interview protocol was conceptually anchored in the three core dimensions Character, Convenience, and Community while incorporating contextual probes to explore Malaysian industry conditions.

The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim before being organised for framework-based coding. The structured alignment between research questions, conceptual framework, and interview design ensured internal consistency and conceptual coherence throughout the data collection process. Rather than relying on multiple data sources, the strength of the study lies in the depth and experiential insight

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provided by elite industry participants, whose professional roles position them at the centre of strategic production decision-making.

3.6 Data Analysis

The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis, guided by the 3C+M framework. The analytical process followed a structured yet flexible approach, combining deductive coding derived from the conceptual model with inductive refinement grounded in participants lived industry experiences.

3.6.1 Analytical Approach

The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2019) reflexive approach. This method was selected due to its flexibility in identifying patterns of meaning while accommodating both theory-driven and data-driven interpretation.

(i) The analysis followed six phases:

- Familiarisation: All transcripts were read multiple times to ensure immersion in the data. Preliminary notes were made to capture recurring patterns related to producers' conceptual understanding, strategic decisions, and contextual constraints.
- Generating Initial Codes: Relevant segments of text were systematically coded through manual coding procedures. Coding was conducted directly on the transcripts using structured annotation and categorisation. Each segment relevant to the research questions was assigned descriptive labels reflecting its meaning.

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- Searching for Themes: Codes were clustered into broader thematic groupings. At this stage, the 3C framework Character, Convenience, and Community served as initial organisational anchors.
- Reviewing and Refining Themes: Emerging themes were compared across all six participants (IV1–IV6) to ensure internal consistency and clear differentiation between categories.
- Defining and Naming Themes: Themes were clearly defined to reflect shared strategic patterns and contextual influences identified in the data.
- Producing the Report: The final themes were synthesised and presented in Chapter Four, supported by representative interview excerpts to demonstrate evidentiary grounding.

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Following transcription, each interview was read multiple times to ensure immersion in the data. Initial observations were noted to identify recurring patterns related to producers' conceptual understanding, strategic considerations, and contextual constraints.

3.6.2 Deductive–Inductive Strategy (3C+M Alignment)

The study adopted a hybrid deductive–inductive approach to thematic analysis.

The three dimensions derived from the literature Character, Convenience, and Community were applied as deductive analytical lenses during the initial coding phase. This ensured conceptual alignment with the framework established in Chapter Two.

However, during the coding process, additional recurring patterns emerged that extended beyond the original 3C structure. These included references to funding

limitations, regulatory considerations, market constraints, cultural expectations, and ecosystem infrastructure. Such themes were identified inductively and later conceptualised as the Malaysian contextual dimension (M).

The resulting analytical structure therefore represents an integration of theoretical guidance (3C) and empirically grounded refinement (M).

3.6.3 Emergence of Supporting Dimensions

Supporting dimensions such as producer awareness, business strategy considerations, and production experience were not predetermined categories. Rather, they emerged organically during coding when participants consistently emphasised operational realities and strategic decision-making processes. These elements were incorporated within the broader 3C+M framework to reflect the interconnected nature of narrative strategy and production practice.

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3.6.4 Clarification on Artefact Use

Publicly available materials such as filmographies, award listings, and professional records were reviewed solely during the participant selection stage to verify eligibility and industry relevance. These materials were not treated as empirical data for thematic analysis, and no formal artefact or document coding was conducted. The analytical findings presented in this study are derived exclusively from interview data.

3.7 Trustworthiness of Research

This study adopted Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to ensure methodological rigour within a qualitative

interpretive design. Credibility refers to the confidence in the truthfulness and plausibility of the findings.

3.7.1 Credibility

In this study, credibility was strengthened through several strategies. First, interviews were conducted with elite industry participants who hold strategic decision-making roles within Malaysian cinema. Their professional positions provided informed, experience-based insights into transmedia practices. Second, interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed systematically through repeated reading and manual coding to ensure immersion in the data. Third, representative excerpts from participants are presented in Chapter Four to allow readers to evaluate the evidentiary basis of interpretations.

Where necessary, clarifications were sought during interviews through probing questions to ensure accurate understanding of participants' meanings. The structured alignment between research questions, the 3C+M framework, and the interview protocol further strengthened internal coherence between conceptual design and empirical analysis.

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability concerns the extent to which findings may be applicable in other contexts. Rather than seeking statistical generalisation, this study provides rich contextual descriptions of each participant's professional background, production experience, and industry positioning. Detailed explanation of the Malaysian film ecosystem including funding structures, regulatory conditions, market size, and

platform infrastructure enables readers to assess whether the findings may be relevant to similar small-to-medium film industries operating within comparable structural constraints. By situating participants within their specific industry realities, the study allows informed judgement regarding contextual applicability.

3.7.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability and transparency of the research process.

An audit trail was maintained throughout the study. This included documentation of sampling criteria, interview scheduling records, consent procedures, transcript versions, coding notes, and iterative revisions of the thematic framework. Versions of the coding structure were preserved to demonstrate how initial deductive categories (3Cs) evolved through inductive refinement into the final 3C+M model.

Regular consultation with the research supervisor provided ongoing methodological reflection and ensured that analytical decisions were grounded in systematic reasoning rather than ad hoc interpretation.

3.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which findings are grounded in the data rather than shaped by researcher predispositions. Given the researcher's professional background within the Malaysian creative and academic environment, particular attention was paid to maintaining analytical transparency. Reflexive notes were recorded during and immediately after interviews to document impressions, emotional reactions, assumptions, and emerging interpretations. These notes helped distinguish participants' articulated meanings from the researcher's prior industry knowledge. By

explicitly documenting interpretive decisions, the researcher was able to track how themes developed from coded excerpts rather than from preconceived expectations.

Supervisor review functioned as an additional layer of analytical scrutiny. Coding categories and thematic interpretations were periodically discussed during supervisory meetings. This process required the researcher to justify interpretive decisions with reference to verbatim excerpts and to clarify how themes aligned with the 3C+M framework. Where interpretations appeared overly influenced by professional familiarity with the industry, revisions were made to ensure that analytical claims were supported by textual evidence. Through this iterative process of reflexive documentation and supervisory interrogation, the study strengthened the transparency and confirmability of its findings.

3.7.5 Researcher Reflexivity

This study is conducted by a practitioner-researcher with professional experience in Malaysia's film and media industry. This positionality provided advantages in gaining access to elite producers, understanding industry terminology, and interpreting references to production workflows. Familiarity with the ecosystem facilitated rapport during interviews and enabled participants to speak candidly about strategic decisions and constraints.

However, insider status also carried the risk of assumed understanding and interpretive bias. There was potential to normalise industry practices or to interpret strategic limitations sympathetically without sufficient analytical distance. To mitigate this risk, interview questions were framed neutrally and designed to invite explanation rather

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than confirmation. During analysis, interpretations were consistently traced back to verbatim transcript excerpts to ensure evidentiary grounding.

Reflexive practice involved actively questioning how the researcher's prior beliefs about Malaysian cinema and transmedia potential might influence thematic emphasis. By maintaining analytic memos and engaging in supervisor-led critical discussion, the researcher sought to balance contextual familiarity with methodological discipline. This approach ensured that the findings represent participants' articulated experiences rather than the researcher's pre-existing assumptions about industry transformation.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to established research ethics principles to ensure the protection of participants' rights, privacy, and professional integrity throughout the research process.

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3.8.1 Ethics Approval

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Awang Had Salleh Graduate School under Universiti Utara Malaysia. All research procedures were conducted in accordance with institutional ethical guidelines for research involving human participants.

3.8.2 Informed Consent

Prior to data collection, all participants were provided with an information sheet outlining:

- The purpose of the study

- The nature of their involvement
- The voluntary nature of participation
- The use of audio recording
- Data handling and confidentiality procedures

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before interviews were conducted. Consent was documented either through signed consent forms or confirmed via email correspondence, depending on the mode of interview arrangement. Participants were informed that the interview would be recorded for transcription and analytical purposes.

3.8.3 Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw

Participation in this study was entirely voluntary. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point without penalty or negative consequence. In the event of withdrawal, any data contributed by the participant would be deleted and excluded from analysis, provided the request was made prior to data consolidation and thematic synthesis.

No participant exercised the right to withdraw during the course of the study.

3.8.4 Confidentiality and Anonymization

To protect participant identity and professional sensitivity, pseudonyms (IV1-IV6) were assigned during transcription and analysis. Identifiable information, including specific project details where necessary, was masked or generalized to prevent traceability.

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Although the participants are established figures within the Malaysian screen industry, care was taken to avoid linking direct quotations to identifiable production contexts unless such information was already publicly available and ethically permissible to reference.

All findings are presented in a manner that preserves professional confidentiality while maintaining analytical integrity.

3.8.5 Data Storage and Security

All interview recordings, transcripts, and related documents were stored on a password-protected digital drive accessible only to the researcher. Backup copies were maintained in encrypted storage to prevent data loss.

Hard-copy consent forms, where applicable, were stored securely in a locked location. Research data will be retained for a period of [Insert number of years, e.g., five years] in accordance with institutional policy, after which digital files will be permanently deleted and physical documents securely destroyed.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological architecture of the study, grounded in a qualitative interpretive paradigm. Guided by a social constructivist worldview, the research recognises that meanings surrounding transmedia storytelling are shaped by lived professional experience and contextual industry realities. Accordingly, a qualitative design centred on elite semi-structured interviews was adopted to explore

how Malaysian film producers conceptualise and implement transmedia practices within their production environments.

Purposive sampling was employed to select six Malaysian cinema producers (IV1-IV6) with demonstrable feature film experience and strategic decision-making authority. This sample was appropriate because the study seeks insight into production-level reasoning rather than audience reception or textual outputs. Publicly available industry records were reviewed solely to verify eligibility, ensuring that participants possessed relevant industry standing.

Data were collected exclusively through semi-structured interviews structured around the 3C framework Character, Convenience, and Community while incorporating probes to surface Malaysian contextual influences (M). Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's reflexive approach, was conducted through systematic manual coding. The analysis employed a hybrid deductive–inductive strategy: the 3Cs functioned as initial analytical anchors, while emergent themes reflecting funding structures, regulatory constraints, market conditions, and producer awareness contributed to the articulation of the contextual dimension (M).

Collectively, these methodological choices enable the study to address its research questions. By examining producers lived experiences and strategic decision-making processes, the study responds to RQ1 by identifying how transmedia storytelling is conceptualised within Malaysian cinema. Through cross-case thematic comparison, it addresses RQ2 by determining the key elements and contextual conditions necessary for developing a transmedia storytelling framework suited to the Malaysia.

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CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical findings of the study and directly addresses Research Question 1, which examines how Malaysian cinema producers conceptualise and apply transmedia storytelling strategies in their production practices. The analysis is structured around the 3C framework Character, Convenience, and Community together with supporting dimensions that emerged from the data. Through thematic analysis of six selected producers, this chapter identifies patterns, contrasts, and structural constraints shaping transmedia implementation in the Malaysian context. The cross-case comparison and discussion sections further synthesise these findings, establishing the analytical foundation for Chapter Five, where Research Question 2 is addressed through the development of the 3C+M Malaysian Transmedia Storytelling Framework.

4.2 Profile of Respondent

Table 4.1 below summarizes the background of the six respondents who participated in this study. Each respondent is represented using pseudonyms IV1-IV6 to ensure confidentiality.

Table 4.1

Background and Roles of the Six Respondents

Respondent	Background / Role	Years of Experience	Notable Works / Achievements
IV1	Actor-turned-producer, active in TV & film productions	20+ years	Produced TV dramas (e.g., Suara Saleha, Lebih Bisa dari Jelatang) – winners of Anugerah Skrin
IV2	Academic & short film producer (UiTM)	20 years	Short films (Barang Baik, Jauh Geylang-Gombak), festival awards
IV3	Veteran producer & founder of Skop Productions	50+ years	Sembilu (1994), Maria Mariana (1996), Gerak Khas series (1046 episodes), Sherif (2024, RM60m box office)
IV4	Animation producer, CEO of Warnakala Studio	18+ years	Didi & Friends The Movie (Top 3 Box Office 2023, Netflix release), YouTube channel with 7.15M subscribers
IV5	Multi-hyphenate actor, comedian, director, producer	30+ years	Papadom (2009), Buli (2004), Baik Punya Cilok (2005), Sumolah (2007), Imaginur (2023)
IV6	Director & producer (Kita Jana Pictures Sdn. Bhd.)	40+ years	Mira Edora, Kekasih Awal dan Akhir – Box Office success in the 1980s–90s

The six producers selected for this study reflect the deliberate sampling criteria outlined in Chapter One, particularly their demonstrated box-office performance, sustained industry presence, and engagement with multi-platform production practices. All respondents have produced commercially released feature films within the Malaysian theatrical market, ensuring that their perspectives are grounded in operational realities rather than speculative commentary. This alignment strengthens the industrial credibility of the findings and situates the analysis within the mainstream Malaysian cinema ecosystem.

Although united by commercial experience, the sample reveals clear variation in industrial orientation and strategic outlook. Two broad production logics emerge. The first comprises traditional live-action producers whose primary focus remains theatrical release and broadcaster-driven content. Within this orientation, transmedia activity is largely reactive, functioning as promotional extension rather than planned narrative expansion. The second orientation includes producers with exposure to

animation, comedy franchises, or digitally integrated business models. These producers demonstrate greater experimentation with cross-platform storytelling, intellectual property scalability, and character-driven ecosystem development.

Among the traditional live-action producers (IV1, IV3, and IV6), storytelling practices remain closely tied to established production pipelines. For instance, IV1 emphasised reliance on scriptwriters and broadcaster requirements, noting that stories are often developed "based on the need statement required by TV stations in Malaysia". This illustrates a demand-led production logic in which character and narrative design are shaped primarily by institutional commissioning structures. Similarly, IV3's five-decade career and box-office-driven filmography underscore a commercially oriented, genre-focused approach where theatrical success remains the dominant metric of achievement. IV6, representing an earlier generation of filmmakers, described a production culture in which character development evolves organically during filming rather than through pre-planned multi-platform strategy. Collectively, these profiles illustrate a production paradigm centred on single-text cinematic completion.

In contrast, IV4 and IV5 represent a more ecosystem-oriented approach. IV4's background in animation and involvement with franchise properties such as Didi & Friends demonstrates how character-based intellectual property can extend naturally into merchandising, streaming distribution, and digital engagement. Animation's inherent adaptability across formats appears to facilitate structured transmedia planning. Likewise, IV5's multi-hyphenate career trajectory reflects an entrepreneurial orientation, explicitly referencing the use of transmedia storytelling to enhance

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audience engagement beyond traditional film exhibition. In these cases, character is conceptualised not only as narrative agent but as expandable asset.

IV2 occupies an intermediary position. As both an academic and practitioner, his experience reflects theoretical awareness of transmedia storytelling alongside practical constraints within short film production contexts. His profile highlights the gap between conceptual knowledge and systemic industry implementation.

Taken together, these profiles reveal generational, sectoral, and structural diversity within the Malaysian film industry. Rather than representing isolated individual cases, the respondents collectively map a spectrum of transmedia maturity from conventional, broadcaster-aligned production models to more integrated, and cross-platform experimentation. This variation provides an essential analytical foundation for understanding the uneven adoption of Character, Convenience, and Community practices examined in Sections 4.3 and 4.4.

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4.3 Thematic Findings

The findings reveal uneven but patterned applications of the 3C dimensions Character, Convenience, and Community across the six Malaysian film producers. While all respondents acknowledge elements associated with transmedia storytelling, the depth of implementation varies significantly according to industrial orientation, genre background, and resource structures. Rather than functioning as a fully integrated strategy, transmedia practices often emerge selectively, shaped by institutional demands, market pressures, and individual entrepreneurial initiative.

The following sub-sections analyse how each dimension operates within the Malaysian live-action film context. By examining points of convergence and divergence across cases, the analysis identifies not only how producers interpret Character, Convenience, and Community, but also where structural gaps limit systematic transmedia development. This thematic analysis provides the empirical foundation for the framework refinement proposed in Chapter Five.

4.3.1 Character (Narrative and World-Building)

Across the six producers, Character is universally acknowledged as central to storytelling success. However, its strategic function differs markedly. For most live-action producers, character development remains confined to the cinematic text, shaped primarily by scriptwriters, performance dynamics, or genre conventions. Only a minority demonstrate deliberate planning of characters as expandable intellectual property capable of sustaining narratives across multiple platforms.

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Among traditional producers (IV1, IV2, and IV6), character is conceptualised as a narrative component rather than a transmedia anchor. IV1 explained that character development is largely delegated to writers, who “only rely on the storyline or the strength of the character's role developed in the drama or film they write.” This indicates a production logic in which character depth is evaluated within the boundaries of a single medium, without structured consideration of cross-platform scalability. Similarly, IV2 acknowledged that in short film production, character impact must be immediate and condensed, noting that “creating characters that resonate across different platforms isn’t something we’ve actively pursued in

Malaysian short filmmaking". These responses reveal a reactive rather than strategic approach to character continuity.

IV6 further reinforces this orientation through a performance-driven methodology, stating that he develops characters organically during filming and that "talent is polished during the set". While this approach foregrounds artistic spontaneity, it limits the possibility of pre-planned narrative expansion. Collectively, these cases illustrate a single-text production paradigm, where character formation is embedded within conventional film practice rather than conceived as a cross-platform design strategy.

IV3 occupies a transitional position. His emphasis on genre-driven storytelling and recurring institutional characters, such as Sergeant Misai in Gerak Khas, demonstrates elements of franchise continuity. However, this continuity emerges primarily within serial television logic rather than as a coordinated transmedia ecosystem. The character's recognition reflects brand familiarity but does not necessarily indicate deliberate narrative dispersion across diverse media platforms.

In contrast, IV4 and IV5 articulate a more intentional orientation toward character scalability. IV4 described maintaining "character authenticity" to ensure recognition "across all platforms" reflecting structured world-building within animation properties such as Didi & Friends. Animation's format inherently supports character consistency and merchandising adaptability. IV5 demonstrates the most explicit transmedia awareness, describing how he extends characters into comics, web series, and short films while maintaining continuity through writer's bibles and a central creative team.

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Here, character is treated as a strategic anchor for ecosystem expansion rather than a self-contained narrative device.

These findings partially align with Jenkins' (2006) proposition that transmedia storytelling requires planned narrative dispersion from the outset. However, the Malaysian live-action context reveals uneven implementation of this principle. While Pratten (2015) emphasises character as the foundational "C" that enables audience continuity across platforms, only a minority of producers in this study operationalise character with that level of strategic foresight.

Overall, Character within the Malaysian film industry remains predominantly narrative rather than strategic. Emotional depth and genre familiarity are prioritised, yet systematic transmedia design is limited. Only producers with animation exposure or entrepreneurial orientation demonstrate proactive integration of character as scalable intellectual property. This uneven adoption reflects broader structural constraints that shape transmedia maturity within the local ecosystem.

4.3.2 Convenience (Platform and Accessibility)

The findings reveal a pronounced divide in how producers conceptualise platform strategy and accessibility. For most traditional live-action producers, platform selection remains project-driven and institutionally determined, typically confined to cinema or television. In contrast, producers with animation or entrepreneurial backgrounds demonstrate deliberate multi-platform planning, tailoring content to audience habits, digital behaviours, and segmented viewing patterns. This divergence

highlights uneven operationalisation of Convenience as a transmedia dimension within the Malaysian context.

Among IV1, IV2, and IV3, platform choice is largely reactive and bounded by existing industrial structures. IV1 stated that his productions "only focus on one platform, whether it is film or television program" with decisions shaped by team discussions and budget considerations. This reflects a conventional production workflow in which platform is selected after narrative development rather than integrated into an overarching transmedia strategy. Similarly, IV2 acknowledged that short films are primarily designed for festival circuits and standalone impact, noting that cross-platform extension is "not typically considered". These responses indicate structural constraints within the short film ecosystem, where limited funding and distribution channels discourage experimentation beyond single-medium outputs.

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IV3 reinforces this orientation, explaining that production decisions depend on "budget and script" and that he has "only produced for Malaysian cinemas and TV station". Although commercially successful, this model prioritises box office and broadcast reach over platform diversification. Collectively, these cases demonstrate a single-platform logic, where Convenience is interpreted as selecting the most viable exhibition outlet rather than designing interconnected audience pathways.

In contrast, IV4 and IV5 articulate a more strategic understanding of Convenience. IV4 described a phased platform expansion strategy, beginning with YouTube accessibility before extending to cinema and international markets. This reflects an entry-point approach, where platform selection is aligned with audience accessibility

and gradual brand building. IV5 demonstrates the most advanced platform integration, referencing TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube, and streaming services as differentiated channels serving distinct audience functions. His emphasis on "AI-driven analytics" and "real-time fan feedback loops" suggests intentional alignment between content format and audience consumption patterns.

IV6 occupies an intermediate position. While acknowledging that platform decisions depend on "story nature, audience behaviour, and market trends", his practices remain primarily anchored in traditional film and television formats. This reflects partial awareness of platform diversification without systematic cross-platform integration.

These findings resonate partially with Dena's (2009) and Pratten's (2015) emphasis on designing audience journeys across platforms rather than merely selecting distribution outlets. However, in the Malaysian live-action context, Convenience is frequently reduced to exhibition choice rather than strategic entry-point architecture. While digitally oriented producers demonstrate emerging transmedia literacy, most producers continue to operate within established cinema broadcast structures.

Overall, Convenience within the Malaysian industry reflects uneven platform intentionality. Traditional producers prioritise medium-specific viability, whereas innovative producers adopt audience-centric, multi-platform planning. This disparity suggests that platform diversification in Malaysia remains driven more by entrepreneurial initiative than by systemic industry transformation.

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4.3.3 Community (Participation and Engagement)

Community engagement emerges as the most unevenly implemented dimension among the six producers. While all respondents acknowledge the importance of audience reception for commercial success, the depth of participatory integration varies significantly. For traditional producers, community remains largely synonymous with promotion and fan support. In contrast, digitally oriented and animation-based producers demonstrate more deliberate efforts to cultivate participatory ecosystems that extend narrative engagement beyond the screen.

Among IV1, IV2, and IV3, community engagement is primarily framed within conventional marketing structures. IV1 described reliance on pre- and post-release promotional strategies using conventional and social media, noting that audiences are not directly involved in narrative development. This indicates a producer-audience separation consistent with traditional film production hierarchies. Similarly, IV2 identified film festivals as the main avenue for interaction, emphasising networking rather than co-creation. These approaches position community as an audience group to be reached, rather than as collaborators in narrative expansion.

IV3's account highlights the historical role of celebrity culture in community formation. Referring to the success of Sembilu (1994), he emphasised how star power generated fan loyalty even before the rise of social media. While effective in its era, this model reflects brand-driven fandom rather than structured participatory storytelling. Community engagement, in this case, emerges organically through celebrity attachment rather than through designed narrative ecosystems.

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In contrast, IV4 and IV5 articulate more proactive strategies aligned with participatory culture. IV4 described leveraging audience interaction data to strengthen loyalty, explaining how fan engagement through songs, social media pages, and events translated into book purchases and cinema attendance. This demonstrates a feedback-driven engagement loop, where audience interaction informs content expansion. IV5 extends this further by actively encouraging fan art, alternate storylines, and scriptwriting contests. Such initiatives reposition audiences from passive consumers to creative contributors within the story world.

IV6 occupies an intermediate position. His example of sustaining a fanbase for Mira Edora through television circulation, music, and reunion events reflects the long-term power of nostalgia and cultural memory. However, this engagement remains largely retrospective rather than interactive, relying on emotional continuity rather than co-creative structures.

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These findings resonate with Jenkins' (2006) conceptualisation of participatory culture, in which audiences contribute meaning and extend narrative universes. However, within the Malaysian live-action context, participatory mechanisms are selectively adopted. For most producers, community functions as promotional support or brand loyalty rather than as narrative co-creation. Only a minority particularly those operating within animation or entrepreneurial frameworks systematically integrate participatory strategies into their production models.

Overall, Community within the Malaysian industry reflects a transitional stage. Traditional producers maintain creator-centric models, while digitally adaptive

producers experiment with co-creative ecosystems. This uneven adoption underscores the structural and generational factors shaping transmedia maturity in Malaysia.

4.4 Supporting Dimensions

In addition to the 3C Model, several supporting dimensions emerged from the interviews, namely awareness and implementation of transmedia storytelling, business and marketing strategies, and production experience. These dimensions provide further insights into the level of preparedness and adaptability of Malaysian film producers towards transmedia practices.

4.4.1 Awareness and Implementation of Transmedia Storytelling

Awareness emerges as a foundational determinant of transmedia adoption among Malaysian producers. The findings indicate that uneven implementation of Character, Convenience, and Community is closely linked to differing levels of conceptual familiarity with transmedia storytelling. Rather than reflecting uniform resistance, the variation suggests a fragmented diffusion of knowledge within the industry.

Among IV1 and IV3, awareness is minimal. Both admitted unfamiliarity with the term "transmedia storytelling", although they recognised global examples such as Marvel and Star Wars. IV1 stated that he had "never heard of transmedia storytelling" prior to the interview, while IV3 described it as "a very big industry" requiring long-term planning. These responses indicate recognition of transmedia as an external, large-scale phenomenon rather than as a locally adaptable strategy. Awareness, in this case, remains abstract and disconnected from daily production practice.

IV2 and IV6 demonstrate partial awareness. IV2, as an academic, acknowledged theoretical familiarity but emphasised the limited practical application within Malaysian short film contexts. IV6 similarly recognised the concept but highlighted implementation challenges, noting that filmmakers "need to be educated" about transmedia practices. This group illustrates cognitive recognition without systemic integration, reflecting structural gaps in industry training and institutional support.

In contrast, IV4 and IV5 represent experiential alignment with transmedia principles. Although IV4 had not encountered the terminology formally, he recognised that his animation-based practices were already aligned with cross-platform expansion. IV5 explicitly described multi-platform experimentation as integral to his career trajectory. In these cases, awareness is embedded within entrepreneurial or digital-native workflows rather than academic discourse.

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These distinctions suggest that awareness operates along a three-tier spectrum: unfamiliar, conceptually aware but constrained, and actively implementing. This uneven diffusion aligns with innovation adoption theory, where early adopters operate alongside a majority that remains structurally cautious. However, in the Malaysian context, limited institutional infrastructure and fragmented IP ecosystems slow the transition from awareness to systematic implementation.

Overall, awareness is not merely a knowledge issue but a structural condition shaping transmedia maturity. Where awareness is low or disconnected from practice, the 3C dimensions remain underdeveloped. Where awareness is experiential and strategically embedded, transmedia practices become more integrated within production planning.

4.4.2 Business and Marketing Strategies

Business and marketing logics operate as critical enablers or constraints of transmedia implementation among Malaysian producers. While all respondents recognise the importance of promotion for commercial success, their strategic orientation differs significantly in terms of integration, data usage, and cross-platform coordination. These differences reveal how financial priorities and revenue models shape the operationalisation of Character, Convenience, and Community.

For IV1, IV2, and IV3, marketing remains largely campaign-based and medium-specific. IV1 described reliance on "conventional methods through various media platforms such as television, social media and radio", indicating a promotional strategy focused on maximising exposure for a single release. IV2 similarly emphasised film festival publicity supplemented by social media, while IV3 highlighted celebrity appeal as a driver of audience turnout. In these cases, marketing functions as post-production amplification rather than as an integrated narrative expansion strategy. Revenue is concentrated around theatrical or broadcast performance, limiting incentive for sustained cross-platform ecosystem development.

In contrast, IV4, IV5, and IV6 demonstrate more diversified marketing architectures. IV4's use of SEO (Search Engine Optimization), cross-promotion, merchandising, and nationwide tours reflects coordinated brand extension beyond the screen. IV5 advances this further through audience analytics, platform differentiation, and AI-driven engagement monitoring. Such practices indicate a shift from exposure-based marketing to data-informed ecosystem building, where audience interaction informs

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strategic decisions. IV6 also referenced audience segmentation and influencer collaboration, reflecting partial adaptation to targeted digital environments.

The distinction between these orientations reveals that marketing sophistication correlates strongly with transmedia maturity. Producers operating within conventional box-office models prioritise short-term promotional bursts, whereas digitally adaptive producers pursue longer-term brand cultivation across multiple revenue streams, including merchandise, streaming distribution, and community-driven content.

This pattern aligns with Scolari's (2009) view of transmedia as an industrial strategy embedded within media convergence ecosystems, rather than merely a storytelling technique. It also reflects Pratten's (2015) argument that business planning must accompany narrative design for transmedia sustainability. In the Malaysian context, limited funding structures and risk-averse investment models constrain producers from embedding marketing into transmedia world-building.

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Overall, business and marketing strategy functions as a structural filter through which transmedia potential is either activated or suppressed. Where marketing remains release-driven and medium-bound, the 3C dimensions are implemented selectively. Where marketing is ecosystem-oriented and data-informed, transmedia integration becomes more feasible.

4.4.3 Production Experience and Workflow Constraints

Production experience and workflow structure significantly influence the feasibility of transmedia integration among Malaysian producers. The findings indicate that

conventional linear production cycles centred on single film completion, limit the capacity for early-stage multi-platform planning. In contrast, producers who integrate transmedia thinking during development demonstrate greater coherence across Character, Convenience, and Community dimensions.

For IV1 and IV3, production remains firmly anchored in traditional cinema-oriented pipelines. IV1 acknowledged that his experience is "based on conventional production methods… focusing on producing films to be marketed in local cinema", while IV3 emphasised budget and script dependency without planning for multi-platform expansion. These responses reflect a linear production logic in which development, production, and marketing follow a sequential model designed for a single release window. Within such workflows, transmedia integration becomes an add-on rather than a foundational design principle.

IV2 highlighted the structural implications of adopting transmedia planning, noting that pre-production would become "more complex" and require simultaneous multi-platform coordination, larger budgets, and diversified skill sets. This recognition underscores that transmedia storytelling is not merely a narrative adjustment but a production reconfiguration. The need for expanded teams and cross-disciplinary expertise presents tangible barriers within Malaysia's resource-constrained industry.

By contrast, IV4 and IV5 describe integrated development models. IV4 explained that transmedia planning is incorporated from the development phase to ensure "consistency across all platforms". IV5 similarly emphasised maintaining a central creative team and using writer's bibles to document character continuity. These

practices reflect a non-linear, ecosystem-oriented workflow where narrative expansion is embedded into production architecture rather than appended post-release.

IV6 represents a transitional case. While he experimented with transmedia elements, he acknowledged limited success due to “budget limitations and other constraints”. His experience illustrates that even where awareness exists, structural resource conditions may inhibit sustained implementation.

Collectively, these findings suggest that production experience operates as a structural filter shaping transmedia maturity. Linear, cinema-first workflows constrain cross-platform integration, whereas development-phase coordination and centralised creative oversight facilitate narrative continuity across media. This aligns with Pratten’s (2015) argument that transmedia design must be embedded at the conceptual stage rather than retrofitted after production. In the Malaysian context, limited funding mechanisms and skill fragmentation reinforce conventional workflows, slowing the transition toward integrated transmedia ecosystems.

Overall, production experience is not simply a matter of years in the industry but reflects embedded production cultures. Where workflows remain medium-bound and sequential, transmedia adoption remains partial. Where workflows evolve toward integrated planning and collaborative oversight, systematic transmedia implementation becomes more viable.

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4.5 Cross-Case Comparison: Emerging Producer Typologies

The cross-case comparison (Table 4.2) indicates that variations in the implementation of Character, Convenience, and Community are not incidental but reflect distinct production orientations within the Malaysian film industry. Rather than existing as isolated individual differences, the six cases cluster into three producer typologies that represent varying degrees of transmedia maturity, structural capacity, and strategic intent.

Table 4.2

Cross-Case Comparison of The Six Respondents (IV1–IV6) Based on the 3Cs Model and the Supporting Dimensions

Respondent	Character	Convenience (Platform & Accessibility)	Community (Audience & Participation)	Awareness & Implementation	Business & Marketing	Production Experience
IV1	Relies on scriptwriters; characters not designed for transmedia	Focus only on one platform (film or TV); driven by broadcaster needs	Uses conventional promotion via TV & social media; no co-creation	Not familiar with transmedia, only knows Marvel/Star Wars from interview	Conventional marketing; ticket sales & actor popularity	Traditional production methods; no transmedia planning
IV2	Characters developed quickly for short films; no cross-platform strategy	Focus on festivals and limited online platforms; not designed for expansion	Audience engagement mostly via film festivals; no co-creation	Familiar academically, but no practical implementation	Relies on festivals & social media for publicity	Follows traditional production phases; notes complexity for transmedia
IV3	Focus on culturally relatable characters & team-based roles (e.g., Gerak Khas)	Prioritizes cinema & TV; chooses based on budget & trends	Relies on star power; cites Sembilu and celebrity culture for fanbase	Not familiar; sees it as a "big industry" concept (e.g., Marvel, Star Wars)	Believes success comes from good script, director, and actors	Emphasizes conventional cinema/TV production, no transmedia expansion
IV4	Creates simple, colorful, value-based characters for children; ensures cross-platform consistency	Starts with YouTube, then cinema & Netflix; careful scheduling for audience access	Uses songs, fan pages, live events, and merchandise to sustain communities	First time hearing "transmedia" but realizes practice aligns with it	Uses SEO, cross-promotion, brand partnerships, nationwide tours	Plans transmedia integration from development; coordinates across platforms
IV5	Crafts relatable characters with strong arcs; uses backstories, social media, fan content	Tailors content to TikTok, YouTube, streaming platforms	Encourages fan art, alternate endings, script contests; active co-creation	Very familiar; experimenting with transmedia as future of cinema	Explores multiple revenue streams (merchandise, spin-offs, brand tie-ins)	Integrates transmedia from early stages; uses writer's bibles & team collaboration
IV6	Characters developed during filming; focus on actor's performance & supporting roles	Selects platforms based on story type & market trends; partial consideration for multi-platform	Uses social media, screenings, and nostalgia-based engagement; limited co-creation	Aware in theory but sees challenges; notes lack of industry readiness	Traditional + some targeted marketing; still focused on box office	Conventional filmmaking phases; some attempts at transmedia limited by budget

4.5.1 Type 1: Linear, Box-Office-Driven Producer

This category, represented primarily by IV1 and IV3 (with elements of IV6), operates within a conventional single-text production paradigm. Character is treated as a narrative component confined to the cinematic or broadcast text, rather than as scalable intellectual property. Convenience is interpreted as selecting the most commercially viable platform typically cinema or television without designing interconnected audience pathways. Community engagement is largely promotional, relying on star power, traditional media publicity, and post-release marketing campaigns.

The primary constraints for this type include budget dependency, broadcaster-driven commissioning structures, and established production workflows that prioritise short-term box office returns. Intellectual property development beyond the primary medium is limited, reflecting structural rather than purely conceptual barriers. Transmedia integration, where present, tends to be reactive rather than strategically embedded.

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4.5.2 Type 2: Experimenting Multi-Platform Producer

This group, exemplified by IV2 and transitional aspects of IV6, demonstrates partial awareness and exploratory engagement with transmedia principles. Character continuity is recognised as important, yet systematic cross-platform planning remains underdeveloped. Convenience includes occasional adaptation to digital platforms, but without fully integrated entry-point architecture. Community engagement occurs through festivals, niche audiences, or nostalgic brand loyalty rather than sustained participatory ecosystems.

Constraints for this category stem from fragmented funding structures, limited access to integrated IP management systems, and the absence of institutional frameworks supporting coordinated multi-platform production. While transmedia literacy is emerging, implementation remains opportunistic and project-specific rather than embedded within long-term strategic planning.

4.5.3 Type 3: Ecosystem-Oriented Transmedia Producer

Represented most clearly by IV4 and IV5, this orientation reflects a higher level of transmedia intentionality. Character is deliberately constructed as a cross-platform anchor, supported by writer's bibles, centralised creative oversight, and long-term brand development. Convenience is operationalised through diversified platform strategies including YouTube, streaming services, and social media aligned with audience analytics and segmented consumption patterns. Community is cultivated through participatory practices such as fan engagement, merchandising, interactive campaigns, and feedback loops.

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Although this type demonstrates greater integration of the 3C dimensions, constraints remain linked to market size, scalability, and international distribution access. Nonetheless, this category illustrates the most mature alignment between narrative design, business strategy, and production workflow within the Malaysian context.

4.5.4 Synthesis and Implications for Framework Development

These typologies illustrate that transmedia adoption in Malaysia operates along a spectrum rather than as a uniform industry practice. The uneven implementation of Character, Convenience, and Community is shaped by awareness levels, business

models, and production architectures. Understanding these producer categories is critical for developing a context-sensitive framework.

The 3C+M framework proposed in Chapter Five responds directly to these differentiated realities. Rather than assuming universal readiness for transmedia integration, the framework recognises varying levels of maturity and structural constraint. It provides adaptable pathways for producers operating within linear models, transitional experimentation, and ecosystem-oriented environments, thereby aligning strategic recommendations with industrial conditions in Malaysia.

4.6 Discussion of Key Findings

This chapter answers RQ1 by demonstrating that the application of transmedia storytelling among Malaysian film producers is uneven and structurally conditioned rather than uniformly adopted. While elements of Character, Convenience, and Community are present across cases, their implementation varies significantly according to production orientation, business model, and workflow architecture. The findings reveal that transmedia practices in Malaysia operate along a maturity spectrum, ranging from linear and single-text production logics to ecosystem-oriented integration.

These patterns both align with and complicate existing transmedia theory. While global scholarship (Jenkins, 2006; Pratten, 2015) emphasises planned narrative dispersion and participatory ecosystems, the Malaysian context reveals selective adaptation shaped by funding structures, market size, institutional commissioning models, and generational production cultures.

4.6.1 Character: Narrative Centrality vs Strategic Scalability

The findings confirm that character remains a foundational element in Malaysian film production; however, its function as a transmedia anchor is unevenly institutionalised. Across cases, producers consistently emphasised character depth, emotional relatability, and genre familiarity as drivers of audience engagement. This aligns with Jenkins' (2006) argument that compelling characters form the backbone of expandable story worlds. Similarly, Pratten (2015) positions Character as the primary stabilising element across platforms.

However, the Malaysian context complicates this assumption. While character strength is prioritised within the cinematic text, only a minority of producers operationalise character as scalable intellectual property designed for cross-platform continuity. For most live-action producers, character development remains embedded within script and performance traditions rather than structured IP architecture. This suggests that strong narrative characters do not automatically translate into transmedia expansion; scalability requires deliberate strategic planning and infrastructural readiness.

Thus, the findings extend existing theory by demonstrating that character centrality alone is insufficient for transmedia maturity. In emerging film ecosystems such as Malaysia's, character strength must be supported by institutional IP management systems and cross-platform production planning before it can function as a true transmedia anchor.

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4.6.2 Convenience: Platform Selection vs Audience Journey Architecture

The findings partially confirm theoretical understandings of Convenience but reveal important contextual divergences. Global transmedia scholarship (Dena, 2009; Pratten, 2015) conceptualises Convenience as the design of interconnected entry points that guide audiences seamlessly across platforms. In this model, platform selection is integrated into early narrative planning.

In the Malaysian context, however, Convenience is frequently interpreted as medium selection rather than audience pathway design. Most producers determine platforms based on budget, broadcaster demand, or cinema viability, reflecting a distribution-driven rather than architecture-driven approach. Multi-platform strategies, where present, often emerge post-production as promotional extensions rather than as integrated narrative ecosystems.

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This divergence suggests that transmedia theory assumes media environments with flexible distribution infrastructures and diversified funding streams. Malaysia's cinema-first production model and fragmented digital ecosystem constrain the operationalisation of Convenience as a strategic dimension. Therefore, the findings extend transmedia theory by demonstrating that platform integration is highly dependent on institutional infrastructure rather than purely creative intention.

4.6.3 Community and Audience Engagement

Jenkins (2006) describes transmedia audiences as active participants who contribute to narrative meaning. The findings show that most traditional producers (IV1, IV2, IV3) view communities primarily as consumers, engaged through conventional

promotion or star power. In contrast, IV4 and IV5 highlight more participatory practices, such as leveraging social media fan pages, interactive polls, live events, and encouraging user-generated content. IV6 acknowledged the power of nostalgia-based communities, using films like Mira Edora to maintain audience loyalty across decades. These results align with international literature emphasizing the role of Community as a driver of transmedia success but also show how Malaysian producers are still uneven in their adoption of participatory strategies.

4.6.4 Supporting Dimensions and Structural Constraints

The supporting dimensions further illuminate challenges identified in Chapter 2. Awareness of transmedia storytelling remains limited, with only IV4 and IV5 demonstrating active experimentation, consistent with scholarship highlighting the need for capacity-building and education in Malaysia's creative industries. Business and marketing strategies also reveal a reliance on traditional promotion and box office indicators (IV1, IV2, IV3, IV6), contrasting with the innovative, multi-revenue approaches (merchandising, digital partnerships, analytics) practiced by IV4 and IV5. Similarly, in production practices, most respondents adhere to conventional workflows, with only IV4 and IV5 planning transmedia integration from the development stage.

4.6.5 Implications

These findings indicate that while the transmedia model (Pratten, 2015) offers significant potential to enhance the reach and sustainability of Malaysian films, its adoption is uneven. Established producers remain cautious, citing budgetary constraints, lack of technical expertise, and industry inertia. Conversely, a minority of

producers are pioneering multi-platform engagement, especially in animation and cross-cultural productions, demonstrating the feasibility of transmedia in Malaysia.

Overall, the results underscore a critical gap between academic discourse and industry practice. While the literature (Jenkins, 2006; Pratten, 2015) emphasizes characters, convenience, and community as key drivers of transmedia storytelling, most Malaysian producers have yet to fully incorporate these principles into their production strategies. This indicates a need for structured capacity-building, policy support, and industry collaboration to facilitate a transition toward sustainable transmedia ecosystems in the local film industry.

4.6.6 Supporting Dimensions as Structural Filters in the Malaysian Context

The findings indicate that the uneven implementation of Character, Convenience, and Community is not merely a matter of creative preference but is structurally conditioned by the Malaysian film ecosystem. Awareness diffusion, business models, and production workflow architectures operate as mediating filters that shape how and whether the 3C dimensions are realised in practice.

First, awareness functions as a diffusion barrier. While global transmedia theory assumes familiarity with multi-platform narrative logic, several Malaysian producers demonstrate limited conceptual exposure to transmedia terminology. Even where awareness exists, translation into practice remains inconsistent. This reflects a fragmented knowledge circulation system within the local industry, where academic discourse, policy aspirations, and production realities do not fully converge. As a

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result, transmedia adoption depends heavily on individual entrepreneurial initiative rather than systemic industry transformation.

Second, business and marketing structures significantly mediate implementation. Global transmedia scholarship often assumes integrated intellectual property management and diversified revenue streams (Scolari, 2009; Pratten, 2015). However, Malaysian producers operate within cinema-first funding mechanisms and risk-averse investment cultures. Revenue concentration around theatrical release reduces incentives for long-term cross-platform ecosystem development. Where marketing remains campaign-based and release-driven, transmedia integration becomes supplementary rather than foundational.

Third, production workflow architecture acts as a structural constraint. Transmedia design requires early-stage coordination, centralised creative oversight, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. In Malaysia, conventional linear production cycles prioritise single-text completion, limiting opportunities for integrated multi-platform planning. Only producers who embed transmedia thinking during development demonstrate sustained cross-platform coherence. This suggests that workflow culture, rather than narrative ambition alone, determines transmedia feasibility.

These structural conditions are closely linked to broader Malaysian policy and institutional frameworks. National initiatives under FINAS and digital content strategies articulate aspirations for media convergence and global competitiveness. However, the translation of policy ambition into production-level infrastructure

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remains uneven. The gap between policy discourse and industry workflow reinforces the maturity spectrum observed across cases.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that transmedia theory cannot be applied as a universal template without contextual mediation. In the Malaysian film industry, Character, Convenience, and Community are filtered through structural realities shaped by market scale, funding systems, skill distribution, and institutional culture. This necessitates the incorporation of a contextual modifier conceptualised in this study as "M" for Malaysian Context into the existing 3C framework.

Rather than replacing the 3C model, the Malaysian Context functions as a conditioning layer that mediates its operationalisation. The following chapter therefore proposes a 3C+M framework that accounts for varying levels of transmedia readiness and structural capacity within the Malaysian ecosystem.

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4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the findings of six in-depth interviews with Malaysian cinema producers (IV1–IV6), analysed through the lens of the 3C Model of Transmedia Storytelling (Pratten, 2015) alongside supporting dimensions (Awareness & Implementation, Business & Marketing, and Production Experience).

The analysis under Character revealed a spectrum of approaches, from conventional reliance on scriptwriters and performance-driven character development (IV1, IV2, IV6), to franchise-oriented strategies (IV3), and finally to more transmedia-oriented

practices such as cross-platform character design (IV4) and deliberate use of character bibles and fan-driven extensions (IV5).

In terms of Convenience, most traditional producers (IV1–IV3) focused on cinema and television, guided largely by budget and broadcaster preferences, while IV4 and IV5 strategically expanded into multiple platforms such as YouTube, Netflix, TikTok, and merchandising. IV6 demonstrated partial awareness by considering platform suitability based on story type and market demand.

The Community dimension exposed a divide in audience engagement practices. IV1-IV3 relied mainly on conventional promotions and celebrity-driven fandoms, whereas IV4 and IV5 adopted participatory approaches, incorporating social media, fan art, events, and interactive campaigns. IV6 highlighted the role of nostalgia in sustaining long-term fan communities.

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The supporting dimensions further revealed gaps in awareness, marketing strategies, and production planning. IV1 and IV3 were unfamiliar with the concept of transmedia storytelling, IV2 and IV6 demonstrated theoretical but limited practical knowledge, while IV4 and IV5 showed active experimentation aligned with global trends. Traditional producers remained focused on cinema or TV markets and box office success, whereas younger and more entrepreneurial producers emphasized digital platforms, data analytics, and cross-platform brand expansion.

Overall, the findings highlight a fragmented state of transmedia storytelling adoption in Malaysian cinema. While certain producers (IV4, IV5) demonstrate readiness and

innovation, the majority continue to rely on conventional storytelling, distribution, and marketing strategies. These insights provide the foundation for the concluding chapter, which will discuss the implications of these findings for theory, practice, and policy, and will propose a framework to guide Malaysian producers in adopting transmedia storytelling more effectively.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter synthesizes the empirical findings of Chapter Four and translates them into a coherent, producer-oriented understanding of transmedia storytelling within Malaysian live-action cinema. While Chapter 4 presented cross-case results, Chapter 5 consolidates those findings into (i) a concise summary of key insights (Section 5.2), (ii) an evaluation of Malaysian producers' experience with the transmedia components of Character, Convenience, and Community (Section 5.3), and (iii) the articulation of a locally grounded framework the 3C+M Malaysian Transmedia Storytelling Framework (Section 5.4).

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Guided by the research questions and objectives, this chapter first addresses RQ1 by demonstrating how Malaysian producers conceptualise and apply transmedia strategies within their production practices. It then addresses RQ2/RO2 by proposing a structured framework that accounts for Malaysian contextual realities and can support more consistent, feasible, and sustainable transmedia implementation in local cinema.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

This section summarises the principal empirical findings presented in Chapter Four in relation to Research Question 1 (RQ1). Rather than reiterating thematic descriptions, this section consolidates the key insights across the three transmedia components

Character, Convenience, and Community together with supporting structural dimensions that emerged from the data.

Collectively, these findings provide an overview of how Malaysian live-action film producers conceptualise and operationalise transmedia storytelling components within existing industrial and contextual constraints.

5.2.1 Character (C1)

- Producers generally recognise that strong characters and coherent storyworlds are important for audience recall and brand value, yet transmedia thinking is rarely embedded at the earliest development stage among Malaysian Producers.
- Narrative expansion is often treated as an add-on after the film is completed, rather than planned as an IP roadmap.
- Where character-led expansion is attempted, it is frequently shaped by IP ownership/control and perceived commercial feasibility.

5.2.2 Convenience (C2)

- Platform choices are primarily driven by feasibility (budget, team capacity, timeline) rather than deliberate user-journey design.
- Coordination across development, production, marketing, and distribution remains uneven, limiting sequencing and clarity of audience entry points across platforms.

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5.2.3 Community (C3)

- Producer's value "engagement," but community-building is commonly approached as campaign-led promotion (short-term visibility) rather than sustained participatory practice.
- Long-tail strategies (fan retention, co-creation pathways, and structured community touchpoints) remain inconsistent and vary across producers.

5.2.4 Supporting dimensions across cases

- An awareness–implementation gap persists. Producers may understand transmedia conceptually but struggle to translate it into operational planning.
- Business/marketing pressures and production constraints (risk, scale, funding structure, and manpower) strongly mediate whether transmedia is attempted.

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Collectively, these findings answer RQ1 by showing that Malaysian producers demonstrate partial awareness of the 3Cs, but transmedia adoption remains early-stage, uneven, and heavily shaped by feasibility constraints and Malaysian industry conditions.

5.3 Evaluation of Producers' Experience with Transmedia Storytelling Components (RO1)

This section evaluates Malaysian producers' experience with the core transmedia components Character, Convenience, and Community based on what they appear to do well, where gaps remain, and how these patterns compare with global practices

discussed in Chapter 2. This directly addresses RO1 (evaluation of producers' experience with transmedia storytelling components).

5.3.1 Evaluation of Character

Malaysian producers demonstrate strengths in recognising the value of character appeal and narrative coherence as drivers of audience engagement and marketability. Across cases, producers typically emphasise the importance of story and character for building recognition, indicating an initial alignment with global transmedia principles that position character/storyworld as narrative anchors.

However, a major gap is the limited integration of transmedia planning at development stage. Character-led expansion is often discussed as a possibility after completion (or after market response), rather than being embedded as a structured IP roadmap. This results in weak storyworld documentation, limited planning for extensions, and uneven continuity management when expansion is attempted.

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Compared with global practices reviewed in Chapter 2, where character design and storyworld rules are systematically planned for franchising, continuity, and additive expansion Malaysian producers' character strategies appear more episodic and project-based. Character potential exists, but it is not consistently operationalised as a transmedia asset.

5.3.2 Evaluation of Convenience

Producers demonstrate pragmatic strengths in adapting to constraints through selective platform choices, especially by leveraging accessible and lower-cost digital channels.

This reflects an applied understanding that platform selection must match resources and local audience habits.

Yet "convenience" is frequently reduced to feasibility alone (what can be afforded and executed) rather than being designed as a coherent audience pathway. Coordination across workflow phase's development, production, marketing, distribution remains uneven, limiting the ability to build structured entry points or release sequencing.

In contrast to global transmedia practice where platforms have defined narrative roles and user journeys are intentionally planned, Malaysian convenience strategies remain tactical and short-term. Convenience is understood more as "what we can do" than "how audiences can meaningfully navigate the storyworld".

5.3.3 Evaluation of Community

Producers show awareness that community and engagement matter, particularly through social media visibility and promotional interaction. Some cases indicate early experimentation with engagement activities, suggesting a growing orientation towards relational marketing.

However, community-building remains inconsistent and commonly campaign-led rather than world-led. Engagement strategies are often tied to release cycles and promotional bursts, rather than designed as sustained participatory ecosystems. As a result, long-term community practices fan retention, co-creation and structured community touchpoints are not consistently embedded into production strategy.

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Relative to mature transmedia ecosystems discussed in Chapter 2 (participatory culture and long-term fandom practices), Malaysian producers are at an early stage of operationalising community as a structural pillar of transmedia storytelling.

Taken together, these evaluations show that Malaysian producers are at an early and uneven stage of transmedia practice across the 3Cs. Strengths are visible in conceptual awareness and pragmatic adaptation, but gaps persist in early planning, user-journey or platform design, and long-term community strategy. This directly motivates the 3C+M framework proposed in Section 5.4, which translates the 3Cs into a locally grounded tool that accounts for Malaysian industrial, cultural, regulatory, and funding realities.

5.4 Clarifying and Operationalizing the 3C+M Framework (RO2)

Building on the evaluation presented in Section 5.3, this study proposes the 3C+M Malaysian Transmedia Storytelling Framework as a structured response to the empirical patterns identified in Malaysian producers' transmedia practices. While the 3Cs (Character, Convenience, Community) provide the core strategic pillars, the findings indicate that these dimensions are consistently mediated by Malaysian contextual realities.

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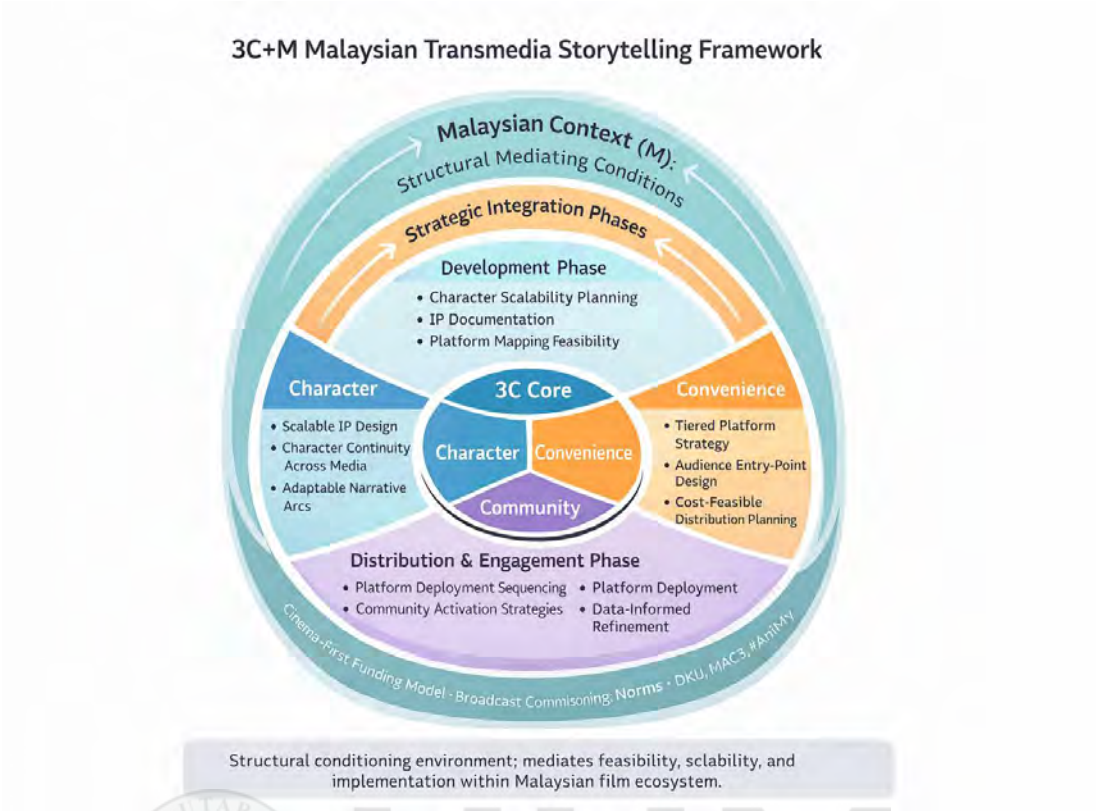

Figure 5.1. 3C+M Malaysian transmedia storytelling framework

Note. Figure 5.1 visualises how the Malaysian contextual dimension operates not as a separate pillar, but as a mediating layer that influences how each of the 3Cs is interpreted and operationalised within local production environments.

As illustrated in Figure 5.1, the 3C+M framework positions Character, Convenience, and Community as interrelated strategic components, embedded within a broader Malaysian contextual layer (M). This contextual layer represents cultural expectations, industrial scale, regulatory frameworks, funding ecosystem, and production infrastructure that shape the feasibility and sustainability of transmedia implementation.

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5.4.1 How the producers can use the framework (development to distribution)

- Step 1: Development Character-first planning

  Design characters and storyworld rules with expansion potential in mind (clear motivations, expandable relationships, and storyworld "spaces" for side narratives). This directly addresses the finding that character strength exists but is rarely operationalised early.

- Step 2: Feasibility mapping Convenience strategy under constraints

  Map realistic platforms based on resources and audience habits. The goal is not maximum expansion, but curated, feasible entry points (e.g., social, mobile-friendly content) aligned with local capacity.

- Step 3: Sequencing Convenience as audience navigation

  Plan timing and platform roles so audiences encounter coherent entry points rather than fragmented add-ons. Align production workflow, marketing timelines, and distribution windows.

- Step 4: Engagement architecture Community beyond the campaign

  Design community touchpoints that outlast the release cycle (online groups, events, interactive prompts, co-creation opportunities). Shift from campaign-led engagement to sustained storyworld-led participation.

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- Step 5: Malaysian contextual filter M as a decision check at each stage

  Apply the M-layer continuously: cultural fit, regulatory compliance, funding feasibility, and market realities. This ensures implementation is locally viable rather than a direct copy of global franchise models.

5.4.2 Grounding in Findings

Each component of the 3C+M framework is grounded in Chapter 4 patterns, particularly the awareness–implementation gap, the dominance of feasibility constraints, and the tendency toward campaign-led engagement. The framework therefore functions as a practical planning tool that translates empirical findings into actionable producer decision-making.

5.5 Practical Implications

The findings of this study carry practical implications for Malaysian film producers, industry stakeholders, and theoretical development within transmedia storytelling scholarship. By identifying uneven yet emerging patterns of transmedia adoption, this section translates empirical insights into actionable directions.

5.5.1 Implications for Malaysian Film Producers

The study demonstrates that Malaysian producers possess conceptual awareness of transmedia storytelling but often encounter operational barriers during implementation. The 3C+M framework offers a structured yet scalable planning model that can be adopted incrementally.

First, producers should integrate character-driven expansion thinking at the development stage, rather than treating cross-platform content as a post-release promotional extension. Designing storyworld rules, secondary character arcs, and narrative gaps early in development allows feasible expansion without significantly increasing production costs.

Second, platform selection should shift from reactive feasibility to structured sequencing. Even within limited budgets, producers may curate low-cost digital extensions such as short-form narrative content, character-based social media arcs, or episodic micro-content that serve defined narrative purposes rather than functioning solely as marketing tools.

Third, community engagement strategies should extend beyond theatrical release cycles. Sustained audience interaction through managed online groups, recurring engagement formats, or limited co-creation initiatives can strengthen intellectual property longevity and brand continuity between projects.

Collectively, these implications suggest that effective transmedia practice in Malaysia does not require large-scale franchise infrastructure. Instead, it requires disciplined integration of Character, Convenience, and Community within realistic industrial constraints.

5.5.2 Implications for Policy and Industry Stakeholders

The findings also indicate that structural conditions significantly shape producers' capacity to adopt transmedia strategies. Policy agencies and industry bodies therefore

play a catalytic role in bridging the awareness–implementation gap identified in this study.

First, development funding schemes may incorporate provisions for transmedia planning documents, such as IP expansion roadmaps or storyworld bibles, at early stages of project development.

Second, structured producer labs, masterclasses, or professional development programmes focusing on storyworld design, cross-platform sequencing, and audience analytics could enhance practical literacy in transmedia strategy.

Third, funding mechanisms may consider incentivising small-scale pilot extensions such as digital narrative supplements or interactive components attached to feature projects. Such risk-sharing mechanisms could reduce financial uncertainty and encourage experimentation within manageable scales.

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By aligning funding frameworks with intellectual property sustainability rather than single-output production, industry stakeholders can support a gradual shift from project-based filmmaking toward ecosystem-based content strategy.

5.5.3 Theoretical Implications

Beyond industry application, this study contributes to transmedia scholarship by contextualising the 3Cs within a Malaysian production environment characterised by smaller industrial scale, regulatory mediation, and funding constraints.

The findings refine existing theory in three ways:

- First, the study identifies an awareness–implementation gap, where conceptual familiarity with transmedia storytelling does not automatically translate into structured execution.
- Second, it observes a tendency toward campaign-led rather than world-led transmedia, in which engagement strategies are driven by promotional cycles rather than sustained storyworld architecture.
- Third, the introduction of the M (Malaysia) contextual layer demonstrates that transmedia components are mediated by local industrial, cultural, and regulatory conditions. This suggests that transmedia frameworks require contextual adaptation rather than universal replication.

The 3C+M model therefore extends, rather than replaces, existing transmedia theory by embedding global principles within locally specific realities.

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5.6 Limitations of the Study

This study is subject to several limitations that frame the interpretation and scope of its findings.

First, the research employed a purposive qualitative sample of six Malaysian live-action film producers. While this approach enabled in-depth exploration of professional experiences, the findings cannot be generalised numerically across the entire Malaysian film industry. The insights are analytical rather than statistical in nature.

Second, the study focuses exclusively on producers' perspectives. Other stakeholders such as directors, screenwriters, distributors, marketers, digital strategists, and audiences were not directly examined. As such, the findings reflect production-level decision-making rather than a multi-stakeholder ecosystem analysis.

Third, the scope of inquiry centred on live-action cinema. Although emerging formats such as games, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) are relevant to broader transmedia ecosystems, these forms did not strongly emerge within the empirical data and therefore were not substantively analysed.

Fourth, the study captures transmedia practices within a specific temporal context of Malaysian industry development. As digital infrastructure, funding structures, and audience behaviours evolve, transmedia strategies may shift accordingly.

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These limitations do not undermine the study's contributions but situate its conclusions within clearly defined empirical boundaries.

5.7 Future Research Directions

While this study provides an in-depth qualitative exploration of Malaysian cinema producers' experiences with transmedia storytelling, several areas warrant further investigation to deepen and expand the current understanding of transmedia practices in the Malaysian context.

5.7.1 Audience-Centred Studies on Cross-Platform Engagement

Future research should examine how Malaysian audiences navigate and engage with transmedia content across platforms. While the present study focuses on producer

perspectives, limited empirical evidence exists regarding audience movement between cinema, streaming platforms, social media, gaming environments, and merchandise ecosystems within the Malaysian market. Audience-centred studies may explore questions such as:

(i) do Malaysian viewers actively seek narrative extensions beyond the cinematic text?

(ii) what platforms function as primary entry points into storyworlds?

(iii) how does transmedia literacy influence engagement levels?

Such research would complement the Community dimension of the 3C framework by empirically assessing whether audience participation aligns with producer expectations and industrial assumptions.

5.7.2 Comparative Studies between Animation and Live-Action Producers

The literature and findings of this study indicate a clear disparity between animation and live-action transmedia implementation in Malaysia. Future comparative research could examine structural, financial, and creative differences between animation studios and live-action production companies. This may include:

(i) differences in intellectual property management strategies,

(ii) variations in character development and franchisability,

(iii) institutional support and policy incentives,

(iv) risk tolerance and investment horizons.

Such comparative analysis would provide deeper insight into why animation has demonstrated stronger transmedia integration, while live-action cinema remains largely single-platform oriented.

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5.7.3 Policy-Oriented Research on Funding Structures and Transmedia Risk

Given the structural constraints identified in this study, future research should investigate how national funding schemes, incentives, and regulatory frameworks influence producers' willingness to adopt transmedia strategies.

Policy-driven studies could explore:

- whether existing funding mechanisms encourage short-term project-based production rather than long-term intellectual property development.
- how government agencies (e.g., FINAS) might design incentive structures that support cross-platform expansion.
- the role of co-production policies and digital innovation grants in reducing transmedia investment risk.

Such research would strengthen the Malaysian contextual dimension ("M") within the proposed 3C+M framework by examining how institutional ecosystems shape production decisions.

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5.7.4 Quantitative Analysis of Market Performance and Transmedia Impact

This study adopts a qualitative design and does not measure financial outcomes of transmedia implementation. Future quantitative research could analyze the commercial performance of films with transmedia extensions compared to those without.

Possible approaches include:

- comparative analysis of box office revenue and streaming performance.

- correlation studies between transmedia activity and audience retention.
- social media engagement metrics as indicators of community sustainability.

Empirical financial and engagement data would provide measurable evidence regarding whether transmedia strategies generate tangible economic and cultural value within the Malaysian film ecosystem.

Collectively, these future research directions expand the study beyond producer experience toward a more holistic examination of audience behavior, industrial comparison, policy influence, and market performance. Such multi-dimensional research would further refine and operationalize the proposed 3C+M framework and contribute to the long-term development of transmedia storytelling practices in Malaysian cinema.

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5.8 Conclusion

This study addressed a structural gap between Malaysia's evolving digital policy aspirations and the predominantly single-platform production practices observed within the local film industry. While global transmedia storytelling frameworks emphasise additive narrative expansion, coordinated platform strategy, and sustained participatory engagement, Malaysian producers operate within distinctive industrial, cultural, and regulatory constraints.

Using a qualitative exploratory design grounded in the 3Cs framework Character, Convenience, and Community, this research examined how Malaysian live-action film producers conceptualise and apply transmedia storytelling components in practice.

The findings reveal uneven yet emerging patterns of adoption, characterised by conceptual awareness, pragmatic adaptation, and feasibility-driven decision-making. Empirically, this study provides one of the first in-depth accounts of Malaysian producers' transmedia practices based on direct experiential insight. Conceptually, it proposes the 3C+M Malaysian Transmedia Storytelling Framework, demonstrating that global transmedia principles must be mediated by local contextual realities. Practically, it offers structured guidance for producers and policymakers seeking to extend intellectual property sustainability beyond single-output film production.

Transmedia storytelling, within the Malaysian context, does not require large-scale franchise infrastructure to begin. Rather, it requires strategic planning, contextual sensitivity, and incremental integration of narrative and platform design. If Malaysian cinema embraces transmedia storytelling as both a creative methodology and an industrial strategy, local stories may extend beyond theatrical windows, sustain audience relationships over time, and evolve into more durable intellectual property ecosystems capable of regional and global resonance.

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APPENDICES

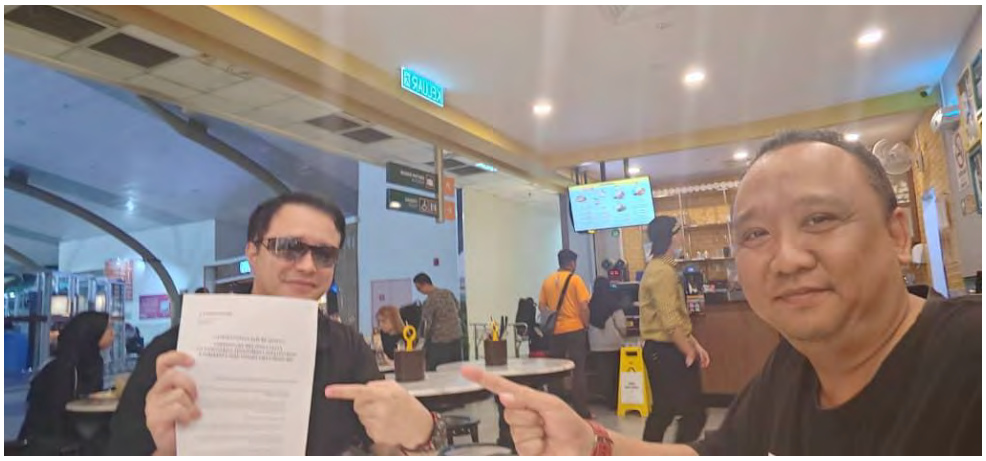
Appendix A

Vita

The Researcher, Nassarudin Ab Rasif @ Ramli is an Executive Producer and Program Producer at Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), serving within the Creative Arts & Commercial Events Unit (CACE), SCIMPA. He began his career as a freelance screenwriter and joined UUM in 2007. Since 2012, he has led the university's television productions in partnership with industry via UUM Holdings Sdn. Bhd. (UUM Holdings). He passed the MQA APEL T7 (Master level) assessment and is currently pursuing a Master of Science (Media Management) at UUM (thesis mode). Beyond driving UUM's commercial productions, he contributes to teaching and learning by integrating professional crews with students and faculty on productions for RTM, TV3 and other partners. His areas of expertise include TV/telemovie production, production management, screenwriting, talent development and industry–academia collaboration. To date, he has produced 20 titles and written more than 40 television scripts.

Appendix B

Interview Session Photograph





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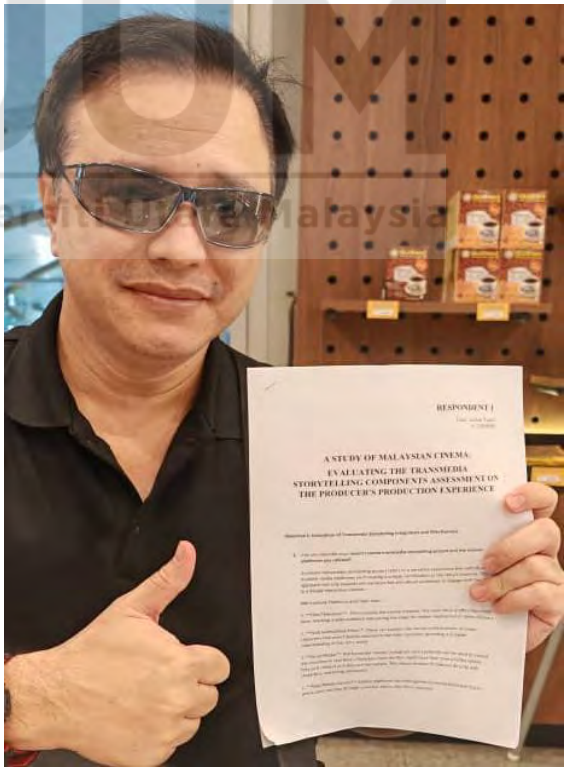

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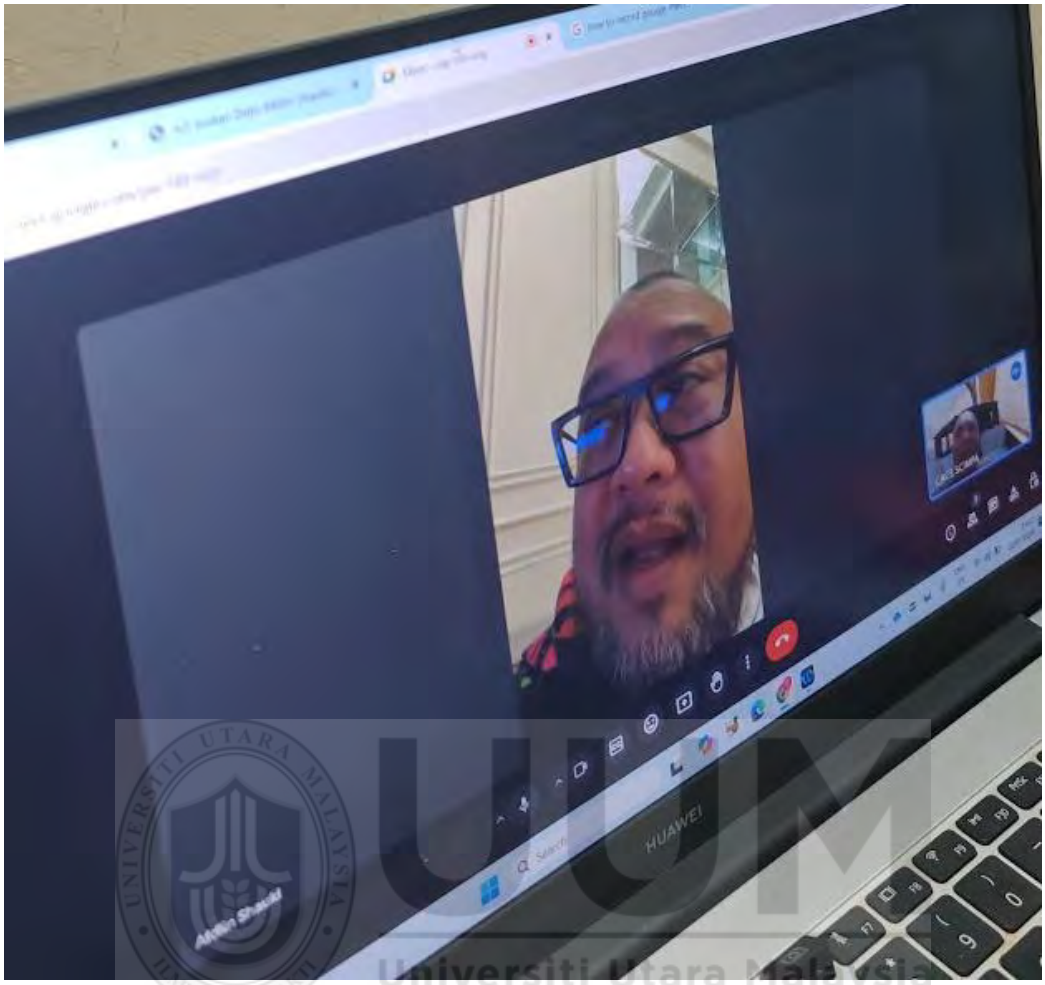

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