

Re: Dakar Arts Festival -

exploring transmedia storytelling methods to document an Internet scam

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Introduction

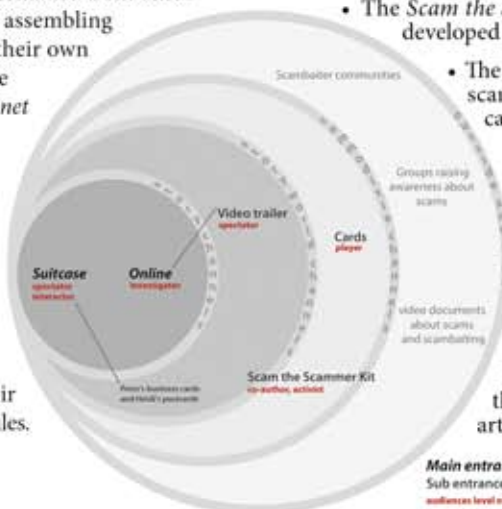
Online scams come in various forms, some quite unbelievable, others smartly entwined in our daily practices. The *Re: Dakar Arts Festival* project documents the practice of scammers, who announce an online open call for a fake art festival in Dakar, Senegal. During the correspondence with the scammers we created three virtual characters, their story is told in an interactive installation and online in form of websites and on various social media channels.

Design choices

The main challenge is to retell a documentation of a scam in an interesting way such that it invites various levels of involvement from the audience [1]. The mix of real life and fictional elements in the story world also leads to interesting discussions on design

Online

The online audience of *Re: Dakar Arts Festival* assumes the role of an investigator, collecting the information from different sources and assembling the pieces from their own story. The website *dakarartsfestival.net* facilitates the audience in the process of assembling the puzzle, by presenting the characters of the story and leading visitors to investigate their social media profiles.



Interactive suitcase

The suitcase consists of various elements:

- a video trailer introducing the story.
- an interactive audio-timeline reproducing parts of the email correspondence.
- various printed documents from the email correspondence with the scammers.
- a map of Dakar with important locations.
- the artists postcards and the gallerists business cards that visitors can use as entrance points to investigate the story online.

The story is left open ended because the scam as well as the story can still mutate and develop [2]. A text to speech program is used to give each character a voice, yet giving the feeling of anonymity and artificiality unveiling the virtual nature of these identities.



Scam the Scammer Kit

The kit can be seen as a facilitative tool for the audience willing to become actively involved in raising awareness about cyber crimes [3]. By introducing the ethical guidelines in the kit we wanted the users to question their motives and methods before entering scambaiting communities.

Further developments

- We created a second version of the suitcase and accordingly made improvements in both versions.
- We created posters showing the *anatomy diagram* of the scam giving an instant overview of the content.
- The *Scam the Scammer Kit* is further developed into a workshop model.
- The research about various scams is published as a quartett card game.
- The scam method also evolved and it is still possible to find open calls.
- The name of the festival changed to *Dakar International Festival of Visual Art (I.C.V. ARTS)*.
- The festival organizers name is linked to an identity theft case of the Senegalese artist *Ousmane Sow*.

Conclusion

- The characters profiles develop during the interaction with the scammers.
- Revealing a scammers practice in a compelling story can warn potential victims.
- Spreading content across different media channels highly increases the characters trustworthiness.

Discussion

- How to encourage an ethical, documentation approach to scambaiting narratives.
- More refined tools to evaluate level of engagement in multilayered storytelling.

Literature cited

1. Dena, C.: *Transmedia Practice: Theorising the Practice of Expressing a Fictional World across Distinct Media and Environments*. University of Sydney, Australia (2009).
2. Evergreen Keefe, J.: *Four Narrative Styles in Transmedia Storytelling* (2005). M.I.T.'s Media-in-Transition Conference May 2005.
3. Jenkins, H.: *Keynote: Revenge of the Origami Unicorn: Five Key Principles of Transmedia Entertainment*. MIT TechTV, <http://techtv.mit.edu/> (2011).