

Há-Vita: A Transmedia Platform about Madeira's Nature and Culture

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Abstract— In this exhibition, we present "Há-Vita", a transmedia platform conceived to foster awareness and communication among locals and tourists regarding Madeira natural wealth. This work takes an artistic approach to the appropriation of a transmedia tool. We take into consideration graphic design aesthetics and interaction design principles in order to promote environmental sustainability and raise awareness in tourists about the biodiversity of Madeira Island, Portugal.

Keywords— tourism, participatory media, video interviews, nature, Madeira Island, artistic design, transmedia storytelling, environmental sustainability, dialogue

I. CONCEPTS AND INSPIRATIONS

As the tourism industry continues to flourish, niche destinations are at risk. However, it is important that the growth of the travel and tourism sector continues in Madeira, as this industry section generates robust revenues to this region [3]. Tourism is one of the main drivers of Madeira's economy, representing about 25 to 30% of regional PIB. This growth in tourism investment and development should nonetheless take place in an open and sustainable manner. For this, it is key to provide the motivation for the further protection of nature, habitats, and biodiversity [1, 4]. With this context in mind, we designed Há-Vita - <https://havita.m-iti.org> - (Figure 2), a participatory transmedia project functioning as a touch point between visitors and tourists of the island of Madeira, opening up dialogue about its rich natural capital, traditions and folklore. In order to create opportunities for this dialogue, the project delivers two main points of interaction. Firstly, it functions as a repository of locally collected video interviews highlighting many aspects of the island's natural capital and local culture. Secondly, it points users to the location-aware fictional story "Fragments of Laura" (FoL). FoL is a playable story that engages its audience in exploring the city of Funchal (capital of Madeira, Portugal), while providing a learning experience about some historical and natural facts of the island [2]. Drawing on principles of community journalism [5], our ultimate purpose is to make Há-Vita participatory; we aim to encourage users to collaboratively engage with content creation, to send questions, comments, and any other kinds of user-generated content, such as photos or videos.



Fig. 1. Há-Vita Logo

II. SEVEN THEMES, SEVEN ICONS

Content and graphical design are equally aligned with the goal of creating awareness about nature sustainability and participation among Há-Vita viewers. The foundation of Há-vita homepage sits on the design of seven themes drawn out from FoL and seven respective icons shown in a drop-down menu that expands until the end of the page. These seven themes have guided the content creation as well as the artistic design of the mobile and Web interface. The latter was created for a customized template on Wordpress. The seven themes are: 1) Laurisilva of Madeira (subtropical forest, UNESCO World Heritage site) 2) Madeira's fauna, 3) Traditional Products, 4) Hydrological Balance, 5) Macaronesian Forests, 6) Invasive Species and 7) Natural Disasters.

A. Content Creation

Thus far, we have interviewed 18 local participants. The interviewees were chosen according to their expertise and local knowledge on the seven themes mentioned above. The participants represented two different groups of journalistic sources: 1) Scientists and 2) local residents. For the sake of illustration, focusing on theme 1 "Laurisilva" involved interviewing two biologists from the Museum of Natural History, in Funchal, a botanist-priest who became a legend on the island for his rich and incomparable knowledge of Madeiran flora, and a biologist from the Botanic Garden of Madeira, among others. All interviewees were informed about the general project goal of creating and instilling in tourists awareness about the natural heritage of Madeira. For scientists, we asked open-ended questions regarding technical distinctions of terms such as native and endemic plants, or the causes of wildfires or floods on the island. For local residents, we posed general questions about their knowledge of, and experience with, the flora, fauna, and traditional products of Madeira. Questions included: Do you know Laurisilva, What can you tell us about Laurisilva? What does Laurisilva represent for you? Which endemic plants do you know? Our questions were open-ended and reflected the journalistic style of having multiple views on the same subject. We asked the same questions to different interviewees.

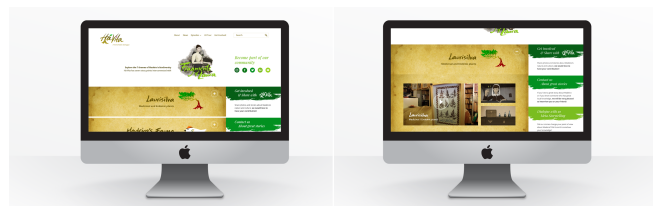


Fig. 2. Screenshot of the homepage: <https://havita.m-iti.org>

B. Conceptualization of the interface and artistic design

The Há-vita graphical elements for the Web and mobile interfaces were designed to highlight the connection with the seven chosen themes reflecting on specific concerns related to Madeira's nature. In fact, the Há-Vita logo itself (Figure 1) is a visual synthesis of one of the typical trees found in the forest Laurisilva located in Fanal, northwest Madeira. This forest covers 20% of Madeira territory and it is fundamental to the hydrological balance of the island. Such natural significance makes Laurisilva the thematic thread that binds all our content together. That said, the design of Há-Vita is Laurisilva-driven in terms of content creation and graphics. The chromaticity of the drop-down menu demonstrates the metaphor in action, as the same tree mentioned above inspired also its color scheme. The craft-paper color and its texture of the drop-down menu depict the trunk of the tree, which in turn grows into the participatory features. Participatory media was then represented by the leaves of the tree in the graphical interface, and were designed in three different shades of green. Each shade illustrates one level of participation, which are as follows: 1) Dark green: Active (Get involved & Share with Há-Vita) – send us content - Share photos and stories about Madeira's nature and culture, we would love to have your contribution. 2) Mid green: Passive (Contact us about great stories) – Contact us if you have a great story about Madeira if you know someone who has great local knowledge. We will be very pleased to interview you or your friend. 3) Light green: Metastorytelling (Dialogue with us) - Send us stories about our stories - Did our stories change your point of view about Madeira? Did it somehow enrich your knowledge? Share your experiences with us.



Fig. 3. Seven Themes, Seven Icons



Fig. 4. Icons being sketched from scratch for Há-Vita

Each of seven themes was paired with a specifically designed icon (Figure 3). The icons were carefully sketched and conceptualized from the beginning as small affordances for the nature and culture of Madeira. Icon 1 depicts the tree mentioned earlier found in Fanal. Icon 2 depicts an endemic bird that exists only on Madeira, the well-known 'Bis-bis'. Icon 3 depicts a glass of poncha, a traditional Madeira drink made of orange, lemon, honey, and rum that used to be used as a medicinal beverage. Icon 4 depicts the natural characteristic of Laurisilva to absorb water. Icon 5 shows the set of archipelagos, which consist of what is called "Macaronesia". Icon 6 depicts how the insertion of plants from other continents may be dangerous for Madeira ecosystem.

Finally, icon 7 depicts the intimate and destructive relationship between wildfires and floods, which endangers not only animal and plants species, but also put human lives at risk on the island. All icons were designed initially by hand (Figure 4) and were improved throughout an iterative process.

III. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

This work presented the transmedia platform Há-Vita as well as the main concepts and concerns that have inspired its creation. Future iterations of the existing platform, including Web and mobile interfaces, will be based on users evaluations of content, graphical interface and participatory features.

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