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# ***Desansiedad*, a Transmedia Web-based Platform for Mental Health Assistance in Hispanoamerica**

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## **Resumen**

*Desansiedad* is a web-based foundation that offers mental health assistance. In the last decade, it has expanded from its initial blog form into a transmedia platform. Many media outlets have played their part in the creation of its consistent overarching narrative around anxiety as its main matter of concern. Each of them develop the implications of anxiety disorders from different angles by exploiting the highlights and features of media such as Youtube videos, blogs, podcasts, emergency kits, books, discussion forums, Instagram reels, live-streaming webinars, etc. Previous research has explored transmedia storytelling intervention with interactive elements for the benefit of Latin women in the USA. Here, the ethnic group, geographic zone and transmedial scope of action for consumer-patients were limited. This research paper proposes a transmedia approach of an online platform in the innovative field of psychological assistance for people with anxiety disorders in Hispanoamerica. This project meets the requirements of what the World Health Organisation identifies as an urgent need in the face of a post-pandemic world with an increase of 25% in prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide. Findings indicate that this immersive multi-channel experience endows patients with the privileged position of being protagonists of their own self-discovery process; a method that considerably improves their quality of life.

**Keywords:** Transmedia Social Platform; Anxiety Disorders; Mental Health Transmedia Assistance; Technology for human experience; Proatients.

## Ponencia (versión sintética)

*Desansiedad* is a web-based foundation that gives mental health assistance. In the last decade, it has expanded from its initial blog form into a transmedia platform. This platform, proposed by the Mexican psychologist Fabiola Cuevas, offers a dynamic and holistic intervention that aims to help people with anxiety disorders overcome barriers of stigmatisation, identify available resources, reduce dysfunctional symptomatology and change their negative perception towards a more resilient view.

In terms of figures, the World Health Organisation (WHO) identifies tackling anxiety and depression worldwide as an *urgent need* especially in the face of a post-pandemic world. WHO's rates have increased by 25% in the past two years<sup>1</sup>. Cuevas' web-based platform provides people with an alternative to mitigate the circumstances of the condition and assist them in their own process. It has currently reached more than one million subscribers via social networking sites, more than five-hundred thousand podcast reproductions and ten million patients. (Luxplenus, 2022)

To these effects, the present research paper aims to explore the transmediality that *Desansiedad* offers to people interested in anxiety disorders for them to explore the implications of this mental state condition as well as to take an active role in the improvement of their well-being.

It will be argued that the active engagement expected from people in this platform resembles the consumer transition to *prosumers*<sup>2</sup> in the transmedia field. By immersing in *Desansiedad's* transmedia experience, patients become *Proatients*<sup>3</sup> who get involved in their recovery process by reflecting upon their condition and working out solutions.

To develop these arguments, the concept of *transmedia identity* coined by Jansson & Fast (2018), the definition of *collective intelligence* posited by Henry Jenkins (2006), and the emphasis on the use of technology for supportive human experiences brought about by Pamela Rutledge (2021) have been selected for theoretical support.

## From a blog into a transmedia experience

A parallel transmedia experience for the purpose of mental health assistance has been proposed by Heilemann et.al (2017). Here, an interactive transmedia storytelling has been deployed for English-speaking Latinas living in The United States experiencing anxiety and depression. The preliminary findings indicate that this transmedia therapeutic

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<sup>1</sup> Assertion made in accordance with the arguments proposed by the WHO in its official website. Available at

<https://www.who.int/news/item/02-03-2022-covid-19-pandemic-triggers-25-increase-in-prevalence-of-anxiety-and-depression-worldwide> Accessed: 1, June 2022

<sup>2</sup> Term coined by Alvin Toffler in his work *The third wave* (1980).

<sup>3</sup> A term that I suggest based on Toffler's term and the active role of patients in this Web-based Platform.

intervention is feasible for engaging the targeted group, who experienced higher levels of confidence and decreasing symptomatology. Similarly, around 2011 Psic. Fabiola Cuevas started writing a blog on anxiety as a means for processing her own experience with the condition and promoting empathy in mental health professionals. (Luxplenus, 2022) Stemming from a massive and rapid response to the blog content, Cuevas tells that the blog gradually turned into a mental health foundation. (Luxplenus, 2022) (See Image 1)

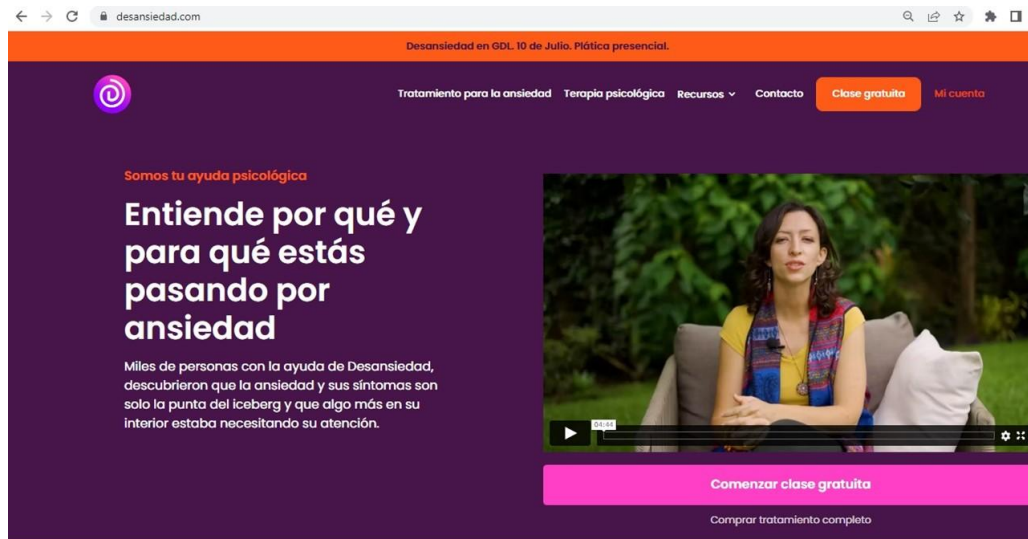


Image 1: Desansiedad's Web Home-page. Desansiedad© Luxplenus 2022 All rights reserved.

Many media outlets have played their part in the creation of this overarching narrative around anxiety as its main matter of concern. As posited by Vann et al. "Contemporary social media platforms provide clearly circumscribed media spaces in their own right. (2018, p.1) *Desansiedad's* platform gives room for a dense interconnection of media either within the paid courses or the content for the general public. According to Vann et al., it is relevant to highlight that "the mass adoption of currently leading social media platforms (...) have actively pursued the creation and further enhancement of (...) transmedia relationships." (2018, p.1) Within psychology field, *Desansiedad* has knitted each of these relationships develop the implications of anxiety disorders from different angles by exploiting the highlights and features of media such as audiovisual libraries, Youtube videos, a blog, podcasts, emergency kits, books, discussion forums, Instagram reels, Tik Tok clips, live-streaming webinars, weekly sessions and workshops to interact with specialists, among other content productions. (See Image 2)



Image 2: Desansiedad's Web Home-page resources . Desansiedad© Luxplenus 2022 All rights reserved.

## Ethical standpoint

As it has been previously mentioned, Psic. Fabiola Cuevas found herself suffering from intense anxiety disorders, which appeared in the face of her graduation from University of Anáhuac. Such a crisis, she affirms, meant an “awakening of her consciousness” that led her to writing a blog. (Luxplenus, 2022) (See Image 3)



Image 3: Introductory comments to Fabiola Cuevas' anxiety experience. Desansiedad© Luxplenus 2022 All rights reserved.

In this way, her story of life became a starting point for ethical identification from which she created a universe in its own right for dealing with anxiety. Correspondingly, Jansson & Fast have explored how fans of transmedia productions experience “emotional engagement

largely connected to feelings of identification”, “admire and empathise with the characters” (2018, p.480). Cuevas’ story of life invites those who consume *Desansiedad’s* content through different platforms to do so and go even farther. People taking the four-month course of *Dale Alas a la Ansiedad* may experience a first-person perspective as empowered “protagonists” of their own recovery processes just like the main character of a transmedia storyworld. In this light, as stated by Jansson & Fast, “identification becomes a driver of transmedia engagement” (2018, p.481), which, in this case, triggers ethical and emotional identification. The key seems to lie in the different media used for the cross-promotion of *Desansiedad’s* content as they “may strengthen the audience’s engagement and identification with its key themes and values.” (Edwards 2012; Granitz and Forman 2015 cited in Jansson & Fast 2018, p. 479) Hence, *Desansiedad* as a transmedia storytelling can be taken as an instrument for circulation and recognition that comes to bring tools for the day-to-day reality of millions of people. (See Image 4)



Image 4: Consumer’s testimony. Desansiedad© Luxplenus 2022 All rights reserved.

## Hunting and gathering for change

In line with the cross-promotion nature of *Desansiedad’s* content, a term that the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines as “the advertising or publicizing of something (...) by means of another product, service, etc.” (n.d.), Henry Jenkins states the following:

Transmedia storytelling is the art of world making. To fully experience any fictional world, consumers must assume the role of hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of the story across media channels, comparing notes with each other via online discussion groups, and collaborating to ensure that everyone who invests time and effort will come away with a richer entertainment experience. (2006, p. 21)

According to Jenkins' words, it is then plausible to establish a connection between *Desansiedad* as a transmedia world-making and its followers who adopt a hunter-gatherer attitude. Additionally, Rutledge contributes to the discussion by casting light upon the underlying "ability to see how a narrative travels and grows across media, the ways (...) different media (...) and our participation can impact our perceptions and attitudes." (n.d) As a result, it can be stated that *Desansiedad's* followers are triggered to chase bits of content across multiple media outlets to get the full experience by means of exploring information, tools, strategies and recommendations for coping with this condition together with taking an active role in the improvement of their well-being. By doing so, cognitive paradigms, perceptions and attitudes may undergo a change that will enable people to find the means for self-assistance and improvement.

### ***Desansiedad*, the birth of *Proatients* and transmedia for enhancing human experience**

Apart from the experience offered by the web-based foundation itself, it is also relevant to explore how patients create a community, mutually support each other within *Desansiedad's* community. Owing to this, patients move away from their traditional passive attitude towards a more active one as it is the main objective of this foundation to enable them to take a leading role to produce a change for improving their well-being.



Image 5: Proatient activity, community participation through forum discussion. Desansiedad© Luxplenus 2022 All rights reserved.

Taking Alvin Toffler’s notion of *prosumers* as people who both consume and produce, it will be postulated that, in *Desansiedad*, patients become *Proatients* who both consume and produce health content and get tools to take action to make changes in their lifestyle. They do so in a collaborative way with the platform’s psychology team (See Image 5) and other members (See Image 6) adhering to what Jenkins identifies as “Collective Intelligence”: “None of us can know everything; each of us knows something; and we can put the pieces together if we pool our resources and combine our skills.” (2006, p.4) In this sense, the consumer experience expands from consumption to interaction, creation, and distribution of content through their social interactions with others. In words of Pamela Rutledge (2021) “it represents a movement away from technology for its own sake and toward human experience.”




**Angélica Cabeza**  
 Expresiones artísticas en 25 de mar

Cuando transito por el camino de mis interpretaciones, encuentro Miles de obstáculos que me detienen y no me dejan avanzar, sino que sigo en el mismo círculo vicioso de las mentiras de mi mente. En cambio cuando sigo el camino de la verdad, la realidad, "Lo que sí está pasando", parece que todo va "sobre ruedas" hacia el camino de la Libertad. Hay luz verde para llegar. Ya quiero llegar!!!!

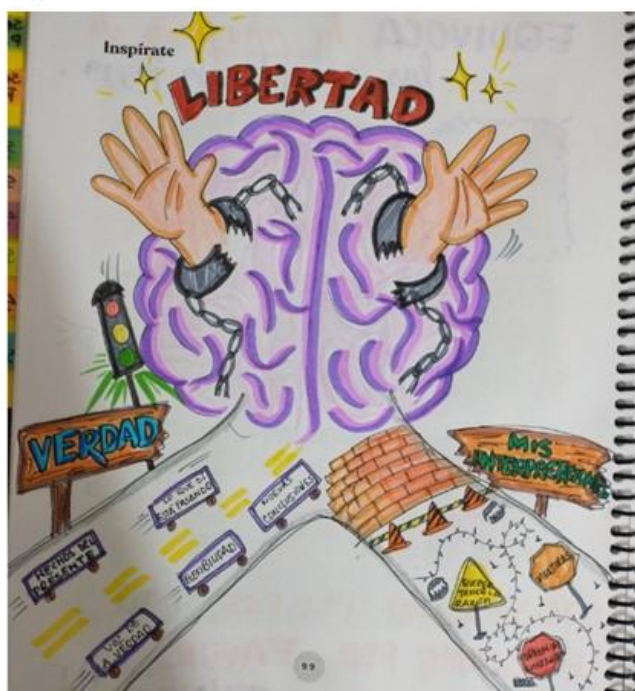


Image 6: Proatient activity, artistic productions. Desansiedad©Luxplenus 2022 All rights reserved.


**Roxana García**  
 Expresiones artísticas en 12 de feb

Les comparto este video animado que hice hace 2 años y medio, ya saben cómo se llama "Ansiedad"



ANSIEDAD - Jacobilobi  
 Presiones, exigencias, emociones reprimidas que causaban un infierno interno... En este video te muestro al Toro azul sufriendo todo esto, hasta explotar hac...  
 Verónica Lay

Expresiones artísticas en 3 de jul de 2021

Graphic desing #Verangel7  
 Este diseño lo hice cuando batallaba con pensamientos obsesivos.



22 Me gusta 8 Comentarios

## Conclusion

As it has been explored, transmediality is here used to “address the new conditions for social expressivity and recognition,” (Jansson & Fast, 2018, p. 482) this community-oriented transmedia storytelling can meaningfully mobilise, raise awareness and empower people who suffer from anxiety disorders. In *Desansiedad's* foundation, anxiety becomes a universe whose different dimensions expand this narrative through multiple media and scopes of analysis of the present disorder. In addition, it has been found that the extent up to which *Proatients* can engage and participate in the dynamics of this transmedia platform is quite significant. Thus, having analysed the implications of *Desansiedad's* transmedia qualities, this web-based platform is not merely for patients to consume or being treated but to produce content and actively engage in the improvement of their well-being. In this way, patients become *Proatients* that become protagonists of their own recovery process. This role detaches from passivity, inaction and even disability that characterises traditional mental

health approaches towards a guided, self-assisted and transmedia method for a more functional lifestyle.

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